

Mini-Workshop

Fieldwork between folders:

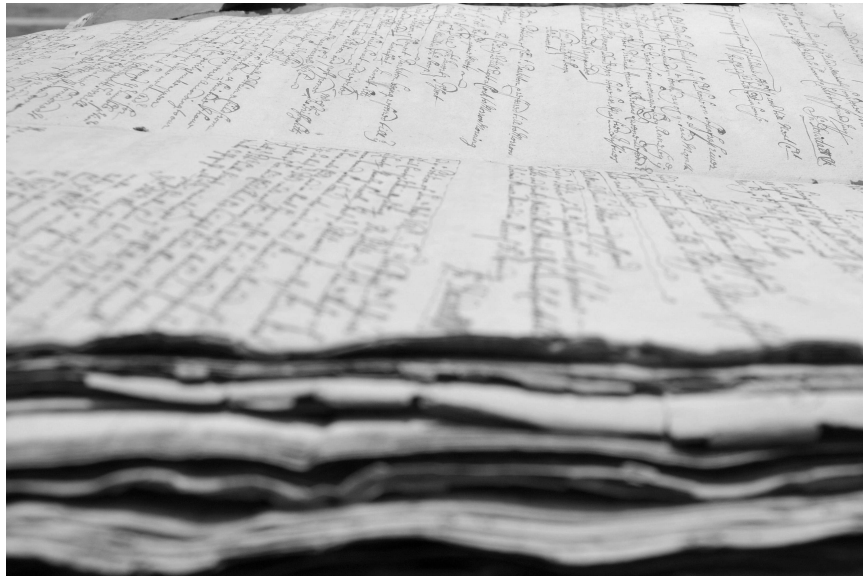
Theories of the archive and the historical anthropology of colonialism

Coordinators: Patrice Ladwig (MPI) and Ricardo Roque (ICS-UL)

14th July 2011

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Guest House, Seminar Room



Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa

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Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

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Fieldwork between folders: Theories of the archive and the historical anthropology of colonialism

Organizers: Ricardo Roque (ICS Lisbon) & Patrice Ladwig (MPI Halle)

Thursday, 14th July. 8.30 – 18.00h. Seminar Room. MPI Guesthouse.

Materials from the archive are often the main sources for historical anthropologists working on the colonial period. Here, archive at its most basic level simply refers to an institution that preserves files, surveys, correspondences and other information. As a bureaucratic apparatus archives produced, classified and administered knowledge about the colonized. They therefore have to be understood as an intrinsic part of colonial statecraft, revealing the archive's direct link to the State and its project to control populations and enhance colonial governmentality.

Recent studies in history and anthropology have looked at the archive's wider entanglements and the implications of those for anthropological and historical research. While the archive very often remains a place where information about the colonized is simply 'extracted' by historians or anthropologists, recent approaches that have been subsumed under the somewhat fuzzy heading 'archival theory' advocate that colonial records and archives also open up a reversed perspective. Calling for an 'ethnography of the archive' and a new reading of colonial documents, these approaches take their starting point from the instability and contingency of the archive. Nicholas Dirks, for example, has proposed that engaging in an "ethnography of the archive entails going well beyond seeing it as an assemblage of texts, a depository of and for history". The archive here becomes not only a place where information is stored, fixed and extracted, but also a space that has a specific history itself and is as much constituted by fragments, broken traces and imaginary projects as by 'hard' historical data. Record keeping was often 'thin', erratic and episodic and the production of knowledge reveals that empires were often less successful in their enterprises than assumed. Then, besides seeing the archive as a part of an imperial power apparatus, historical anthropologist now also look at the failures, anxieties, silences, absences and struggles that are reflected in the archives' institutional histories and the documents themselves. Moreover, through the influence of postcolonial studies, colonial archives are not anymore exclusively treated as part of a finished past, but are understood as having an important and continuing legacy in the contemporary period.

This shift of moving from extraction to reflection on the archive itself has parallels in the stance anthropologists have developed towards their fieldwork. Since the 1980s and the so-called crisis of representation, anthropologists have engaged in a range of debates that enhanced the subject's reflexivity towards its fieldsites and information gathering. The position of the fieldworker itself, the problems to access the field and the exposition



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to local hegemonies have been elaborated as critical points for encountering the former invisibility of the researcher. Moreover, multi-sited fieldwork and transnational approaches to the field have evolved and now complement the classical focus on one place. The workshop explores the theoretical and methodological implications of the ‘fieldwork’ of historical anthropologists working in colonial archives. By juxtaposing, comparing and differentiating ‘classical’ anthropological fieldwork and the work in colonial archives, the workshop participants discuss the intersections of anthropological studies and historical studies in the light of recent approaches advanced in archival theory.

Presentations are combined with readings suggested by the participants. Electronic copies can be obtained from the organizers. In case you are interested in participating, please contact: Patrice Ladwig ladwig@eth.mpg.de and/or Ricardo Roque ricardo.roque@ics.ul.pt

Schedule

8.30-8.45. Patrice Ladwig & Ricardo Roque: Welcome

8.45-9.30. Patrice Ladwig: *Introduction: ‘Archival theory’? Implications for the anthropology of colonialism*

Readings: 1. Featherstone, Mike (2006): Archive. in: *Theory Culture and Society*, 23:2, pp. 591—597. 2. Stoler, Ann. *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton University Press 2010, pp. 31-53.

9.30-10.00 Oliver Tappe: *Moving across Zomia: The dispersal of groups and their traces in the archives*.

Reading: Paul Ricoeur, Archives, Documents, Traces. In: *Time and Narrative III*, University of Chicago Press 1990, pp. 116-126.

10.00-10.30h Coffee Break



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10.30-11.15 Ricardo Roque: *'Skull Archives'. Objects and texts from colonial East Timor.*

Reading: Roque, Ricardo (2010): Trajectories of human skulls in museum collections. In: *Headhunting and Colonialism. Anthropology and the circulation of human skulls in the Portuguese Empire, 1870-1930*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 103-126

11.15-12.30 Dittmar Schorkowitz: *'Maculature' and the access to archives. Long-term experiences from archival research in Russia and Central Asia.*

Reading: Nicholas Dirks (2002): "Annals of the Archive: Ethnographic Notes on the Sources of History," In: Brian Keith Axel (ed.). *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and Its Future*, pp. 47-65.

12.30-14.00 Lunch break

14.00-14.45 Christiana Bastos: *Among the nameless theorists. Portuguese colonial doctors and epidemics in 19th century health reports.*

Stoler, Ann. *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton University Press 2010, pp. 1-16.

14.45-15.30 Christoph Kohl: *Perils and Potentials: Colonial Archives and Libraries in Postcolonial Times in Guinea-Bissau*

Reading: De Certeau, Michel (1992): The space of the archive and the perversion of time. In: *The writing of history*. Columbia University Press, pp. ??

15.30-16.00 coffee break

16.30-17.15 Sayana Namserva: *War between folders? The historical anthropology of Qing Dynasty China and Tibet from an archival perspective.*

Reading: Bartlett, Beatrice (2007): Qing Statesman, archivists, and historians and the questions of memory. In: Blouin, Francis & Rosenberg, William (eds.): *Archives, documentation and institutions of social memory*. University of Michigan Press, pp. 417-426

17.15-18.00 Final discussion



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