

12th Salon Transregional Studies: "Claiming the Public: Pentecostalism and the Global in Africa" am Mittwoch 09.02.2011, 18:00 Uhr

Ort: Tschechisches Zentrum Berlin, Friedrichstrasse 206, 10969 Berlin



Nähere Informationen auch auf der
Homepage des Center for Area Studies der FU Berlin

Date and venue:

9 February, 2011 6 p.m. (s.t.) – 8 p.m., reception afterwards
Tschechisches Zentrum Berlin, Friedrichstrasse 206, 10969
Berlin

Main speaker:

Prof. Dr. Birgit Meyer (VU University Amsterdam, Social and Cultural Anthropology; at present
Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin)

Discussants:

Prof. Dr. Hansjörg Dilger (Freie Universität Berlin, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology)
Dr. Andreas Mehler (German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Director of the Institute of
African Affairs)

This Salon is held in cooperation between

- the FU Center for Area Studies,
- the German Institute of Global and Area Studies,
- Büro Berlin and
- the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, FU Berlin.

Registration:

until February 2, 2011 at geschaeftsstelle@cas.fu-berlin.de

Abstract of main lecture:

In her lecture, Birgit Meyer will raise questions for our understanding of the public sphere and the role of religion in Africa. She will present the example of Ghana, where Pentecostal Christianity has become a major public voice in the aftermath of democratization. Moving between the levels of historical and ethnographic work and theoretical reflection, Birgit Meyer rejects a mere application of theories about modern religion and the public sphere to Africa. Instead, she pleads to start from a broad notion of 'public' as open, common and accessible. Once the public sphere is not taken as a normative ideal, but as an arena in which actors are 'going public' and 'making things public,' new questions arise that need to be addressed via solid historical and ethnographic work. Birgit Meyer advocates a contextualizing approach that spots historical transformations of the notion of 'public' and legacies that affect the way in which Pentecostalism goes public and claims a public in our time. In so doing, she stresses the need to take into account the materiality and tangibility of the spread of Pentecostal churches through media. Special attention has to be put on the Pentecostals' impact on the body and the senses and the ways in which this generates distinct styles that make Pentecostal identity become apparent. The point is that we need not only rethink the public sphere, taking leave of idealist, elitist, Eurocentric and all too abstract notions. Moreover, we have to develop fresh approaches to religion in general, and Pentecostalism in particular. Rethinking the public sphere in our time requires rethinking religion and vice versa.

The Salon Transregional Studies is a series of the Center for Area Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. It is held in cooperation with the German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Büro Berlin and the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, FU Berlin.