

## Colonial Genocide in Sub-Saharan Africa - Namibia, Tanzania, Congo Free State

15374 Seminar  
Wednesday, 12-2pm (online)  
First session: October 20, 2021  
Sara Dehkordi  
Otto-Suhr Institute of Political Science  
Freie University Berlin  
email: sara.m.dehkordi@gmail.com

**Seminar description:** “There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory.” To control the archive, and therefore memory, means to control the ways in which history is perceived, but also, how it becomes reconstructed and imagined. Implied violences of the present can in this way be cut off from their historical backgrounds and reside as isolated conditions of the social, but not of the political. Dehistoricizing then means at the same time a depoliticizing of the event. The German genocide on the Herero and Nama in Namibia, on the Ngoni, Matumbi, and Ngindo in Tanzania, and the Belgian genocide on the Kongo, Mongo, and Luba in the Congo, have often been subjects of dehistoricization, depoliticization, and silence. It is impossible to read the catastrophe of the holocaust as a historical one, without taking into account the brutal manifestations of fascism within the German colonial apparatus. The genocidal practices and technologies in both cases, the manner in which colonialists and leaders of the national socialist party viewed themselves, the racialized regimes in which they ordered, administered and made law, and the epistemological foundations through which they rationalized their notion of superiority and their relationship to violence, are inextricably linked. Patrice Lumumba’s joint execution by Belgian, UK, US, and Congolese forces in 1960, and the role of Belgium in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, have to be read against the history of unthinkable genocidal practices that were committed by Belgians at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The historical records that disclose these relations are rarely generated. What remains is to look at the power relations and political formations that led to the silencing and erasure and at the discourse that the present archival documents form, or, conversely, to pose the question of how that what is absent can be understood. In this seminar, we will discuss and carve out methods that allow us to reprocess these genocides respectfully and patiently, and to understand their historical and political meanings. In this process, we will also discuss how misleading and violent the use of colonial archives can be. This requires us to include questions of epistemology and method.

**Seminar plan:** In the nine sessions before the Christmas holidays, we will focus on three different themes: First, the competing discourses of genocide and a critical review of the history of the term and its international legal consequences. Second, the genocide in the Congo under Belgian rule. And third, Germany's genocidal scorched earth strategies in German West Africa. After the holidays, seven sessions remain in which we will first concentrate on the German genocide on the Herero and Nama in Namibia and finally, try to create a conversation between the different histories of genocides and their meanings for the present.

**Requirements:** Reading notes, short presentation (10-15 minutes), and for those who plan to obtain the full credits, a term paper/ term project

### **Course material / bibliography**

- Biwa, Memory: *Afterlives of Genocide: Return of Bodies from Berlin to Windhoek*. In: Moradi, Fazil, Six-Hohenbalken, Maria and Buchenhorst, Ralph (eds.): *Surviving Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation*. London and New York 2017

- Biwa, Memory: *'Weaving the Past with Threads of Memory': Narratives and Commemorations of the colonial war in southern Namibia*. Cape Town 2012

- Césaire, Aimé : *Discourse on Colonialism*. Paris 1950

- Ewans, Martin: *European Atrocity, African Catastrophe Leopold II, the Congo Free State and its Aftermath*. London 2002

- Farred, Grant, Kavwahirehi, Kasereka and Praeg, Leonhard (eds.): *Violence in/and the Great Lakes: The Thought of V-Y Mudimbe and Beyond*. Grahamstown 2014

- Freire, Paulo: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Introduction, Preface and Chapter 2. New York and London 2000. Originally published in 1970

- Gellately, Robert and Kiernan, Ben: *The Spectre of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*. Cambridge 2003

- Hochschild, Adam: *King Leopold's Ghosts*. New York 1998

- Howard-Hassmann, Rhoda E.: *Genocide and State-Induced Famine: Global Ethics and Western Responsibility for Mass Atrocities in Africa*. In: Perspectives on Global Development and Technology 4, No. 3;4. 2005
- Iliffe, John: *Tanganyika under German Rule 1905-1912*. Cambridge 1969
- Jones, Adam: *Genocide, War Crimes and the West*. Chapter 20: Nesbitt, Francis Njubi: *Coming to Terms with the Past: The Case for a Truth and Reparations Commission on slavery, segregation and Colonialism*. London and New York 2004
- Mapunda, O.B. and Mpangara, G.P.: *The Maji Maji War in Ngoni*. Dar es Salaam 1969
- Moradi, Fazil, Six-Hohenbalken, Maria and Buchenhorst, Ralph (eds.): *Surviving Genocide: On What Remains and the Possibility of Representation*. London and New York 2017
- Moses, Dirk,(ed.): *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*. New York and Oxford 2008
- Patterson, Orlando: *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London 1982
- Sarkin, Jeremy: *Colonial Genocide and Reparation Claims in the 21st Century*. Westport 2009
- Sarkin, Jeremy: *Germany's Genocide of the Herero – Kaiser Wilhelm II, His General, His Settlers, His Soldiers*. Cape Town 2011
- Sunseri, Thaddeus: *Famine and Wild Pigs - Gender Struggles and the Outbreak of the Maji Maji War*. In: The Journal of African History, Volume 38, No. 2. 1997
- Weisbord, Robert G.: *The King, the Cardinal and the Pope: Leopold II's genocide in the Congo and the Vatican*. In: Journal for Genocide Research. Volume 5, Issue 1. 2003