

– Institute's Colloquium –



The Institute of Ethnology of the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität is glad to welcome

Prof. Dr. Paul Ocobock (University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA)

Wednesday, January 13th 2021, 4-6 p.m.

#Gocutmyhusband: Age, Masculinity, and the Politics of Foreskin in Kenya

Why would a Kenyan woman stand before her neighbors and announce that her husband had not been circumcised? Why would her shocked neighbors then arrest her husband and forcibly cut him in public?

And why would such a story captivate the imagination of Kenyan audiences? In this lecture, I use the story of forced male circumcisions in contemporary Kenya to weave together a long history of anxieties about and struggles over age and masculinity in Kenya. Age and gender mattered a great deal to the many ethnic communities of Kenya and to the state. Young men used the new possibilities of colonial rule to reimagine cultural notions of age and masculinity. Migrant wage labor, town life, criminality, anti-colonial violence, and nationalism all became avenues for young men to argue with one another and their elders about youthfulness, maturity, and manhood. British colonial officials also viewed relationships among male generations as a potent source of power. The British became active participants in age-relations, institutionalizing age and masculinity as inseparable components of statecraft - a process I call the elder state. The elder state survived decolonization; post-independence politicians retooled it for nation-building, creating a gerontocratic form of politics that entrenched the power of a single elder generation of male politicians over their young constituents for the next half century.

The Institute's Colloquium will take place digitally and the required information will be announced.

Everybody is welcome!