

VIOLENCE AND INTIMACY IN COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL AFRICA: GLOBAL AND LOCAL HISTORIES OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

Authors' workshop

University of Basel, **15-16 June 2020**

Summary: Scholars working on histories of violence in Africa are invited to participate at an author's workshop on the subject of intimate relations and violence in different colonial contexts to be held in Basel in June, 2020. The workshop will lead to the compilation of a special issue on violence and intimacy in African history to be published in a peer-reviewed journal.

The colonial situation was characterized by an intimacy of the historical actors, creating relations of a complex and conflicting nature. Often, such relations were characterized by violence. As Ann Laura Stoler succinctly put it, they were both 'tense and tender'¹ in nature. Intimacies in colonial settings have long since been a popular theme of study to scholars across various disciplines; in gender, feminist, post-colonial studies, and history, amongst others, and across geographical regions. Instead of referring to notions such as "closeness" or "proximity," the concept of "intimacy" encompasses a wide spectrum of relations. Whereas other notions often imply a spatial and geographical closeness, it refers to an emotional, social or intellectual closeness as well as a physical and bodily one—both in a sexual and a more general, spatial sense.² This allows for a much more nuanced analysis of the complexity of relations within colonial and post-colonial contexts.

More recent historical research on European colonialism and imperialism has extended the theme of intimacies beyond the "sexual" or the "domestic" on which it had gained most ground,³ to exploring intimacies across various

¹ Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post)Colonial Studies," *Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (2001): 829.

² On the concept of intimacy see: Lynn Jamieson, "Intimacy as Concept: Explaining Social Change in the Context of Globalisation or Another Form of Ethnocentrism?," *Sociological Research Online* 16, no. 4 (2011): 1, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/16/4/15.html>; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 9.

³ Most notably: Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*; also: Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

settings—from moral economies and labour relations, to emotional economies and cultural hybridities as well as economies of colonial knowledge.⁴ Perspectives of global history and entanglement have also gained prominence.⁵ These important contributions notwithstanding, the issue of violence has thus far hardly been systematically researched. As Penelope Edmonds and Amanda Nettelbeck found, we still understand very little about the ways in which intimacies were linked to violence⁶—and vice versa, as we would add. Moreover, most existing works focus on the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised at the expense of intimacies between indigenous people themselves. Unsurprisingly, Africanist historians have explored the latter in greater detail, most notably in literature on domestic and sexual violence as well as the household.⁷ However, it seems as if there is still much to be done on intimacy and violence in Africanist historiography as well. Existing research centres the analysis on the household through the lens of master-servant relations, thereby sidelining intimacies between Africans. With but a few exceptions, the literature also omits periods of transition to self-rule and its aftermath. Not least, historians of Africa too have directed little attention towards exploring violence in the context of intimacy systematically.

The authors' workshop seeks to address these gaps and strives to bring these strands of historiography into dialogue. We want to discuss the relation between intimacy and violence in colonial settings, periods of transition to

⁴ See for example: Penelope Edmonds and Amanda Nettelbeck, "Precarious Intimacies: Cross-Cultural Violence and Proximity in Settler Colonial Economies of the Pacific Rim," in *Intimacies of Violence in the Settler Colony: Economies of Dispossession Around the Pacific Rim*, ed. Penelope Edmonds and Amanda Nettelbeck (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

⁵ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette M. Burton, ed., *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Ulrike Lindner and Dörte Lerp, "Introduction: Gendered Imperial Formations," in *New Perspectives on the History of Gender and Empire: Comparative and Global Approaches*, ed. Ulrike Lindner and Dörte Lerp (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

⁶ Edmonds and Nettelbeck, "Precarious Intimacies," 1. They particularly speak of forms of colonial violence, but we stress that this holds true for other forms and contexts as well.

⁷ See for instance: Elizabeth Thornberry, "Sex, Violence, and the Family in South Africa's Eastern Cape," in *Domestic Violence and the Law in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, ed. Emily S. Burril, Richard L. Roberts, and Elizabeth Thornberry (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 117–137; Prinisha Badassy, "'...And My Blood Became Hot!' Crimes of Passion, Crimes of Reason: An Analysis of the Crimes of Murder and Physical Assault Against Masters and Mistresses by Their Indian Domestic Servants, Natal 1880-1920," *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 23, no. 1 (2005): 73–106; Wayne Dooling, "Reconstructing the Household: The Northern Cape Colony Before and After the South African War," *Journal of African History* 50, no. 3 (2009): 399–416.

post-colonial independence and its aftermath. How did violence (re)shape intimate relations? And in what ways did the latter in turn influence the ways in which violence was used, understood, represented or legitimized? What role did wider contexts and structures play in forming and altering violent intimacies, e.g. different spatial settings, socio-political contexts or forms of colonial rule, particularly settler colonialism? Moreover, we would like to engage critically with the concept of “intimacy” Is it useful for analysing the often complex and ambiguous colonial and post-colonial settings we encounter in our research? Or should we rather stick to other terms and concepts, as “intimacy” seems to qualify the relations we study as somewhat affectionate from the outset? Perhaps such relations can best be studied through a spatial approach, namely by looking at spaces or scapes of violence?

We welcome papers which focus on specific sites of intimacy and violence including, but not limited to, households and families, plantations and farms, schools, military or police camps, and touch upon aspects such as race, class, gender, masculinity, patriarchy, training, education, labour relations, discourses and ideas, nationalism, state-making and/or rule. Contributions can also engage more closely with certain intimate relations, for example between master and servant, husband and wife, teacher and student, or officer and soldier—or specific forms of violence, be they physical or structural. We are particularly interested in contributions that present local case studies of intimacy and violence and implement a global perspective. Moreover, we especially encourage the submission of papers focusing on intimate violence between and among indigenous people. While the workshop’s focus is set on Africa, papers on other world regions in (post-)colonial settings are also welcome.

The workshop is specifically designed as an authors’ workshop with the aim to compile a special issue to be submitted to an Africanist or Global History journal. We invite researchers to submit a full paper or an extensive proposal of at least three pages based on original research. The workshop itself will be dedicated to discussing each others’ papers and defining common themes. Researchers from institutions in Africa are particularly encouraged to apply.

The costs for travel and accommodation will be covered on the understanding that participants agree with the scope, purpose and timeline of the workshop.

Please send your paper or proposal (three pages minimum) no later than **1 March 2020** to Brian Ngwenya (b.ngwenya@unibas.ch) and Kai Herzog (kai.herzog@unibas.ch). Selected contributors are asked to submit their full paper by **4 May 2020**.

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