

Working Group:

“Territoriality and Cartographic Knowledge”

Our project *Cartographies of Africa and Asia (1800–1945). A Project for the Digitization of Maps of the Perthes Collection Gotha (KarAfAs)* is a co-authored endeavour of the Gotha Centre for Transcultural Studies and the Perthes Collection of the Gotha Research Library, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Its main goal is securing the digital availability of the maps of Africa and Asia in the Perthes Collection for the international scientific community, as well as communicating the historical contexts of assorted maps and showing possible entry routes to the cartographical objects to researchers worldwide. Thereby we intend to inspire future projects, which see questions of territoriality and spatiality in a fresh light, combining the facilitated access to source material held at the Perthes Collection to escape well-trodden paths of eurocentric interpretations.

The project follows in the footsteps of the predecessor ETHIOMAP (Wolbert Smidt, Éloi Ficquet, Iris Schröder »Cartographic Sources and Territorial Transformations in the Horn of Africa since the Late 18th Century« / DFG), which broadened cooperative networks of European scholars and established new cooperations with Ethiopian research partners, too. This resulted in the steady presence of scholars from Ethiopia at the Centre of Transcultural Studies until this day. The concept of decentralising European perspectives is furthered also by our deep involvement with the several fellowship programs at the Gotha Research Campus, which bring junior and senior scholars from globally diverse locations to Thuringia to interact with the Perthes collection. The singularity of the collection as an institution which preserves the original state of a 19th-century publishing house for cartographic material in continental Europe is exceptional; its holdings are, despite this, still largely underexplored.

KarAfAs has already left its mark and involved many international and national scholars; some of them actively supporting its inauguration in the first place (Ines Eben v. Racknitz, Leipzig/Nanjing; Éloi Ficquet/ Paris; Ute Schneider, Essen; Wolbert Smidt, Jena/Mekelle). Others have already published texts for the project’s blog *Mapping Africa and Asia* (Mimi Cheng, Rochester, NY; Phillip Meyer, Leipzig; Frances O’Morchoe, Dhaka). These cooperations involve established as well as early-career researchers. Academic exchange happened over a coffee, in panel discussions and during shared research meetings (Mirela Altić, Zagreb; Zegeye Woldemariam Ambo, Mekelle/Gotha; Aychegrew Hadera, Bahir Dar; Admasu Abebe Haile, Addis Ababa/Gotha; Samuel Kidane, Mekelle/Gotha; Rouven Kunstmann, Erfurt/Gotha; Felix Schürmann, Hamburg; Beatriz Véliz Argueta, Philadelphia/Gotha; Stephanie Zehnle, Kiel). In this productive atmosphere, already lots of exciting insights into the challenges of researching cartographic material and their implications for conceptions of territoriality have been gained. This discussion is to be continued and steadied in a working group, discussing texts and possible research avenues for Territoriality and Cartographic Knowledge, focussing on, but not restricted to, the holdings of the Perthes Collection in Gotha.

**UNIVERSITÄT
ERFURT**

Forschungskolleg
Transkulturelle Studien

Claudia Berger

Kontakt

Universität Erfurt
Forschungskolleg Transkulturelle
Studien/Sammlung Perthes
Schlossplatz 1
99867 Gotha

claudia.berger@uni-erfurt.de
0361 737 1605

**Projekt »Kartographien Afrikas
und Asiens (1800-1945). Ein Digitalisierungsprojekt zur Sammlung Perthes Gotha«**

<https://www.uni-erfurt.de/forschungskolleg-transkulturelle-studien/forschung/forschungsprojekte/drittmittelprojekte-und-verbundvorhaben/karafas>

<https://karafas.hypotheses.org>

Datum

09.05.2022

GEFÖRDERT VOM



**Bundesministerium
für Bildung
und Forschung**

1. Approach and Research Questions

Despite the focus of the digitization project on maps of Africa and Asia, we are opening the working group also for scholars on Middle and South America, where questions of Territoriality, Spatiality and Boundary Making have been constantly engaged by researchers of diverse research fields. Cartography as a visual medium inspires research from a variety of academic disciplines, which explore the intricacies of the genre through their specific methodical lenses. Interdisciplinary debate is therefore helpful to fully grasp the potential of cartography in the explanation of the construction and usage of territoriality/territorialities, its extension and contestation.

1.1 Cartography as a Set of Socio-Political Practices

Since its inception, Critical Cartography has encouraged researchers to move away from positivist narratives of cartography as the continuous perfection of mapping techniques and the rationalisation of territory. Cartography and Mapping are embedded in power structures; their positionality is derived from their various authors, their historical contexts and the addressed audience. Values and political reasoning are, consciously or accidentally, interwoven in the design process, which is as much structured by innovation as by convention, Zeitgeist and circumstantial factors.

1.2 Multiplicities of Territoriality

In his proposition of an “Age of Territoriality” for the late 19th to the late 20th century, Charles Maier based his thesis with presumably global reach mostly on so-called Western concepts. Alternative concepts of territoriality are mentioned in passing only. He concludes: “Living with a frontier and within a frontier has tended to carry the day” (Maier 2016:6). While Western concepts of territoriality left an undeniably substantial mark in many world regions, we explicitly research the multiplicities of territorialities: How do diverging understandings and enforcements of territoriality interact and/or interfere with each other locally or on a global scale? We thereby acknowledge that territorialities can be layered and overlapping. Even or especially concepts which are officially neglected can still exercise formative power for one or more groups of actors.

2. Aims of the Working Group

- Establishing a platform for discussion and a closely-knit working group of researchers of territoriality and historical cartography
- Supporting research initiatives on territoriality and historical cartography by members (application for new projects; the organisation of workshops and lectures)
- Evaluating the potentials of the Perthes Collection for research on territoriality and historical cartography
- Enhancing the visibility of research on territoriality and historical cartography at the Gotha Centre for Transcultural Studies

3. Mode of Operation

The working group is intended to facilitate discussions that will benefit the respective researchers' own research and enable joint projects between members. For this purpose, the focus can be on substantive understanding as well as on practical questions, such as processing a project application.