

FORSCHUNGSKOLLOQUIUM

Mittwoch, 24.5.2017, 10:00-11:30 h, Institut für Afrikanistik und Ägyptologie, Raum I

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Remembering a colonial language: The case of Bangala in West Nile, Uganda

Bangala language was introduced by Belgian colonial authorities during the time of the occupation of the Lado Enclave between 1894 and 1910 (today's border area of South Sudan, DR Congo and Uganda), mainly as a lingua franca among colonial agents, soldiers, and missionaries in their interaction with civilians. The present talk summarizes the findings of a first short research trip to Arua, West Nile (Uganda) in March 2017, where I worked with Bangala speakers who are today in their late 70s and 80s, and who still speak the language in church, during get-togethers and when they remember their troubled past. In Uganda, Bangala has turned into a linguistic practice that is often associated with pain, memories of colonial atrocities, migration and escape routes that forcefully led the speakers from Belgian Congo to Sudan and then to Uganda. But the use of Bangala also seems to evoke a specific form of colonial nostalgia, is still seen as a language of prayer and deep emotions and as a vanishing language practice which is no longer acquired by younger speakers, who instead tend to learn Lingala, Swahili, or nowadays Luganda. My talk on Bangala, the language of old people in Arua, is intended to result in an open discussion, where methodology, focus and aim of an envisaged research project could be critically discussed with the audience. The talk touches both upon structural issues related to Bangala (in comparison to old colonial language manuals) as well as on sociolinguistic/postcolonial perspectives.

