Pressemitteilung

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Svenja Ronge
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Wissenschaftliche Tagungen
Geschichte / Archäologie, Gesellschaft, Kulturwissenschaften, Philosophie / Ethik, Sprache / Literatur
überregional

How language defines dependency relationships

How do asymmetrical dependencies and slavery manifest in language, narratives and lexical fields? Scholars of the Cluster of Excellence "Beyond Slavery and Freedom" at the University of Bonn worked intensively on this question in their first thematic year, which will culminate with a discussion of their research on October 1 and 2 at the annual international conference of the Cluster of Excellence. Due to the corona pandemic, the papers will be delivered digitally.

Over the past research year, the researchers at Bonn focused intensively on how asymmetrical dependencies are represented in linguistic contexts. With "asymmetrical dependencies", the Cluster has devised a new key concept for research into slavery and dependency, which includes not only slavery but also other constellations such as debt bondage, convict labor and exploitative forms of wage labor. In their conference contributions, the researchers will rethink and question key concepts, terminologies and categories that structure how we conceptualize and talk about asymmetrical dependencies and slavery. The research area "Semantics - Lexical Fields - Narratives" intends to establish a new analysis of language with this approach.

The declared aim is the exploration of semantics, narrative patterns and discursive structures. This will include an evaluation of how historical actors spoke about asymmetrical dependencies across a variety of situations. By employing historical semantics, scholars can gain insights about the use of certain terminologies. At the same time, historical semantics encourages us to question the vocabulary we use today to analyze dependency structures. Defining slavery is challenging, because it has existed for several thousand years, has spread worldwide and has taken on different forms.

The conference is divided into seven thematic blocks covering a wide range of epochs and regions. For instance, researchers take a look at the Middle East and Arabic languages, or even ancient Rome. Women’s voices recounting stories about slavery will also be analyzed.

The conference is aimed at an international, interdisciplinary audience from the word of academia as well as the interested general public. The lectures will be held in English digitally via Zoom. Registrations are possible until September 25, 2020 at https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/events/registration-annual-conference.

About the Cluster of Excellence:

"Asymmetrical dependency" - with this new key concept, the Cluster "Beyond Slavery and Freedom" wants to establish a new approach to research on slavery and dependency. The discourse so far has been shaped by slavery in the Americas.
or in classical antiquity. With its research contributions, the Cluster is leaving this path and expanding the perspective in terms of content, space and time. After all, forms of servitude and forced labor do not necessarily have to be associated with the catchword slavery. "Asymmetrical dependency", on the other hand, includes various forms of human exploitation, such as forced labor, debt bondage or servitude. The focus will be on one research area per year until 2025.

wissenschaftliche Ansprechpartner:
Media contact:

Silvia Oster
Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies
Tel.: +49 (0)228/73-62477
E-mail: pr@dependency.uni-bonn.de


Conference program