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The Pre-Death Bequest of Gerd Spittler

Summary

This project is about the research material of Gerd Spittler collected in West Africa from 1967 onwards. It is not a project outlining a research programme, but a project dedicated to completed research. It is not limited to the Research Section Learning, but concerns the whole Cluster. The material includes texts (field notes, excerpts and copies from African archives) video material (6,000 photos), and audio material in Hausa and Tamacheck (tapes and cassettes).

Most photos are digitised. The texts and the audiomaterial will now be digitised (collections@UBT). The originals will be stored in the University archive. The material should become part not only of a German, but also of an African archive. This undertaking involves the IRSH research institute in Niamey (Niger) and a museum in Timia (Agadez region).

Key Questions

This is a pioneering project for the Cluster and for African Studies in Bayreuth. In it, the following questions are scrutinized: What should be done with the research materials of scholars? After publication, should they be disposed of and forgotten? Which materials deserve to be preserved? Should they be digitised? What happens to the analogue inventory? Where and how should they be stored? How can the research material be made available to African scholars?

Methods and Concepts

The research material consists of text video and audio material.

Text material:

- Field notes of research in Niger and Nigeria from 1967 onwards.
- Excerpts and copies from colonial archives in Niger

These texts will be digitised and stored in collections@UBT. The original analogue inventory will be stored in the University archive. The excerpts and copies from the colonial archives of the former Chef-lieux de cercle and Postes Administratives are largely material that is no longer available in the original.

Video material:

The video material consists of about 6,000 photos taken between 1967 and 2006 in Hausa und Tuareg Regions in Niger and Nigeria. They are digitised in collections@UBT. The original analogue inventory will be stored in the University archive.

A book comprising 300 photos was published in 2023 (Gerd Spittler, *Leben mit wenigen Dingen*. 2023)

Audio material:

The audio material (tapes and cassettes) are recordings in Hausa and Tamacheck most of them concerning the pre- and early colonial period. This will be digitised in collections@UBT. The original analogue material will be stored in the University archive. A special temporal depth is achieved by the fact that interviews could be conducted with old people among the Hausa in Gobir who had still personally experienced the pre-colonial period before 1900. These oral testimonies can be confronted with written archival material.

The material should not only become part of a European archive, but also of African archives. The main focus is on archives in Niger, where most of the research material was collected: IRSH (Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines, University of Niamey Niger) and the community of Timia (Agadez region) which is planning to build a museum on the history and culture of the region. The extent to which and the form in which Spittlers research material should be included will be discussed with leaders of the community.



Kasso, born in Gobir in 1890, reports on power relations in pre-colonial Gobir and the coming of the French. (Photo: Spittler, 1968)



Khadjita, born in Timia in 1905, talks about political and climatic events of her youth (Photo: Spittler, 1984)

PROJECT TEAM



PROF. EM. DR. GERD SPITTLER
FORMER CHAIR OF ETHNOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF BAYREUTH

Contribution or Relation to the Cluster's Aims & Goals

The Cluster, as well as the earlier activities of Bayreuth's African research, such as the two SFBs (Sonderforschungsbereich), were and are primarily research-oriented. However, there has been little awareness of archiving research material. An exception within the Cluster is the Digital Research Management. In the Cluster, a process of reflection should be set in motion that goes beyond digitisation and discusses what role analogue and digital archival material should play, what their relationship is, how they are stored, cared for and made accessible.

The general aim of this project is to initiate this process of reflection.



*Guzzel shows and explains the finesses of goatherding.
(Photo: Spittler, 1985)*



*Alhaji Salikhu, limam of Timia, explains the Risala to listeners among them Gerd Spittler
(Photo: Spittler, 1984)*



*Old acacia albida tree on which the mission voulet-Chanoine hung 27 inhabitants of Tibiri in 1899.
(Photo: Spittler, 1968)*

Further Links / Key References

www.collections-uni-bayreuth.de/pool/collection-gerd-spittler

Gerd Spittler Leben mit wenigen Dingen. Der Umgang der Kel Ewey mit ihren Requisiten. Tübingen: Mohr und Siebeck 2023.