03.06.

**18:15–19:45 Uhr P 5** (Philosophicum)



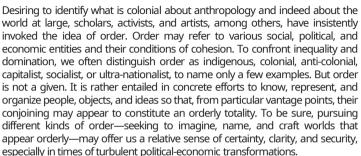
Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien

2025

## George Paul Meiu

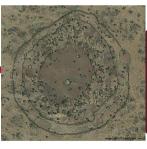
**University of Basel** 

## The Fetish of Order: Anthropology, Colonialism, Mess



Because anthropologists have played a central role in articulating and circulating ideas and imaginaries of indigenous order in settings of colonial modernity, scholars now ask: Are these anthropological depictions of order expressions of colonial frameworks of rule? Or are they liberal critiques of such frameworks, informed by indigenous worldviews? This paper explores a few moments in which, in northern Kenya, past and present, indigenous people, anthropologists, colonial administrators, post-independence elites, and development workers, among others, have sought to pin down indigenous order, whether as customary integrative mechanism, a domain of biopolitics, a locus of cultural alterity, or a commodity brand. New questions thus need to be addressed: What happens when different pursuits of order intersect in particular (post)colonial contexts? When and why is order a necessary condition for imagining different individual and collective futures? And where could, in this case, social and political critique begin?

**George Paul Meiu** is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Basel. He is author of *Ethno-erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money, and Belonging in Kenya* (University of Chicago Press, 2017) and *Queer Objects to the Rescue: Intimacy and Citizenship in Kenya* (University of Chicago, 2023). He is also host of the video podcast 'Ethnographic Imagination Basel.'



Satellite image of ritual settlement, Samburu District, Kenya, 2012, Google.

