

Call for Papers for the next issue of the *Interculture Journal*

**Photography and (Post-)Coloniality: Visual Representations of Colonial Encounters in Intercultural Perspective**

*Interculture Journal: online journal for intercultural studies* is looking for contributions in German, English or French, for issue 02/2026 on the topic of **Photography and (Post-)Coloniality: Visual Representations of Colonial Encounters in Intercultural Perspective**. This special issue explores the role of photography as a central medium of (post-)coloniality and welcomes contributions examining visual representations of colonial encounters from an intercultural perspective. Contributions may examine both historical and contemporary photographic practices to locate the medium of photography in (post)colonial and intercultural discourse. The bracketed prefix “(post-)” indicates that the colonial as an ongoing historical power structure is not always obvious, but is always present and must be deconstructed to achieve the decolonization of society and culture. This thematic issue explores the intersection of photography, (post)coloniality and interculturality offering a research perspective that has not yet been adequately examined and aligning with current German and international discussions about the insufficiently addressed cultural “legacy” of colonialism.

The invention of photography in the early 19th century occurred during a period of great dynamics in the colonial project of the European powers. Colonial expansion utilized the still young medium of photography for political, power-political and legitimizing purposes. The sciences, particularly anthropology, ethnology, natural history and geography, were also involved in the project of reorganizing and mapping the world, which produced a rich repertoire of images of the foreign and the other during the 19th century. As Eleanor Hight and Gary Sampson (2004: 1) have pointed out, colonial photographs consolidated certain stereotypes and the idea of the inferiority of colonized peoples and their homelands in the minds of Europeans. Elizabeth Edwards demonstrated that colonial photography’s primary role was to “create visual witnesses for scientific observations and to produce taxonomies” (2003: 337). Photographs from the colonial era are among the controversial objects and images that have recently been debated publicly regarding how to handle colonial “heritage”. In ethnological museums and ethnological

collections, photographs are now widely recognized as cultural assets whose function extends beyond the purely documentary. In addition to material cultural assets and human remains, photographs have increasingly come into focus when it comes to handling artifacts and objects from colonial contexts, partly due to the fact that these photographs were taken under duress and violence. For instance, the German Museums Association's guidelines for handling colonial collections describe photographs as “culturally and historically sensitive cultural assets” with regard to potential claims by the societies of origin. The same guide also refers to the photographs' potential to “overcome Eurocentric ways of thinking and emphasize the reciprocity in historical developments” (2021: 26).

Most of the photographs kept in museums and archives were used for colonial propaganda, e.g. through their public dissemination, for example as postcards. These images reflect the shared history of colonized and colonizing peoples as well as the diverse interdependencies that persist to this day and are considered part of their shared heritage. However, disseminating these images is often controversial, depending on whether they are in the space of the colonized or in the colonizers' space (Kokou Azamede, 2016). To facilitate intercultural dialog on this topic, it is important to consider the socio-cultural and historical dimension of each image. As Sergej Seitz, Anke Graneß and Georg Stenger point out, photography is undoubtedly a fundamental intercultural phenomenon because human communities and cultures always have certain forms and practices of pictorial representation that can also be read as expressions of their respective world and self-perceptions (2018: 8). Photographs from colonial contexts are visual records not only of cultural contacts and encounters or of the power dynamics of colonialism; they also show traces of complex inter- and transcultural entanglements. According to Gesine Krüger, colonial image collections can be considered as palimpsests “because many meanings, readings and uses are superimposed and layered in them and do not simply replace each other” (2013: 8). Interest in colonial photography as a historical, multi-layered source underscores the need for critical examination and reappraisal. *Visual culture studies* approaches (Nicholas Mirzoeff, 1999) criticize the images, the associated social image practices and their interweaving with postcolonial and power-political aspects (Marius Rimmele, Klaus Sachs-Hombach and Bernd Stiegler, 2014: 10). Colonial forms of

representation can thus be understood as “hybrids” that incorporate interpretative contexts of different cultural practices (Jens Jäger, 2009: 178).

Drawing from colonial image sources, the planned special issue will demonstrate that, beyond their entanglement with colonialism’s brutal desire to conquer, military subjugation and the exploitation of natural resources, these sources also have the potential of processes of cultural appropriation of ways of life and self-perceptions, thereby contributing to intercultural identity constructions in the colonies.

This perspective raises the following topics and questions, among others:

- Colonial image politics and photographic representations of intercultural encounters
- The potentials and challenges of using colonial photographs as evidence of intercultural entanglements and negotiation processes
- The potential of decolonial perspectives for the repositioning of colonial image collections
- Creative forms of reception and appropriation of colonial image collections and image worlds by contemporary artists and activists
- Museum presentation practices and curatorial strategies regarding colonial image collections and decolonial debates

We invite researchers from various disciplines, including history, cultural and visual studies, postcolonial studies, anthropology and intercultural communication research, to propose contributions on this topic, in particular

- historical and contemporary case studies on the photographic representation of intercultural encounters;
- conceptual and empirical contributions on the significance of photography in colonial and post-colonial contexts;
- restitution and digital recontextualization of colonial photographs;
- decolonial perspectives on historical archives and collections;
- resistant and alternative readings of colonial photographs;
- postcolonial artistic, activist and curatorial engagements with colonial photographs.

Scholars interested in this call are invited to submit proposals for contributions. Abstracts (max. 500 words) and a short biography (max. 150 words) should be submitted by **August 30, 2025** by email to the editors ([nkoudavalentin@gmail.com](mailto:nkoudavalentin@gmail.com) / [christoph.vatter@uni-jena.de](mailto:christoph.vatter@uni-jena.de)). Full articles are expected by January 10, 2026. We look forward to your contribution!

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