

Namibian and Southern African Studies

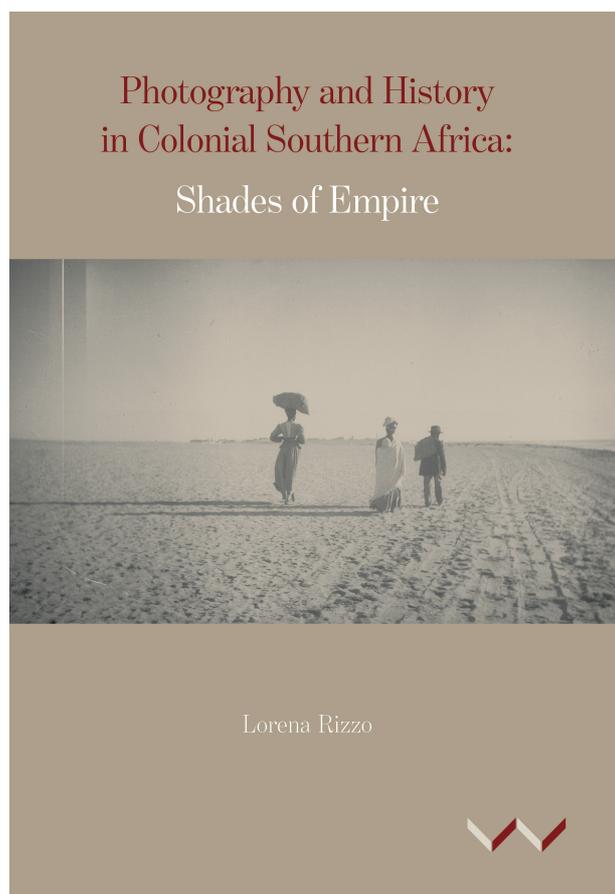
Wednesday 18 March 2020 18:15-20:00

Lorena Rizzo

(Center for African Studies Basel)

Book Launch: *Photography and History in Colonial Southern Africa: Shades of Empire* (Routledge/Wits University Press) - **Introduced by Prof. Jean Comaroff**

Venue: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, Klosterberg 23, 4051 Basel
After the launch we invite you for an **Apéro**



The Namibian & Southern African Research Colloquium, jointly organised by the Centre for African Studies of the University of Basel and the Basler Afrika Bibliographien, aims at creating a forum for local and international scholars to engage in cross-disciplinary and methodological debates in Southern African Studies.

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Lorena Rizzo is a senior lecturer and the co-chair of the Centre for African Studies at the University of Basel. She is a historian of Namibia and South Africa, with a special interest in gender and visual history. She was a visiting fellow at the Department for African American and African Studies at the University of Michigan in 2010/11, an affiliated scholar in the Center for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape in 2012/13, and the Oppenheimer Fellow at the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University in 2016/17. Among her publications are *Gender & Colonialism. A History of Kaoko in north-western Namibia, 1870s-1950*, (2012); 'Visual Genders - Identification photographs, respectability and personhood in colonial Southern Africa in the 1920s and 1930s', *Gender & History*, 26, 3, 2014: 688-708; and 'Policing the image: the Breakwater prison albums, 1880s-1900s', *Social History*, 41, 3, 2016: 285-303.

Jean Comaroff is the Alfred North Whitehead Professor of African and African American Studies and of Anthropology, and an Oppenheimer Fellow in African Studies. From 1978-2012 she was a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago, and Director of the Chicago Center for Contemporary Theory. Her research, primarily conducted in southern Africa, has centered on processes of social and cultural transformation – the making and unmaking of colonial society, the nature of the postcolony, and the late modern world viewed from the Global South. Her writing has covered a range of topics, from religion, medicine and body politics to state formation, crime, democracy and difference. Her publications include *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: the Culture and History of a South African People* (1985); "*Beyond the Politics of Bare Life: AIDS and the Global Order*" (2007); and, with John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (vols. I [1991] and II [1997]).

In this book, Lorena Rizzo elucidates the relationship between photography and history in colonial Southern Africa in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th century. She considers private and public archives, images produced by African itinerant photographers, white settlers, and colonial state institutions from Namibia and South Africa. Readers encounter photographs that range from prison albums from late 19th century Cape Town; police photographs from German Southwest Africa (Namibia) in the early 20th century; studio portraits commissioned by African women and men who applied for identity documents, travel permits and passports in the 1920s and 1930s; visual studies of whiteness and blackness authored by settler photographers; and South African *dompas* photographs from the 1950s and 1960s; to African women collections assembled in the locations of Windhoek and Usakos in central Namibia, and aerial photography in the Eastern Cape in the mid-20th century.

The examination of this rich corpus of historical photographs highlights the ways in which photographic images cut across conventional institutional boundaries and complicate rigid distinctions between the private and the public, the political and the aesthetic, the colonial and the vernacular, or the subject and the object. Rizzo argues that rather than understanding photographs primarily as a means of preserving and recreating the past in the present, we can also value them for how they evoke at once the need for and the limits of historical reconstruction