

The Script of Empire - Interiors of Bureaucracy and the Materiality of Colonial Power

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This paper explores the place of visuality in the context of self-representation of the colonial state in southern Africa. The discussion of photographs from Namibia produced during the German and the South African colonial period aims understanding the ways in which bureaucratic sites and spaces were visually constructed and enforced. The paper investigates these bureaucratic locations in order to reflect on the visual representation of power and on notions of class, race and gender informing the social relations within institutions and bodies of the colonial state. While with increasing state constitution agency in Namibia's colonial bureaucracy was powerfully claimed by members of the German and later the South African settler society, some Africans managed to enter these spaces as clerks, teachers, policemen and translators. Still, their presence remained contested and the structural disfavoring of Africans as employees of the colonial state is reflected by their marginality in the visual field.