



human development in landscapes
GRADUATE SCHOOL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KIEL

BIWEEKLY COLLOQUIUM
Monday, 17th of October 17.00

ETHNOARCHAEOLOGY, POTTERS, AND CASTE IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA

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Caste societies present in Africa have an imposing affect on an individual's marriage relations, status, occupation, settlement patterns, ritual purity, diet, and burial placement. Ethiopia contains at least one craft-based caste group in virtually every Cushitic, Omotic, and Semitic speaking society. However in Ethiopia, there has been little research on how caste influences the material culture and settlement patterns of different segments of the population, such as potters and other low caste members. The Gamo of southwestern Ethiopia offer a unique context to study a present-day African society, which has a strict caste system. The Gamo exhibit characteristics associated with the caste systems described in South Asia and other parts of Africa. They organize themselves into endogamous caste strata according to occupation and patrilineal descent, and each caste group is associated with different levels of prestige, purity/pollution and power. This paper will outline my ethnoarchaeological research over the last 15 years among the Gamo peoples of southern Ethiopia. Lastly, I will discuss our present research that includes a dialogue between oral tradition, ethnoarchaeology, and archaeology to reveal the origin, location, and organization of historical settlements in the region and have found evidence of households belonging to different caste groups.

Venue: Lecture Hall (Klaus-Murmann-Hörsaal), Leibnizstraße 1, CAU Kiel