

Wednesday Seminars

LECTURE SERIES IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

22.10.2025 | 5 p.m. | @ Übungsraum IKSA | NIG, 4th floor

Humphrey Asamoah Agyekum (University of Copenhagen) *Internal Security Operations and Illegal Gold Mining in Ghana: Operations Vanguard and Halt II*



Humphrey Asamoah Agyekum is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for Global Criminology, Department of Anthropology (University of Copenhagen, DK). He currently works on a project on illegal mining in Ghana, and was previously the postdoctoral researcher on the *Analyzing Maritime (In)Security in Ghana* (AMARIS) project. He is the author of *From Bullies to Officers and Gentlemen: How Notions of Professionalism and Civility Transformed the Ghana Armed Forces* (2019, Berghahn). As a trained Africanist and anthropologist, he has conducted long-term fieldwork in both Africa and Europe, and his scientific output has appeared in leading academic journals.

In this presentation, I present data from my fieldwork on Ghana's military response to illegal gold mining, locally known as *galamsey* (bastardization of gather and sell). Gold mining is an important preoccupation in Ghana. In recent years, *galamsey* has been at the frontline of state intervention due to its environmental consequences. In the southern and central parts of the country, where illegal mining is most prevalent, the landscape is scattered with craters and piles of excavated soil, but also polluted waterbodies. This environmental damage, and especially images of polluted waterbodies, triggered a public outcry and fears around future access to clean water. The securitization of environmental damage served as a platform for the state to launch its militarized response, specifically by declaring *galamsey* a national security threat. In this talk, I examine the government's choice for a militarized response from Ghanaian soldiers' perspective on internal security operations Vanguard and Halt II. I discuss internal debates around this choice within the Ghana Armed Forces, the implications for civil military relations, and finally, potential abuses and unintended consequences of these internal security operations.



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