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What Is a Text?

Karin Barber, University of Birmingham
19 September 2018, 3-5 pm
Hörsal D7 (Södra husen)

Inaugural lecture of the "World Literatures and the Culture of Texts" theme, in collaboration with the research programme "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular Dynamics in World Literatures".

Creativity with words is found in all cultures. And in all cultures, this creativity can be employed in the constitution of texts - forms of words that are woven together in such a way as to attract attention, elicit response and invite remembering and re-creation across time and space. Texts in this sense exist as

much in oral forms as they do in writing; and in many parts of the world, there have been long histories of cohabitation and interaction between oral, manuscript and print modes. Drawing on examples from Africa, South Asia and the Middle East, I will explore the porousness of the boundaries between texts in these different modes of realisation, and suggest that some of the key features of text-constitution that this exploration brings to light may raise questions for modern Europe-focused literary theory.