

Soutenance de mémoire de MA en sciences sociales- *pilier anthropologie* - de

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***Order, order!***

***How authority and power imbalances shape the judicial process in a Zambian local court***

**Mardi 17 décembre 2019 à 10h30**

Institut d'ethnologie  
Saint-Nicolas 4 – 2000 Neuchâtel

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**Résumé :**

Local courts are the customary law courts of the Zambian judiciary. They are widespread in the country and cater for a large part of the population, especially in rural areas, making them the State courts that deal with the highest number of cases.

While contemporary studies on customary law courts widely focus on normative and legal issues, this ethnographical thesis looks at the judicial process from a political and legal anthropological perspective. I ask how power imbalances and negotiations of authority between court workers, parties and members of the audience inform the logics of legitimation that underly the judicial process of a Zambian local court.

On the basis of five months of ethnographical fieldwork, I will discuss the roles of each category of court workers, questioning their structural authority, the staging and the ways they performed it in the courtroom. This will lead me to highlight the formal and explicit, but also the informal and implicit logics the court workers used to guide their work. I argue that these can be framed as procedural, functional, ritual and personal.