

ISA INTERNATIONAL GUEST LECTURE

## LIVING BY THE SEA: THE POLITICAL HISTORY AND MARINE ECONOMY OF MINICOY (SOUTH LAKSHADWEEP)

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Minicoy, locally called Maliku, is the southernmost island of the Lakshadweep archipelago, but is culturally and historically linked to the Maldives. The population are Muslims and follow matrilineal and matrilineal kinship rules. Most men work internationally as seamen, or - after an early retirement from commercial seafaring - locally as fishermen. They maintain a high reputation in their economic field and never complain about under-employment. A decisive aspect of their economic success, I would suggest, is the seaman's ethos. Sailing and fishing appear as the privileged (or even only) way for a young man to come up in life. In songs, proverbs and narratives the ocean appears as a male arena, a space of (or for) working, longing, competition, and (formerly) decapitation. Trade goods, fish and cash all come from the ocean. In the seaman's perception, there is no dichotomy of land and sea, but rather a continuum of village, coconut plantation, lagoon, atoll and open sea.



**Frank Heidemann** is professor for social and cultural anthropology at the University of Munich. His research interests include politics, religion, indigeneity, social aesthetics, visual anthropology and the history of anthropology. Most of his fieldwork was based in South India and Sri Lanka, especially in the Nilgiri Hills, on the Andaman Islands, and more recently on the Lakshadweeps. After his habilitation on politics and religion of the Badaga people (*Akka bakka*, 2006, Berlin, Lit) he authored an introduction to *Ethnology* (2013, in German, utb, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht), and co-edited „Manifestations of History. Time, Space and Community in the Andaman Islands“ (with P. Zehmisch, Primus 2016), „The Bison and Its Horn. Indigeneity, Performance and the State in South Asia“ (with R. Wolf, *Asian Ethnology*, 2014) and „The Modern Anthropology of India“ (with P. Berger, Routledge, 2013). On social aesthetics, atmosphere, proximity, and social proprioception he published in *Aesthetics* 23(1):49-67 (2013) and in A. Grieser's and J. Johnston's *Aesthetics of Religion* (De Gruyter, 2017). In spring 2019 he plans to continue his fieldwork in Minicoy.

