

FROM MANGA TO MANIFESTO: YOUTH CULTURE, PROTEST, AND THE GLOBAL CIRCULATIONS OF *ONE PIECE*

Asien-Afrika-Institut



1 Theme, 2 Days, 3 Departments

Research Workshop at the Asia-Africa-Institute of the University of Hamburg

Date: 26-27 March 2026

Location: Asia-Africa-Institute, Edmund Siemers-Alle 1, Hamburg, Germany

Organizers: Prof. Dr. Nora Derbal (Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies)
Prof. Dr. Kerstin Fooker (Japanese Studies)
Prof. Dr. Hewan Semon Marye (African Studies)

CALL FOR PAPERS

In 2025, the emblematic flag of the Japanese manga *ONE PIECE* has surfaced in youth-led protests from Nepal and Indonesia to Morocco and Madagascar, transforming a symbol of fictional pirate rebellion into a banner of real-world dissent. In this two-day interdisciplinary workshop scholars from Middle Eastern, Japanese and African studies explore together how popular culture travels across linguistic, cultural, and political boundaries to animate new forms of protest and solidarity among Generation Z.

We invite contributions that investigate the transnational lives of symbols, the appropriation of Japanese visual culture in African and Middle Eastern contexts, and the ways in which global media imaginaries shape local expressions of political agency. How does *ONE PIECE*'s narrative of freedom, friendship, and resistance against corrupt authority resonate with the lived experiences of young activists in postcolonial societies? What does the circulation of such symbols outside of the 'Western' imaginary reveal about the shifting landscapes of global cultural exchange, digital communication, and generational identity? And are there cases of protest centered in

Asia, Africa or the Middle East that operate outside (or resist being absorbed into) global capitalist frameworks?

Written and illustrated by the Japanese author Oda Eiichirō (b. 1975) and published since 1997, the modern pirate story *ONE PIECE* counts with more than 500 million copies in circulation worldwide as the best-selling manga series ever. By examining the *ONE PIECE* pirate flag with its characteristic straw hat as both a cultural artifact and a political signifier, the workshop seeks to map the intersections of popular culture, protest aesthetics, and transnational youth mobilization. We welcome papers from across the humanities and social sciences — including anthropology, cultural studies, political science, and regional studies — that contribute to understanding how Japanese pop culture (not limited to *ONE PIECE*) is reimagined in local acts of resistance.

Instructions:

Limited travel funding may be available for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and faculty from low-income countries and institutions. We aim to publish the revised papers as a special issue in a refereed journal.

Submissions: Individual proposals should include an **abstract** (300 words), email address, affiliation, and **short biography** of presenter(s). Please also indicate if you will need assistance with travel funding.

Email submissions to both Nora Derbal (nora.derbal@uni-hamburg.de) and Kerstin Fooker (kerstin.fooken@uni-hamburg.de).

Deadline for submission of proposals: December 1st, 2025

Notification of acceptance: December 15, 2025