Thursday 6 February 2025 at 2 p.m.
5nd floor, Seminar room of the Institute of Ethnology
Czech Academy of Sciences, Na Florenci 3, Praha

Arpan Roy, Ph.D

Leibniz–Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin

Relative Strangers:
Romani Kinship and Palestinian Difference

This talk will be a presentation of the recently published book Relative Strangers (University of Toronto Press, 2024). Examining how memory, intergenerational transmission, and kinship work together, *Relative Strangers* sheds light on Romani life in Palestine. Arpan Roy presents an ethnographic portrait of Dom Romani communities living between Palestine and Jordan, zooming in on everyday life in working-class neighborhoods, and under conditions of perpetual war and instability. The book focuses on how Doms are able to sustain ethnic difference through kinship, even when public performances of difference are no longer emphasized – a kind of alterity that is neither visible by obvious markers like race or religious difference, nor detected by the antennas of the state. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Amman, Roy makes a case for such alterity for Romani people and other groups in the region. Analysing intimate ethnographic scenes through anthropological theories of kinship, psychoanalysis, social theory from the Global South, and more, the book reveals how alterity in the Middle East does not adhere to rigid identitarian categories. Ultimately, *Relative Strangers* demonstrates the inadequacy of transposing models of pluralism centred on European and American experiences of minoritization onto other contexts.

Arpan Roy is a Marie Skfodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin. He is the co-editor of Naseej: Live-Weavings of Palestine (Pluto Press, 2025). He holds a PhD in Anthropology from Johns Hopkins University. His current research is on Christian missionary work in the Arab world.

Institute of Ethnology
Czech Academy of Sciences

FUNDED BY
GAČR
CZECH SCIENCE FOUNDATION

CASA
CZECH ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY