

MONETARY TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE EARLY COLONIAL GULF OF GUINEA, 1880s TO 1920s

Many African pre-colonial regions are characterised by their peripheralization as zones of production or unloading of different global currencies such as gold, glass beads, and cowries. In the precolonial period, for various reasons, state formations and slave markets were peculiarly absent in West Central Africa, broadly between the coast of Cameroon and Cape Lopez in Gabon. Here, like in many out of the way semi-imperial spaces, there was no gold or silver currencies nor even colonial government fiat currencies until well into the period of imperial consolidations from the 1920s onwards, no transactions with "money"; there were instead a multiplicity of items counting as money, highly monetized goods and not commodity or barter goods, and which were linked asymmetrically to global value chains through the use of virtual units of accounts such as the dollar and franc in negotiations with German and British merchants on the coast. I aim to provide a renewed appreciation of the long tradition of studying non-state issued monies in African history and their supposed decline and eclipse, but instead of glossing them as barter, traditional or "primitive" currencies, I outlining the intense shifts and instabilities that lead some currencies to be adopted and others discarded within cycles of commercial expansion and world-trade linked to particular commodity booms (in our case and period: ivory, and rubber and contract labour). To do this we must travel through concrete exchanges, their steps and components, but also provide a reappraisal of the perplexities and consistencies of bookkeeping, equivalence, and inflation and their rootedness in pre-colonial African economic practice without losing sight of the selectively enriching and broadly abrasive global political economies of exploitation in relation to African interdependencies with Asian and European commodity and money markets.

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Die Veranstaltung findet online über Zoom statt.
Bitte melden Sie sich für den Zoom-Zugang bei:
sekretariat.wsu@geschichte.uni-freiburg.de (Natascha Kindermann)



Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg

Historisches Seminar

Forschungskolloquium der Professur für Wirtschafts-, Sozial- und Umweltgeschichte (Prof. Dr. Melanie Arndt)

zusammen mit dem Lehrstuhl East Asian Studies (Prof. Dr. Sabine Dabringhaus) und der Professur für Neuere Geschichte der Universität Heidelberg (Prof. Dr. Stefanie Gänger)

