

## LECTURE

**Ute Rösenthaler**

### **From China to West Africa: Mediations and Translations along the Tea Trail**

*Tea was traded from China to Mali in West Africa across different geographical regions, political economies, cultural contexts, and religious affiliations. It was received by enthusiastic consumers, stern critics, and often assumed national importance, following its translation into local meanings and cultural practices.*

From the seventeenth century onwards, green tea was traded from China via Europe and Morocco to present-day Mali in West Africa, where it became the dominant drink—and not black tea or coffee. Along the tea trail, tea leaves, equipment, and ritualized preparation assumed complex and often contested meanings. Malians, for example, have enthusiastically embraced tea as their new national beverage since the 1990s, while also criticizing it as a cause of growing youth unemployment. Before tea assumed significance, however, it had to be translated into local understandings. This presentation explores how tea made its way into people's minds by examining the contact zones or intersections of tea learning along its pathways. It conceptualizes these intersections as cultural translations through which the trade good, together with its material and immaterial components, its consumption and interpretations, became key constituents of meaning in local cultural contexts.

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**Ute Rösenthaler** studied anthropology, journalism, and German literature at the Free University Berlin, where she also received her Ph.D. for a study on women's arts in Cameroon and Nigeria. She worked on art projects in Paris, at the Cluster of Excellence "The Formation of Normative Orders," and on the project "Africa's Asian Options" in Frankfurt. Her second book considers the history of cult associations in the Cross River region. She is currently an IFK\_Senior Fellow.

Selected publications: with Alessandro Jedlowski (eds.), *Mobility between Africa, Asia and Latin America: Economic Networks, Cultural Interaction and Aspirations of Success*, London 2017; with Mamadou Diawara (eds.), *Copyright Africa: How Intellectual Property, Media and Markets Transform Immaterial Cultural Goods*, Canon Pyon 2016; with Dorothea Schulz (eds.), *Cultural Entrepreneurship in Africa*, London 2016.

**November 6, 2019**  
**6.15 p.m.**  
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