

## Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies

### BIGSAS Colloquium in the Knowledge Lab of the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence

**Thursday, 02 February 2023, 16:30 – 18:00 (CET) / presented in S58 (RWI) & online via Zoom.**

<b>16:20</b>	<b>Opening of the virtual conference room</b>
<b>16:30 – 16:35</b>	<b>Opening address by the Dean of BIGSAS, Prof. Dr Andrea Behrends</b>
<b>16:35 – 17:15</b>	<p><b>Robin Frisch</b></p> <p><i>Social history of the Franc CFA. Currency struggles in Togo and Cameroon (1920-1994)</i></p> <p>Introduced by Prof. Dr Joël Glasman Discussant: Carla Coburger</p>
<b>17:15 – 17:55</b>	<p><b>Ngozi Edeagu</b></p> <p><i>Writing back to Empire: Newspapers, Non-Elites and Decolonisation in the Global Public Sphere, 1937-1957</i></p> <p>Introduced by Prof. Dr Joël Glasman Discussant: Prof. Dr Dmitri van den Bersselaar</p>

#### **Participation in Person:**

The Colloquium will take place in the Seminar Room S58 (RW I Building) on the campus.

#### **Participation via Zoom:**

<https://uni-bayreuth.zoom.us/j/68396130569?pwd=K250OG9IS3F3OXVrdUFBL2UzUIFSZz09>

Meeting ID: 683 9613 0569 / Passcode: 897688

***Robin Frisch - Social history of the Franc CFA. Currency struggles in Togo and Cameroon (1920-1994)***

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This PhD project combines research on the making-of French colonial money with the history of the critique of the CFA franc. With three spotlights on Togo and Cameroon, it tells a story of limited monetary control during French colonialism, monetary alternatives planned by Togolese President Sylvanus Olympio in the 1960s and the revival of the critique of the CFA franc during structural adjustment in the 1990s. In the 1920s, multiple monies were in use not only in trade, but also for tax collection and on the markets. After the Second World War, with the official introduction of the CFA franc, the currency was more standardized, but not less contested and appropriated by the people using it. At independence, in the 1960s, Olympio tried to establish a sovereign central bank and even considered a monetary cooperation with West Germany, Great Britain and Nigeria. A spotlight on the making of the CFA Franc in the Southern Cameroons at the reunification in the in the early 1960s shows how the French treasury influenced the independent Cameroonian government. It also shows how important the image of the CFA franc as a “modern” money and as a tool for the national economic development mattered during this period. In the 1990s, it was exactly this narrative of economic modernity and sovereignty that got shattered during the protests against the SAPs. The CFA franc became a symbol of economic oppression and dependency on France.

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***Ngozi Edeagu - Writing back to Empire: Newspapers, Non-Elites and Decolonisation in the Global Public Sphere, 1937-1957***

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*Writing Back to Empire* is a history of decolonisation in Nigeria from below. It, thus, re-examines and highlights the significance of non-elite historical actors in the historiography, stressing local and transnational dimensions. Therefore, it writes back the non-elite into a prominent place in the historiography focusing on the grievances of market women and petty traders, residential secondary school students, salaried workers and casual labour, and (ex-)servicemen. In focusing on the what, who, why, and where of decolonisation, this work inserts new voices into received narratives and received voices into new narratives. These narratives are woven through the lens of local and transnational coalitions and competitions within the *West African Pilot* newspaper owned by the US-trained Nigerian nationalist Nnamdi Azikiwe. Non-elite groups held different notions of ‘freedom’ occasioned by the end of British rule from the competing visions embraced by the elite. Cooper (2005: 18) argued against scholars fusing all forms of opposition to colonialism into “a narrative of growing nationalist sentiment and nationalist organization.” This work similarly avoids subsuming competing group interests under the banner of nationhood as this inherently disregards internal tensions.

Therefore, through the analysis of Nigerian and African American newspaper sources and archival material spanning Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the United States, this thesis asks new questions about old phenomena and old questions from contemporary social and economic vantage points: 1) For whom and for what was decolonisation? 2) What partnerships and divides predicated on these competing visions of freedom were present on the path to end British colonial rule? 3) How did non-elite groups cooperate and conflict among themselves and elite groups, exemplified in the *West African Pilot* and its journalistic networks? 4) To what extent did the non-elite achieve their visions of freedom at the end of British rule in 1960?

The colloquium presentation will focus on the evolution of the research, the structure of the PhD thesis and further steps.

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