

# Liminal Trade: Merchants and Their Markets beyond Geographical and Methodological Boundaries in Africa and across the Atlantic Ocean (1350–1600)

**International workshop**  
Rome, 14 – 15 May 2018



This workshop is a discussion about the concept of "liminal trade" in West Africa and the Atlantic in the period from 1350 to 1600. Economic historians studying European merchant networks in the late medieval and early modern periods have access to a considerable corpus of sources materials in European archives. However, when examining under-documented areas – such as West Africa or the African Atlantic – it is necessary to move beyond these European (primarily Spanish, Portuguese and

Italian) sources. Archaeologists and art historians have used objects, artifacts, relics and other material to study regions lacking in written sources. By working with scholars in these disciplines, economic and social historians can cross traditional methodological and historiographical boundaries to enrich their perspective and provide new insights on trade and European merchant networks in West Africa and the Atlantic.

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Fig.: Saltcellar, Nigeria, Bini-Portuguese, Ivory, 16<sup>th</sup> century (in: *For Spirits and Kings. African Art from the Paul and Ruth Tishman Collection*, exhibition catalogue, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981, cat. 75).

## Conference venue

Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom  
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## Monday, 14 May, 15.00–19.30

- 15.00 Heinrich Lang | Bamberg, Carlo Taviani | Florence  
[Introduction](#)
- 15.10 Gérard Chouin | Williamsburg/Virginia,  
Carlo Taviani | Florence  
[Silent Trade as Introduction](#)

### I - Liminal Sources

Chair: Thomas Gruber | Florence

- 15.30 Heinrich Lang | Bamberg  
[Crossing the Limits of the Account Books:  
Non European Accounting](#)
- 15.50 Claudia Wedepohl | London  
[Trade Routes of Goods – Migration Routes of Culture:  
Aby Warburg's Historical Geography](#)
- 16.20 Marco Di Branco | Rome  
[Do We Need to Read Arab Historians  
of the 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> Centuries?](#)
- 16.40 Discussion
- 17.20 Coffee Break

### II - West Africa and the Atlantic. Objects and People Crossing Boundaries

Chair: Heinrich Lang | Bamberg

- 17.40 Andreia Carvalho | Lisbon, Pedro Pinto | Lisbon  
[The Activities of Duarte Tristão and his Partners  
from the Atlantic to India \(1495–1521\)](#)
- 18.10 Steven Teasdale | Toronto, Carlo Taviani | Florence  
[Seeking Africa. Tracking the Genoese Trading  
Diaspora towards the Atlantic \(1450–1530 ca.\)](#)
- 18.30 Marta Carosco | Florence  
[Archaeology of Sugar in the Atlantic](#)
- 19.00 Discussion
- 20.00 Conference Dinner

## Tuesday, 15 May, 9.30–16.30

- 9.30 Chet van Duzer | Providence/Rhode Island  
[A Cartographic Perspective on Changing  
Conceptions of the Ocean in the Fifteenth and  
Sixteenth Centuries](#)
- 10.00 Ingrid Greenfield | Florence  
[Francesco Carletti and the Materiality  
of Enslavement](#)
- 10.30 Discussion
- 11.00 Break



- 11.20 Vera Simone Schulz | Florence  
[Transcultural Dynamics, Mercantile Aesthetics  
and the Mobility of Artifacts. Artistic  
Exchanges between Sub-Saharan Africa,  
the Mediterranean and the Middle East](#)
- 11.50 Kate Lowe | London  
[Out of Africa: Tusks, Ivory and a Pygmy](#)
- 12.20 Discussion
- 13.00 Lunch Break

### III - East and West

Chair: Alexander Koller | Rome

- 14.30 Verena Krebs | Bochum  
[Venetian Traders in Ethiopia, ca. 1410](#)
- 15.00 Francisco Apellaniz | Florence  
[Beyond Egypt: Venice and the Knowledge  
of the Red Sea](#)
- 15.30 Discussion and Final Remarks

Discussants:

Gérard Chouin | Williamsburg/Virginia: Sections 1, 2 and 3  
Francesco Guidi Bruscoli | Florence: Sections 1 and 2

