

Paper Proposal for: **Dublin Gastronomy Symposium 2018**  
(29-30 May 2018, Dublin)

Speaker: Dr. Diana Miryong Natermann, Hamburg University

## The Power of Rejection

### Colonial Practices of Not-eating in Sub-Saharan Africa

This paper analyses, reconstructs, and presents how food and dining cultures are linked to the establishment, implementation, and legacies of power within a colonial setting. Food cultures were inherent to imperial endeavours and intricately connected to *white* habits of not-eating. Colonial empires were sites that did not only see colonisers adapt to local cuisines – they resembled culinary playgrounds marked by imbalanced power relations that both propelled foreign foods into Europe and caused racially biased rejections of the same.

By juxtaposing *white* food and dining cultures with those of sub-Saharan Africa the aim is to show how rejecting indigenous foods and dishes represented European political and cultural elitism within the colonies. Culinary rejection was applied as a means of segregation. Food played an integral part of (re-)enforcing whiteness amongst Europeans in Africa and the exclusion of indigenous foods was more than a matter of likes and dislikes.

Food history and whiteness studies offer a marginalised but vital angle on everyday colonial lives: They highlight the intimate yet separate spheres of *black and white* in Africa where colonisers and colonised shared many intimate spaces, yet *white* colonial identities were nurtured by artificially separating from the colonised during meal times.

The paper's point of departure are visual and written ego-documents by Belgian, German, and Swedish men and women who whilst in Central Africa practiced a supposedly more *civilised* dining culture and turned eating into a daily renewed status symbol. By combining whiteness studies with food, colonial, and visual history I provide a more refined understanding of imperial realities as practised by European colonisers in Africa and show that food history is intrinsically tied to the research on colonial identities and post-colonial theories.