



Kanazawa University

26th International Economic Seminar

University of Bologna (Italy)

Dr. Domenico Cristofaro



Lecture title:

*“Marginalizing Colonialism:
Money, Power, and Urban Life in the
Early 20th-Century Ghana”*

Time: 2:45 PM, Mon. 20 October 2025

Venue: Human and Social Science Hall 2, 5F,
3rd meeting room, Kanazawa University

Organizer: International Economic Research Group

Co-Sponsors: Faculty of Economics and Management
Graduate School of Human & Socio-
Environmental Studies.

Registration form:

<https://forms.gle/qedDsi3cZ7PEJbbeA>



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Abstract

Conceiving of colonialism as a uniform, monolithic, and hegemonic process across the African continent obscures the complexities through which compromise, negotiation, and economic and political transformation unfolded. This presentation examines how colonial rule in Ghana was not only imposed but also actively marginalized by African actors from the very first encounters with British troops. Far from passive subjects of domination, communities in northern Ghana developed strategies that limited, deflected, and reshaped colonial authority. Focusing on the early colonial period, the presentation argues that the marginalization of colonial power was not a single moment but an ongoing process, sustained through creative responses that consistently minimized the reach of colonial control. Three interrelated spheres of life are central to this analysis: spatiality, where settlement patterns and concepts of land use resisted colonial regulation; politics, where chiefs, ritual authorities, and non-centralized communities reconfigured power relations to their advantage; and economy, where markets, trade, migration, and the circulation of multiple currencies developed along trajectories only partially shaped by colonial oversight. By foregrounding these dynamics, the presentation underscores the limited scope and fragmented nature of colonial rule, while emphasizing the agency of African actors in shaping their own historical trajectories. In doing so, it calls for a reassessment of the history of colonial Ghana: not solely as a story of domination, but also as one of active marginalization of the empire through everyday practices.

植民地主義をアフリカ大陸全体に渡る単一的で、支配的なプロセスとして捉えることは、その過程で妥協、交渉、そして経済的・政治的変容がどのように展開されたのかという複雑さを覆い隠してしまいます。本発表では、ガーナにおける植民地支配が単に押し付けられたものではなく、イギリス軍と最初に接触した時からアフリカ側の人々によって積極的に周縁化され（訳者注 被支配者側も主体的に利用し）たことを検討します。つまり、ガーナ北部のコミュニティは決して受動的ではなく、植民地権力を制限し、逸らし、再構築するための戦略を展開していました。本発表は、初期植民地期に焦点を当て、空間、政治、経済の領域から、植民地権力の周縁化は一度限りの出来事ではなく、植民地的支配の影響を最小限に抑える創造的な対応を通じて持続的に行われてきたプロセスであると主張します。

Speaker's Bio

Domenico Cristofaro is a research fellow and adjunct lecturer at the University of Bologna. He is a historian of Africa with an anthropological background, focusing in particular on Ghana and its northern region. His interests encompass urban history, economic history, and the relationship between African planning, political changes, currencies, and commercial and infrastructural transitions. He has conducted both ethnographic and archival research in Ghana and across Europe. His work has appeared with international publishers and in leading journals, including the *African Economic History*, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* and *The Journal of African History*.