



**FROBENIUS-INSTITUT**  
FÜR KULTURANTHROPOLOGISCHE FORSCHUNG  
AN DER GOETHE-UNIVERSITÄT

## W O R K S H O P   A B S T R A C T

**"Contested Millets in Africa and India"**  
**Frobenius-Institute, Frankfurt/Main, May 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

The workshop discussed the changing value of various types of millets in Africa and Asia and the "competition" between millets and other grains over time. It brought together scholars from anthropology, archaeology, archaeobotany and biology from Germany and the Netherlands.

For millennia millet provided the basis of subsistence for different peoples all over the world. The cultivation of millet probably originated in Central Africa and Asia and archaeologists assume that different varieties of millet were exchanged between the two continents since early times. Millets have an exceptional nutritional value and their cultivation requires only little water, as they grow in relatively infertile and dry soils. Millet cultivation is therefore highly sustainable in times of decreasing water-supply. Nevertheless, in different parts of the world millet as a staple food has increasingly been under pressure. This marginalization of millet seems to have occurred at various times in different parts of Asia and Africa. This "competition" between grains is, of course, also a competition between ideologies and values, visions and modes of life, political and religious influences, social and economic capitals. The abandonment of millets does not only result in a loss of food pluralism and thus of bio-diversity. Proceeding from the observation that the production, distribution and consumption of staple food items such as millets is intimately linked to various aspects of life, it also means a loss of socio-cultural diversity.