

Seminar Series 2024-2025

Emotional Grammars  
of Globalization

Mediterranean Emotions  
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Johann Baptist Klauber. "Inácio de Azevedo en Portugese jezuïeten. vermoedelijk door huguenoten op hun missie naar Brazilië. Amsterdam. Rijksmuseum, https://id.rijksmuseum.nl/200466425, Public Domain.

**ELISA FREI**

Goethe-Universität Frankfurt

**Salt and Solitude:  
Ilarione Sala and  
the Emotional Cost  
of Missionary  
Mobility (c. 1700)**

**1<sup>st</sup> July 2025  
10.00-12.00**

**University of Florence  
Via San Gallo 10  
Online Seminar**

[meet.google.com/nym-jitm-jjd](https://meet.google.com/nym-jitm-jjd)

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SOCIETY FOR THE  
**HISTORY of  
EMOTIONS**

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## ABSTRACT

This presentation delves into the unpublished diary (c. 1700) of the Italian abbot Ilarione Bonaventura Sala, who was dispatched by the Congregation of Propaganda Fide to assist in the complex negotiations surrounding the Chinese Rites Controversy. While his final destination was the Qing Empire, much of Sala's surviving narrative concerns the long and emotionally charged oceanic journey that brought him there. Throughout the voyage, Sala documented his experiences with meticulous care: from the daily rhythms of shipboard life to the interpersonal dynamics among religious travelers and sailors, from the unfamiliar customs and cultures encountered en route to reflections on his own sense of displacement.

Solitude is one of the most pervasive emotional undercurrents in the diary. Uprooted from his familiar world—culturally, spiritually, and relationally—Sala often found himself overwhelmed by distance and uncertainty. Yet his writing also reveals how vital food, companionship, and curiosity became as strategies for emotional survival. Meals shared, stories exchanged, and tastes discovered served as small but significant anchors amid the instability of travel.

By focusing on the emotional dimensions of Sala's journey rather than its theological or political stakes, this paper offers a window into the fragile resilience of a Mediterranean religious subject negotiating a new global reality—one shipboard encounter, one bowl of rice at a time.

## THE SPEAKER

**Elisa Frei** is an Assistant Professor in Church History at the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt. She also works as a project assistant for the *Digital Indipetae Database*, hosted by the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies at Boston College, and as an assistant editor for the journal *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*. She is a research associate at the University of York, where she spent part of her PhD in History, after the BA in Archival Studies and Librarianship, the state diploma in Archival Studies, and the MA in Philology and Literary Hermeneutic. She studies the Society of Jesus during the early modern period, its missions in East Asia, and the formal path to reach them—through the so-called *Litterae Indipetae*, source material on which she has extensively written. In 2023 she published her first monographs: *Early Modern Litterae Indipetae for the East Indies* (Brill) and *'Bussar ben forte per aprirsi la porta nell'Indie'. Negoziare la missione nella Compagnia di Gesù (XVII-XVIII sec.)* (Edizioni dell'Orso). She also co-edited *Profiling Saints. Images of Modern Sanctity in a Global World* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023) and *Istoria della Compagnia di Gesù. L'Asia by Daniello Bartoli* (Einaudi, 2019).