What is “washoku”? How did it become the intangible cultural heritage in Japan? At the center of the narrative is the 2013 inscription of “Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year” on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This presentation will challenge the very definition of washoku as it was presented in the UNESCO nomination, and expose the multitude of contradictions and falsehoods used in the promotion of Japanese cuisine as part of the nation-branding agenda. This lecture is based on Prof. Cwiertka’s recent book Brading Japanese Food: From Meibutsu to Washoku. University of Hawaii Press, 2020.

Katarzyna Cwiertka is a professor of Modern Japan Studies at the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies, the Netherlands.

This event is sponsored by the “Global Food” research unit of the Institute of Comparative Culture led by James Farrer.