

PREMISES

In the 15th century, the arrival of Europeans on the West African coast gave rise to completely new contacts between culturally different populations. In Southern Europe, social relations were characterised by a perception of otherness based in particular on religious intolerance towards non-Christians and a racial approach associated with ethnic origin or territory of origin. At the same time, Senegambian societies were experiencing profound political changes that led to territorial and ethnic fragmentation on the basis of lineage and established order. In the European enclaves emerging on the West African Coast, categories like blood, lineage and race had to adapt to social and political stakes of rapidly intermingling Senegambian societies themselves confronted with the process of islamisation, re-hierarchisation by lineage, and/or de complex territorial reconfiguration. The notions of 'blood' and 'race' that linked the 'quality' of lineages, skin colour and 'honour', conveyed by European representations, should be mirrored with such categories as caste, order and lineage in the processes of identity building in Senegambian societies. Such designations change and interact over time, distinguishing hereditary 'virtues' and assigned attributes of purity or impurity, linked to free or servile ancestry.

In the Americas, the Caribbean in particular, colour had become, as early as the 17th century, a predominant factor to determine all individuals' racial and socio-professional status. In the context of areas of Senegambian contacts, such notions as honour, quality, status, lineage as well as religious denomination became determinant for defining situations of exclusion or inclusion in incipient social and political structures. The rise of scientific theories of race starting in the 18th century bolstered a biological approach to social relations although it never replaced the historical realities proper to societies having arisen from the meeting of Europeans and Africans. On a regional scale, the combination of all these elements, and the social and ethnic profiles of Senegambian populations produced a myriad of socio-racial categories: *filho da terra* (native son), *branco da terra* (native white), *grumetel/gourmet*, *rapaz/rapacious*, *cristão da terra* (local Christian), *tangomao*, etc. Senegambian societies had pre-existing terms for classing and declassing people: *maccudo*, *jyaado*, *gallunke*. These words refer to individual in Pulaar societies, each with different connotations. Most of these categories were unknown at the time; they developed over time and space. Regulated by legislation and assimilated by social players, they are one among many specificities of what we can call *métisses* (mixed race).

The workshop will focus on four areas of reflection:

1. **Notions of pure and impure blood.** This entails using a comparatist framework to examine parallels that may or may not be established between the discourse and practices linked to the notion of pure blood in the Iberian context and rationales operating underlying Senegambian societies.
2. **Categories of 'Race' and 'Colour'.** This requires seeking to understand how such notions as 'Race' and 'Colour' could be mobilised by the different players in territories under Iberian domination or in Senegambian societies subject throughout this period to the upheaval of processes of mobility, migration and miscegenation.
3. **Complex heritage of slavery.** How did categories of slaves and slaves' descendants develop in the context of societies marked economically, socially and politically by participation in the Atlantic slave trade?
4. **Semantic variation.** This is the study of terms to understand the complexity of social relations, the plurality of denominations and the diversity of forms of slavery. These lines of thought are not exhaustive: we will also consider propositions relating to neighbouring areas, as well as more theoretical aspects to enrich the cross-disciplinary debate.