



UNIVERSITÉ  
DE LORRAINE

Centre lorrain de recherches interdisciplinaires  
dans les domaines des littératures, des cultures et de la théologie



## International Conference

### Call for papers

**Perception and denomination / categorization of the notion of colour**

*"Methodology of action, vision, perception, cognition"*

*"Light and / or tint, denominations and complex realities in its diversity"*

**8-9-10 November 2017- MSH Lorraine-Nancy**

Organized within the framework of the "Rendez-vous du TSANGA"

*"Transmissions of Knowledge and Numerical Appropriation of African Generations"*

According to Locke, colour is a second quality of the thing. He denounces here the illusory and tenacious nature urging human beings to consider that the thing is really of its colour. On the contrary, colour is a subjective construction. It depends on the human's physiological and cognitive constitution. Admittedly, once the quasi-universality of the organization of the human eye is recognized, the colour subjectively given to objects seems to be firmly linked to the physicochemical action by wavelengths on the cones in the retina.

However, the cognitive processes of perception are too complex and integrative to guarantee a strict reduction between the physiologically seen and the cognitively perceived.

A culturalist approach is then needed to understand how the perception of colour can be built beyond physiology. We will not speak about what is medically classified as perception disorder, but rather about how the fact of being a member of a culture can influence, or even build the perception of colours. Thus, following Michel Pastoureau's reflections according to which "more than nature, pigment, eye or brain, it is society that" makes "colour, which gives it its definition and meaning, which declines its codes and values, which organizes its practices and determines its stakes "(2015, P. 240), a general challenge would be to understand how colour - and especially hue - could have emerged in the Western world as a primary notion to describe the strictly visual appearance of the world, whereas the notion of intensity could also have imposed itself.

The generalist approach to these questions is not devoid of any perspective. If it is true that the western print has imposed some of its knowledge, practices or values on the daily life of countries in the Global South with the creation and integration of new vocabulary, The 1<sup>st</sup> TSANGA Meeting issue is to lay the foundations of a reflection which aims to deconstruct or, conversely understand the idea that most African cultures did not perceive and / or still do not perceive the colour by the colour shade but by other functioning modalities. For some sub-Saharan African cultures, the essential point is not to know if the colour is red, green, but to know whether it was dry or wet, striped or spotted, smooth or rough, soft or hard, dark or clear, deaf or sound, ... Colour can be apprehended together with other sensory phenomena.

This difficult question is conditioned by the specific context of the African continent as in other non-westernized cultures in the world. It hardly seems to encompass a homogeneous culture. It may be thus appropriate to ensure that the culturalist approaches are mixed with an ecologic approach of perception as formulated by James J. Gibson.

On the linguistic, ethnolinguistic and sociolinguistic level, if we adopt the denomination of tones and the shades in tones in the Western culture, can we still recognize true, classifiable colours? Similarly, is it possible and seems essential:

- to consider categorization-denomination of colours from new genetic classifications of languages;

- to confront the paradoxes raised in the description work of field studies collected since the 1980s and in recent studies;
- to develop and “disentangle” theories which put either language or language/ colour as a determining factor: "The way in which we perceive the world depends on language", according to Sapir-Whorf, the psycho-genetic principles of colours by B. Berlin & B. Kay, The Approach by Anne Wierzbicka's Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), etc.

As the purpose of the "Rendez-Vous" is essentially methodological, the conclusions of the meeting could enable the "new" Africanist researchers to invest this field of study in a transdisciplinary perspective. Finally, the topic of the “colour”, due to its capacity to federate several research fields, offers a space of reflection and an opportunity to compare approaches in field research, languages, literature and arts. Thus, through this theme, we will try to examine the origin of learning and educational techniques, the transformation of social organization modes, the integration and development of these cultures in the current environment. This first meeting aims to be the first step which can enable the following things to happen during the next “Rendez-vous”:

- to take up this topic of the perception, denomination and application of colour as a particularly significant sample, able to provoke transdisciplinary reflections on the relevance or not of the theoretical and methodological approaches used;
- to examine how the colours perceived, reproduced, named and translated in Africa and among populations from this continent are or have been transmitted and developed in the creation of literary and artistic works, or of spiritual or didactic messages (learning, training, translation);
- to consider the whole thing in an intergenerational and pluri-interdisciplinary context with the means provided by technological advances, particularly digital ones.

The organizing committee wishes to receive submissions for communication or participation to a workshop (Friday 10, 2-5pm) which address the theme of the conference from one of the following angles:

- Vision, sensory perception, cognition, current state of knowledge and prospects for application in African research
- Field research, categorization, processing of lexical and semantic information: descriptive studies of languages, linguistics and ground ethnolinguistics, description and modelling of the lexicon
- Traditional and modern Perception / Denomination of the notion of colour: the nature of imported objects named in terms of colour and their appropriation (art, religion, technology and use of iron, etc.)

### **Abstract Submission Deadline : 20 may 2017**

Submit your abstract of no more than 250 words (a reply to your proposal will reach you before 5 June)  
The French language would be preferred but English is acceptable as well (**slides in French please**)

**The application form and the presentation of the overall context of TSANGA are attached in pdf version.**

**As part of the action research of the TSANGA project, all the presentations will be filmed and the visual aids of the project will have to be particularly accurate. They will constitute for the multidisciplinary teams living in a country from the Global South participatory tools of work for the project and educational data for their students.**

Contact Information: [Sylvie Grand'Eury-Buron](#), [Erick Cakpo](#), [Bruno Trentini](#)

An invitation letter to facilitate your preparations for the conference will be sent upon request. Please note that sending this letter does not mean that you will receive financial support from us. Insofar as possible, we will ask for some support from the AUF for colleagues from countries in the Global South and we will financially support speakers who are not a member of a research laboratory or are retired researchers. In other cases, you should contact your university or other institutions to obtain a French visa or some financial support.

All participants to the Conference should have a valid health insurance. The organizers will not be in a position to take any responsibilities for medical care or any other health costs which individual participants may incur.