

CALL FOR PAPERS

Northwest Africa into the Atlantic World in the fourteenth-eighteenth centuries: Re-mapping the field through overlooked histories

Saint Louis University-Madrid, June 5, 2027

Co-organizers

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This one-day workshop will examine the history of northwest Africa in the Atlantic world from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The period coincides with the so-called “Age of Exploration” and the development of encounters between different shores of Africa, the Americas, and Europe. Surprisingly, scholars have largely overlooked northwest Africa in the history of both the Atlantic world and the Age of Exploration as well as in these fields of academic study. Yet, the area and its people played pivotal roles at this critical juncture. Geostrategically, the Maghrib was located on maritime routes linking the different shores of a burgeoning Atlantic and elsewhere. Its peoples maintained long-running and enduring ties to both western Africa to the south and western Europe to the north. Their knowledge of intellectual and linguistic traditions, roads, rivers, and nautical worlds, as well as of the ecological and geographical particularities of neighbouring and distant states and peoples, facilitated contact, exchange, transmission, and flows between different areas of the eastern Atlantic and beyond.

It is vital to take a closer look at these and other instances of northwest Africa’s roles in the Atlantic world. The coastline from the Strait of Gibraltar to the Senegal River spans some 2,500 km. By reintegrating the area into the study of the ocean basin, a geographic reorientation of the broader Atlantic world also comes into view. The study of modern European mapping and the cartographic shaping of the world takes the tracing of Portuguese tracks south along northwest Africa’s coast as the point of departure for the emergence of modern “scientific” mapping. This seeming objectivity has been applied to the formation of the space of the Atlantic world both ontologically and epistemologically. At the same time, however, maps that created the burgeoning space of northwest Africa filled the interior with fantastic information and illustrations. Reintegrating northwest Africa can bring to light the interplay between the objective and the subjective in the creation of, and scholarly interventions on, the Atlantic world.

The workshop will take place at Saint Louis University's Madrid campus on 5 June 2027. The meeting is sponsored by Saint Louis University's Center for Iberian Historical Studies in partnership with CSIC-Instituto de Historia, Diplomacia Intercultural Mediterránea de la Monarquía Hispánica (DIPLOINMED), and the Spain-North Africa Project (SNAP). Scholars from all disciplines working on related topics are welcome to apply. Research that relates northwest Africa to western Africa, the Atlantic islands, and the Americas are of particular interest. One of the purposes of the meeting is to workshop papers with the goal of producing a special issue of an international journal. A limited number of stipends up to \$800 US Dollars will be available to offset travel costs for participants coming from outside Madrid and will be distributed after the event. This funding is tied to active participation in the publication project. The workshop and the publication will be in English. Please submit a 300-word abstract and a 200-word narrative biography by 15 October 2026. Decisions will be notified in mid-November. Accepted contributors will send in papers of 3,000-6,000 words by 1 May 2027 to be pre-circulated among participants and go through a first-round of feedback at the workshop. Questions and proposals can be sent to Toby Yuen-Gen Liang (yglhistory@gmail.com) and Marta Albalá Pelegrín (martaa@cpp.edu).

