

Monday, 20.04.2026; 4:15 - 5:45 pm CEST

Temitope Fagunwa, Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany

## **Residual Histories and the Medieval Formation of Black Representation in European Pharmacy**

### Abstract:

This lecture examines the emergence and diffusion of Black symbolism in European apothecary culture, arguing that its consolidation must be understood through three interconnected developments; the medieval Mediterranean spice trade, the circulation of pharmaceutical knowledge, and the representational culture of the Hohenstaufen court of Frederick II in Sicily. First, it traces Mediterranean and Indian Ocean trade networks, through which pepper, cinnamon, cloves, saffron, myrrh, and other medicinal substances circulated, forming the material basis of medieval European pharmacology. Second, it explores translation movements and scholarly exchanges that connected Greek, Latin, and Arabic intellectual traditions, enabling the transmission of pharmacological knowledge. Third, it situates Frederick II's court as a cosmopolitan imperial centre where visual and heraldic representations of Black figures gained prominence within a Mediterranean political imagination. While prior scholarship has focused on early modern guild traditions, heraldic usage, or later racial interpretations, no sustained study has linked Black imagery in pharmacy to Frederick II's courtly culture or Sicilian spice commerce. By cross-referencing relevant pharmacological manuscripts, medieval trade records, and visual sources, this lecture reconstructs the material flows and symbolic practices that shaped the medieval formation of Black representation in European pharmacy. In doing so, it addresses a historiographical lacuna and contributes to broader discussions in the history of science, material culture, and the formation of European commercial traditions.

### Short Bio:

Temitope Fagunwa's research focuses on entangled histories resulting from transatlantic slavery and migration. His work lies within African diaspora studies and examines the economic and cultural legacies as well as the historical experiences of African communities in the Americas and Europe. His PhD dissertation, "African Brazilians in the Economy of Lagos, 1861–1960," examined the economic roles and cultural integration of African returnees from Brazil in colonial Lagos. Through this study, he offers a new perspective on the impact of Atlantic slavery on the formation of a global African cultural identity on both sides of the Atlantic. His postdoctoral research at the Leuphana Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture and Society (LIAS) at Leuphana University Lüneburg turns to another entangled history beginning in the eighth century, whose influences extend into the present. In this research, he explores the impact of African Moors in shaping European cultural and intellectual landscapes, seeking to reassert their historical significance within modern scholarship. In addition to his academic contributions, Fagunwa actively participates in Pan-African intellectual movements. His interdisciplinary approach bridges history, anthropology, and cultural studies, fostering a broader understanding of Africa's interconnected past with the wider world.