

Call for Papers
VI International Conference on African Labour
Slavery, Migration, and Contemporary Bondage in Africa
23rd-25th of September 2009

This is a revised call for papers and participation for an interdisciplinary conference on 'Slavery, Migration, and Contemporary Bondage in Africa', to take place at the Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation, Hull, United Kingdom. This conference will explore linkages between the history of slavery and migration in Africa and contemporary forms of bondage, such as child labour, 'classical' slavery, child soldiers, descent based discrimination, and human trafficking and the exploitation of migrants. Eight travel bursaries are available for early career scholars based in and/or from Africa. The conference has been sponsored by:

- * The Wilberforce Institute, University of Hull
(<http://www.hull.ac.uk/wise>).
- * The Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of Witwatersrand (<http://www.migration.org.za>).
- * The Centro de Estudos Africanos, Universidade do Porto
(<http://www.africanos.eu/ceaup/>).
- * The Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on the Global Migrations of African Peoples, York University,
(<http://www.yorku.ca/tubman/Home/index.html>).
- * The European Union Seventh Framework Programme, EURESCL Project
(<http://www.eurescl.eu>).
- * The British Academy UK-Africa Partnership Programme
(<http://www.britac.ac.uk/>).

Background

The history of slavery and abolition is not confined to the Americas, but also extends to millions of slaves in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. When the Trans-Atlantic slave trade finally came to an end in the 1860s, both slavery and slave trading remained widespread across most of Africa. Prior to the colonial 'scramble' of the late nineteenth century, African slaves represented more than a third of the population in some parts of the continent. During this period, the need to abolish slavery and slave trading featured prominently amongst self-serving justifications for wars of colonial conquest, but once European authority was firmly established this anti-slavery rhetoric quickly gave

way to caution and complicity. Under colonial rule, slavery in Africa experienced a 'slow death' that was frequently measured in decades, rather than years. It remains an open question, however, whether the legal abolition of slavery can be regarded as a clear break with the past. Once slave labour was renounced, colonial agents turned to related forms of exploitation, such as forced, bonded and indentured labour, which could be more brutal and exploitative than indigenous slave systems. When controls on movement associated with slavery came to an end, political elites turned to other instruments to take their place, such as 'vagrancy' laws, migration schemes, and racially and ethnically defined barriers.

The events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century can be connected to more recent developments in continental Africa in a number of ways. In some cases, elements of pre-colonial practices have persisted to this day. Especially problematic here are countries such as Mauritania and Niger, where 'classical' slavery and descent based discrimination remains an ongoing problem. In a larger number of cases, contemporary forms of bondage involve an extension and reformulation of earlier historical models. In many parts of West Africa, human traffickers have been able to manipulate local traditions based upon the placement of poor children with friends and relatives. In countries such as Sudan and Uganda, recent histories of raiding parties and 'abductions' can be traced to earlier historical precedents. When modern human rights campaigners object to 'slave chocolate' sourced from parts of West Africa, they are following in the footsteps of earlier campaigns against the use of forced labour in cocoa production under colonial rule. When modern migrants find themselves in dangerous and exploitative conditions, their predicament shares a number of features in common with earlier victims of colonial exploitation. When African governments seek to restrict and regulate movement, their approaches routinely draw upon a series of colonial precedents and templates. In order to fully evaluate both current problems and future prospects, one must first understand historical practices.

Slavery, Migration and Contemporary Bondage in Africa

Interested researchers are invited to submit paper proposals based on one or more of the following themes:

Governance

* Similarities and differences in the (ab)use of labour: How have pre-Colonial, Colonial and Post-Colonial political authorities sought to organize and regulate labour in Africa?

* Evolving patterns of migration and movement control: How have various models of political authority sought to regulate, promote and/or restrict the movement of peoples in Africa?

* Institutional influences and colonial practises: On what terms can we connect colonial budgets, 'native' policies, middle rank administration and forced labour practices?

Social and Economic Formations

* Innovation in exploitation: What factors account for the emergence and/or further expansion of new forms of bondage following the legal abolition of slavery across continental Africa?

* The persistence of pre-colonial practices: On what terms can historical practices be connected to current problems, such as child labour, descent based discrimination, and/or debt-bondage?

The Past in the Present

* Historical parallels with contemporary problems: What can the history of slavery, migration and colonial rule in Africa tell us about contemporary developments and future prospects in Africa?

* The legacies of historical slave systems: How has the history of slavery, migration and colonialism influenced contemporary patterns of movement and labour exploitation within Africa?

* Repairing historical wrongs in Africa: What avenues are available to repair past injustices?

Each of these themes invite scholars who specialise in particular issues and events to reflect upon the broader significance of their field of expertise to both the broader history and contemporary prospects of Africa.

Submission Information

To submit a paper proposal, please send abstracts of up to 300 words, together with a current curriculum vitae to wise@... , by the 13th of March 2009. The organizers of the conference have also secured eight bursaries for early career scholars from/based in Africa. These cover flights, accommodation and conference registration. Applicants for bursaries should apply through the same procedure outlined above, indicating that they wish to be considered for a bursary. Final papers of between 6000 and 8000 words will be expected by the 31st of July 2009. The registration form for the conference will be available in March 2009. Requests for additional information should be directed to either Joel Quirk at j.quirk@... or Darshan Vigneswaran at darshan.vigneswaran@.... The organizers of the conference plan on publishing a selection of revised conference papers as a special issue of the journal Slavery and Abolition.