

Cadbury Conference 2017
Marriage in Africa
(held in honour of Lynne Brydon)

31st May – 2nd June 2017

Department of African Studies and Anthropology
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Abstracts Wednesday 31 May

- ❖ **2.30 – 4.30 pm: Panel A - Inside/Outside Marriage: making claims, negotiating status and marking boundaries** - Chair: Reg Cline-Cole; Discussant: Stephan Miescher (Danford Room)

- **Roseanne Njiru (Catholic University of Eastern Africa): *'Mpango wa Kando': Gender norms, extramarital sex and HIV risk in marriages in Kenya***

Marriage in Kenya is the largest contributor to all new HIV infections due to gender inequalities that facilitate, mostly men's, *mpango wa kando* (multiple sexual partnerships) and limit condom use. Yet, despite years of HIV interventions to address gender inequalities in marriage, there is little evidence of its impact. Many programmes continue to focus on individual sexual behavior change (often fidelity), emphasising a male perpetrator and female victim, without adequate attention to how gender intersects with other socio-structural factors to shape infidelity for men and women. This study compares couple-level qualitative data from rural low-income cash crop farmers in Eastern Kenya and city middle-class couples in Nairobi, to examine how the social context of marriage structures extramarital sex and, consequently, the HIV risk. From the analysis, four themes are discussed: changing marital ideologies, gendered household labor, control and surveillance of women's mobility, and access to productive resources. The study argues that interventions for addressing gender inequalities in marriage should go beyond individual sexual behavior change to embrace a nuanced contextual community approach. This will enable a more productive examination of the complex intersections of geography, class, gender, romance and consumption in marriage in Kenya, for better results in ending the gender inequalities that shape the HIV risk.

- **Rosemary Obeng-Hinneh (University of Ghana, Legon): *Consensual unions in Ghana: a precursor or an alternative to marriage?***

This paper explores the different ways in which individual partners in consensual unions in the urban space of Accra, Ghana interpret the status of their union and negotiate entry into marriage. A total of twelve couples with varying ethnic, socio-economic and religious backgrounds were purposively sampled. Life history interviews were conducted separately for the individual partners and thematic network analysis was carried out on the primary data collected. Drawing on the Schutzian (1973) conceptual model of multiple relevant structures, this paper argues that contrary to the simplified categorization of consensual unions into either a precursor or an alternative to marriage, variables such

as gender, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds may work together to produce complexities in the definition of the status of a consensual union. The study, for instance, found that a particular union may be interpreted both as a precursor and an alternative to marriage, depending on which partner's perspective is in question.

► **Karen Lauterbach (University of Copenhagen): *Marriage, divorce and adultery: assessments of the moral standing of charismatic pastors in Ghana***

This paper looks at how marriage, divorce, and adultery are used as criteria to assess the legitimacy and moral standing of pastors in Ghana. Historically, mission churches have had marriage as part of their moral battleground and have hugely influenced how Ghanaians perceive and practise marriage. At the same time, accusations of adultery have been used as a way to categorize someone as 'fake', because the immoral practice was a sign of the person's illegitimate position. Such debates are prominent also in the present-day charismatic Christian landscape, in which the nuclear family and being a father or a mother is celebrated. The paper will explore how ideals around marriage are expressed in different cultural forms in charismatic Christianity (newspapers, biographies, pictures, different forms of self-portrayal). It will also discuss how marriage is used as a base on which one can claim to be a truthful and morally righteous person and hence legitimize a leadership position, as being married (being a husband or a wife) is associated with particular virtues. These virtues, such as being a father, a protector, a care-taker, also come to characterize the broader social roles people possess. The paper moreover looks into how these ideals are changing and might be under influence from other forms of popular culture.

► **Nimrita Rana (University of Birmingham): *'If your Indian dad decides he isn't going to have anything to do with you, and your mum is not strong, you end up not seen, you disappear': reflections on paternal recognition/rejection of Sindhi-Ghanaian children in contemporary Accra***

South Asians, particularly Sindhis (from what is now the India-Pakistan borderlands), have migrated to and settled in West Africa since the early twentieth century. In 2017, towards the end of a period of 12 months of doctoral field research among the Sindhi community in Accra, Ghana, I became aware of a number of individuals born of 'illegitimate' relationships or passing sexual encounters between Sindhi men and non-Sindhi Ghanaian women. This paper explores the reflections of an adult man who was born to a Sindhi father and a Ghanaian-Lebanese mother. Rejection by his father meant that he relied upon his mother and her kin both for his affective relationships and material support. Reflecting back upon his experiences, and hinting that they were indicative of other cases, this particular man concluded that, 'If your Indian dad decides he isn't going to have anything to do with you, if your mum is not strong, you end up not seen, you disappear.' The circumstances of this man's birth had carried economic, social and emotional implications throughout his lifetime. By comparing his case with another that has had a very different outcome, this paper will also consider some of the ways in which Sindhi men have attempted to legitimise their relationships with non-Sindhi Ghanaian women, and 'recognise' their children, sometimes at the expense of their position within the South Asian community. This is a deeply gendered process, as the relationships we hear of are between Sindhi men and non-Sindhi women. What then is the impact of the recognition of such relationships?

and their offspring on the ‘legitimate’ wife and the wider family? What consequences do both sets of children face in terms of support during their lifetime and inheritance? What can the inclusion or exclusion of children tell us about the changing structures of families and the cultural boundaries that Sindhis maintain? I would appreciate feedback on the work-in-progress, particularly because only a small number of research participants were willing to discuss this issue in detail.

- ❖ **5.00 – 6.30 pm: Guest lecture**, in collaboration with Modern British Studies and the Centre for Modern and Contemporary History (Lecture Room 7)

- **Carina Ray (Brandeis University): *Inter-racial marriage, colonial metropolises and gendered optics of African nationalism***

Far from being a salacious footnote in the history of anti-colonial nationalist struggles, the roles that white women played in the push toward independence—as political comrades, friends, and sometimes as lovers and wives to many of the Black men who had come to the imperial center to agitate for independence—were often sustained and meaningful. This talk explores this affective history while also attending to the ways in which it skews the gendered optics of African nationalism by further obscuring the role of African women in the decolonization process.

Abstracts Thursday 1 June

- ❖ **9.30 – 10.30 am: Panel B - Defining Duty: religiosity, ethnic diversity and family law** - Chair: Insa Nolte; Discussant: Lynne Brydon (Danford Room)

- **Akosua Adomako Ampofo (University of Ghana, Legon): ‘A man doesn’t carry a woman’s handbag’: men of god and the place of women**

The teachings of those who stand in the pulpit have a wide reach that is not limited to Sunday mornings and mid-week services. The “men of God” (and occasionally women) are potent voices on gender issues and the mere scale of their influence makes their perspectives worthy of attention. They have created a powerful body of popular discourse that reflects a masculinity that can be liberating for women to the extent that they eschew violence, advocate companionship and monogamy, and underscore the responsibilities of husbands and fathers. At the same time, some of their discourse reflects a conservative tone regarding the position of women relative to men that reasserts male domination (Adomako Ampofo, Akosua and Michael PK Okyerefo, 2014.). This paper uses “masculinity” as a lens to explore examples of commentary by some Christian leaders on, and implications for, gender relations.

- **Rose Mensah-Kutin (ABANTU, Ghana): *Changing gender relations and implications for marriage under the law in Ghana***

The challenges of socio-economic development in Ghana, coupled with the retreat of the state from social provisioning, is increasingly transforming social and gender relations. Women are having to bear a disproportionate share of the burden of household maintenance including paying school fees and taking care of children. This has implications for the traditional and patriarchal notions about marital relationships.

There are three different types of valid marriage recognised by the Ghanaian law. These are: customary marriage, marriage under the Marriage Ordinance, and Islamic marriage under the Marriage of Mohammedans Ordinance. These different types of legal marriages are impacted upon differently by changing gender relations. Especially in situations where women find themselves playing both roles as mothers and fathers and being in charge of finances and decisions that have to be made in the household, they begin to resist and to challenge the legitimacy of traditional expectations about their subordinate position in the marital relationship.

This presentation therefore seeks to provide some understandings of how the socio-economic power play in gender relations leads to particular behavioural and attitudinal outcomes between women and men as married couples. It also seeks to explore the ways in which the legal system in Ghana is confronting some of these changes to promote greater equity and secure women's interests and concerns.

- ❖ **10.45 am – 12.15 pm: Panel C - Contestation and Continuity in Marriage: things that might change and things that might stay the same** – Chair: Keith Shear; Discussant: Paulo Farias (Danford Room)

- ▶ **Insa Nolte (University of Birmingham): *Marriage and the gendered order in Nigeria***

In most parts of Nigeria, marriage is constitutive of social adulthood, especially for women. But there are many different models of marriage: legal provisions for civil and Christian forms of marriage contrast strongly with traditional and Islamic practices, debates about marriage centre strongly on the differences between monogamous marriages and polygyny. However, in practice, state and non-state practices are often combined, and debates about men's and women's positions within marriage take place within different religious and legal traditions as well as between them. Despite their differences, all debates and practices relating to marriage emphasise the immorality of non-heterosexual practices and the authority of husbands over wives.

Looking beyond the differences and contestations between different legal and religious traditions, this paper argues that the contrasting marital provisions in Nigeria constitute an 'order of discourse' in which the very diversity of views implicitly confirms truths about gendered and sexual citizenship that are held both by the state and its citizens.

- ▶ **Helene Neveu-Kringelbach (University College, London): *Visions of polygyny, intergenerational relations and marriage choices among middle-class Senegalese women***

This paper examines the ways in which youth experiences of living in polygynous households shape the life aspirations and marriage choices of middle-class Senegalese women. In contrast to an enduring popular discourse, throughout the Senegambian region, according to which women live happily in polygynous marriages, this paper argues that middle-class Senegalese women's increasingly common choice to 'marry out' may be explicitly linked to family narratives and personal experiences of living with polygyny. In these narratives, the emotional suffering of women from earlier generations, their ill-health and compromised educational trajectories are often interpreted as consequences of polygyny.

These narratives stand in contrast to classical anthropological studies of polygyny in Africa, have analyzed the institution from the perspective of the dominance of social juniors by the 'elders', from an economic perspective, as a marker of male prestige or through African ideals of sexuality and

reproduction. In many of these studies, polygyny is thus examined as a coherent system. Whilst building on this body of work in African and migratory contexts, this paper departs these analyses by looking at women's agency. The paper focuses, in particular, on the ways in which middle-class women who choose to 'marry out', often against the wishes of senior male relatives, moralize their choice by invoking aspirations to companionate marriage and (paradoxically) continuity with older Wolof values of compassion and care among spouses. The paper suggests that the women's narratives serve to provide moral legitimacy to their controversial choice to marry Europeans, while also seeking to fulfil the broken aspirations of mothers or other senior female relatives. Ultimately however, women's 'exit strategies' through marriage outside the region may not fundamentally alter the ideal of polygyny in Muslim Senegal. The paper draws on long-term fieldwork in urban Senegal since 2002 and on interviews carried out with Senegalese women, their husbands and family members in Senegal and France since 2011.

► **Ellie Gore (University of Birmingham): *Queer negotiations: marriage, reproduction, and saso masculinities in Ghana***

This paper explores how working class queer men – *saso* – navigate norms of masculinity in Accra, Ghana. Drawing on 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork, it examines the complex negotiations that *saso* make around gender expectations, particularly marriage and reproduction. To do this, the paper looks at the experiences of two *saso* attempting to reconcile the competing pulls of family, marriage, queer desire, and political activism. It argues that *saso* gender practices oscillate between resistance and accommodation, subversion and conformity, and that they do so in highly context-specific ways. Theoretically, the paper invokes Gramsci to locate these dynamics within a constellation of hegemonic political and cultural forces, notably class relations and heteronormativity. These hegemonic formations, I suggest, compromise – but do not foreclose – queer forms of intimacy, embodiment, and activism in this context.

❖ **1. 15 – 3.00 pm: Panel D - Coercion, Custom and Consent: debates about marriage in colonial Africa** - Convenor: Benedetta Rossi; Chair: Amy Redgrave; Discussant: Tom McCaskie (Lecture Room 7)

► **Sarah Delius (University of the Witwatersrand): *'Hands free, Feet free': marriage, slavery and colonial policy in Sierra Leone 1880-1930***

Domestic slavery was only officially abolished in Sierra Leone in 1928 and, although Sierra Leone had been set up as a colony for free slaves, it was the last of the British colonies to abolish slavery. It was only after several public embarrassments in 1924 and 1926 that the British were forced to admit that slavery was still practised in Sierra Leone. Academics in the past have examined how this 'slow death' of slavery affected the anti-colonial struggle and added to the creation of rural peasantry. This paper will argue that this fails to engage fully in the complexity and legacies of slavery in Sierra Leone. Most lacking in this line of argument is that it does not engage in issues of gender and the complex relationships between marriage and slavery.

From 1880 to 1930, the idea of being a wife and being a slave were of perceived as

overlapping in multiple – often contradictory – discourses. Thus, the positions of wife and slave were conflated either in colonial arguments that described how badly women in Sierra Leone were treated (as both wives and slaves were exploited and treated as chattel); or in arguments that aimed to show how the ‘domestic institution’ (i.e. African slavery) was benign, because female slaves could be assimilated to wives. In the records, the narratives of women, too, reflect this overlap, or semantic confusion, as women transferred as slaves or pawns described themselves as being given as wives to a soldier or a chief.

This paper argues that these terms need to be problematized in the debate about the abolition of slavery. It also argues that we need to re-examine terms like ‘domestic slavery’, often used as a blanket term to explain the complex intersections between the institution of slavery and marriage. This paper also argues that in order to fully understand the intersection of marriage and slavery in Sierra Leone between 1880 and 1930, it needs to be examined through patterns of dependency, and hierarchies within households and states. The intersections of marriage and slavery cannot be divorced from the tensions between the British abolitionist causes, the colonial project, and how these terms became tied up in the ongoing power struggles between chiefs and British administrators.

► **Toni Smith (University of Birmingham): *Colonial and missionary perspectives on gender roles and marriage practices in Congo, and their legacies***

In the last twenty to thirty years there has been an increase in civil conflicts in certain African countries where sexual violence has become a prominent part of the terror tactics used against civilians; women and girls in particular. ‘Sexual/conjugal slavery’ and ‘forced marriage’ are just some of the terms that have evolved across international legal, academic and development circles to describe the relations and harms committed in wartime. Historically, violence in Africa has been framed within narratives which portray Africa as a dark and brutal place. These modes of discourse have been shaped by colonial ideas. In this paper I aim to contextualise historically some of the perspectives which inform modern discourses on gender-based violence in Africa.

My work is concerned with Congolese historical gender relations and marriage practices as perceived and categorised by Belgian colonialists and missionaries. I explore colonial understandings of gender roles, consent, marriage and slavery and the ways in which they interacted with African patriarchal values to demarcate legitimate and illegitimate sexuality. This approach serves as a useful lens through which to view structures of power that eroded women’s statuses and positions in Congolese society and entrenched gender inequality. It also provides another way to make sense of some of the discursive limits of contemporary international narratives that simplify and inform development agendas centred on tackling sexual violence in the Congo. It is important to examine both the conditions under which gender inequality was normalised and the stories which have been employed to explain this normalisation over time. Therefore, it is necessary to explore colonial discourses around ‘native marriage’. What were the colonial debates/agendas and why do they matter today? How was marriage understood and practised by some Congolese communities?

► **Rhian Keyse (University of Exeter): *‘The accused is not my husband’: forced marriage, justice and resistance in the case of Zeruya Akach 1942-45***

In October 1942, Zeruya Akach, a young Luo woman, fled to the Church Missionary Society

headquarters at Ng'iya in Western Kenya. Zeruya alleged that she had been forced into marriage with a wealthy polygamist, from whom she had attempted to escape several times without success, and sought assistance from Archdeacon Walter Owen to secure her freedom from this unwanted union. What followed from Zeruya's disclosure was a long and complex legal case, described by Owen as 'the most important case concerning the rights of girls' to have ever been discussed in Kenya. The legal proceedings spanned three years, a range of courts from local tribunals to the Supreme Court, and produced much correspondence at the highest levels of the colonial government. This case is one of the only surviving files on forced marriage in the Kenya National Archives or the CMS archives in the Cadbury Library to include the direct testimony of an affected young woman or girl. It is therefore a crucial source of historical evidence in terms of how young Luo women and girls constructed and contested forced marriage.

Using a broad range of legal sources – including court transcripts, witness statements, and police investigation notes – as well as colonial correspondence, this paper will examine how young women and girls like Zeruya, along with their husbands and fathers, missionaries, and the colonial administration, sought to use colonial legal structures to contest appropriate responses to forced and early marriages. It will show how differing notions of custom and tradition, justice, and the moral responsibility of the colonial state, were brought to bear on such issues by the range of actors concerned. What emerged was a set of broader debates relating to the ideal relationship between colonial authorities and the governed, the acceptable limits of force, and the resistance strategies available to women and girls in Western Kenya. More broadly, this paper will shed light on the ways in which legal strategies were used to contest the gender-based rights and duties of colonial subjects and the colonial state.

➤ **Elizabeth Thornberry (Johns Hopkins): *Customary marriage and state power in early C20 South Africa***

This paper examines debates over the recognition of "customary" African marriages in South Africa during the decade between the end of the South African War and the creation of the Union of South Africa. During this period, anticipation of the coming political union reopened the "native question" in South African politics, and the issue of whether to recognize customary marriages came to serve as a focal point for a host of broader questions about the capacity of Africans to become "civilized," the value of indigenous African culture, the legal status of African women, and the authority of chiefs and other traditional leaders.

In this paper, I trace the development of these debates across the four colonies, each of which took a different approach to the regulation of African marriages. I then turn to an examination of court records from King Williams Town, a magisterial district in the Eastern Cape region, in order to investigate how the colonial administration dealt with customary marriage in regions where it was given little or no formal recognition. I trace the role of marital disputes in the development of an "informal" system of customary courts. Colonial officials in these "informal" courts applied (their interpretation of) customary law to African family law disputes, despite the lack of any statutory authority to do so. I argue that the development of these courts demonstrates that the turn towards indirect rule in South Africa was driven by the demands of African litigants, and in particular by

demands for the adjudication of marriage disputes. These demands came not only from older African men who sought the help of the colonial state to enforce the rights that they claimed over women and men, but also from younger men and women who hoped that the colonial state would intervene on their behalf. In turn, these demands shaped the forms of citizenship put forward by black politicians in the early 20th century, as intellectuals articulated a defence of customary law within the discourse of civilisation.

❖ **1.00 – 2.45 pm: Panel E The Dilemmas of Desire: marriage (ability), social media and popular culture** - Chair: Juliet Gilbert; Discussants: Karin Barber (Danford Room)

➤ **Katrien Pype (KU Leuven / Birmingham): *Bolingo ya Face - stranger sociality, digital marriages, and family dilemmas in contemporary Kinshasa***

In Kinshasa, social network sites such as Instagram, WeChat, Facebook and Whatsapp are mostly used as dating apps. Kinshasa's youth have easily embraced these new platforms to enlarge their social networks because they play into the desire for stranger sociality so striking for the lifeworlds of Kinshasa (inhabitants of Kinshasa). It also leads to an expansion of potential love partners. In the playful digital courting and flirting, the lines between 'sexual play' and 'matrimonial commitment' have been blurred. This presentation starts from the premise that electronic networks are epitomising the possibilities of love relationships that the urban context of the megapolis already offered. Virtual networks now also make the dream of 'marrying a *djika*' (someone from the diaspora) actually possible. The analysis will focus on how electronic marriages come into being, are managed, and very often, dissolve, and how families respond to these new strangers. New dangerous categories of 'risky lovers' are identified and debated, especially '*mibali ya poto*' (husbands from Europe) and '*basi ya face*' (girls from Facebook). The material shows how electronic social networks not only enlarge users' social lifeworlds, but also how these tie into aspirations for 'foreign' sexual partners.

➤ **Ewa Majczak (University of Oxford): *'Facebook will cry': photographs, seduction and marriage***

In this paper I explore how popular photography mediates practices of courtship and ideals of marital life among young Bamileke women living in Yaounde. The photographs are made by various means ranging from mobile phones to photographic studios and are displayed for example on Whatsapp profiles and Facebook.

In order to 'catch a husband' but also to 'keep a husband' young Bamileke women are often encouraged - by their partners and by each other - to seduce. Seduction is achieved by creating particular appearances through a series of aesthetic and bodily practices. It is extended through photographs which, in addition, entail carefully staged posing. Young women draw their ideas on how to look and how to pose from popular culture, including music stars seen in video clips, models in fashion shows and celebrities in glamour magazines. Thus self-images express and materialise young women's desires to get married and particular ideas about desired marital life.

Determined to achieve the onset of social adulthood that marriage bestows, young Bamileke women actively use their self-representations to increase their chances of finding a suitable marriage partner by displaying their images, for example on Facebook. These practices draw on a longer trajectory of photographic use. Images were, and to an extent still are, sent from towns to villages or

abroad as part of marriage courtship, often through the intermediary of kin. By displaying their photographs today young women make use of familiar practices in new ways. Facebook and Whatsapp in particular, and mobile phones and internet technologies in general, offer these young Bamileke women ways to pursue their seduction enterprise according to socially acceptable norms of female propriety and secrecy.

By often updating displayed self-representations women are not only circulating the images of seductive women and establishing it as a desirable part of courtship and marital relationships. They are also calling for affective responses that, I argue, rely on a particular aesthetic appearance that the images circulate. In a context where other channels of knowledge about a person are less or no longer available, the photographs are further reinforcing the idea that appearances matter as a way of knowing the person in general, here the potential marriage candidate in particular.

► **Raheem Oluwafuminiyi (Adeyemi College of Education): *‘Having his baby and not being his wife’: the Baby-Mama syndrome and the changing roles of marriage in the Nigerian music industry***

‘Baby-mama’ is a term used by the men folk to describe a woman or mother who bear their child or children outside marriage. Often seen as a derogatory term, but strictly biological in connotation, the word has made inroads across societies and is widely recognised in popular cultures. This was first noticed in the lyrics of Jamaican reggae and dancehall songs around the 1980s, and again from the mid to late 1990s in American hip-hop and RnB songs. Beyond its widespread use as part of hip hop’s dialect, its biological practicability meant that ‘baby-mama’ assumed a greater dimension among celebrities too.

With the remarkable transformations in the Nigerian music industry from the late 2000s, the ‘baby-mama’ syndrome became a growing trend among celebrities. An account noted that this trend grew from a paltry 7 in 2013, jumping to as much as 15 reported cases by the end of 2014. The number quadrupled between 2015 and 2016 and shows no sign of abating. The growing trend has given rise to questions such as whether the trend is pursued for pleasure or popularity ratings. As this trend heightens, many fans too seem to be taking a cue from this. It is not uncommon to find young girls choosing to have babies for similarly young or older men rather than being wives. By this, the sacrosanctity of marriage becomes threatened.

In many African societies, what constitutes marriage was not in itself the union binding two adults but what Olugboyega Alaba called “legitimate and responsible procreation”. Among the Yoruba of southwest Nigeria, for instance, a child was seen as a precious item without which an adult, especially a woman, was looked upon with derision. Though marriage has witnessed a downturn in recent times, especially under the forces of social change, it is still highly regarded. With the rise of the ‘baby-mama’ syndrome, the roles of marriage appear to have been significantly reversed. While a fraction of these ‘baby-mamas’ end up marrying their ‘baby-daddies’, most culminate in ‘reverse marriage’ where, though unmarried, both parties assume the role of fringe parents. It is in light of the above that this paper examines the ‘baby-mama’ syndrome in the Nigerian music industry and explores changes in the marriage institution whose ultimate goal it is to foster legitimate and responsible procreation.

- ❖ **3.00 – 4.30 pm: Panel F - Between Stigma and Survival: contemporary perspectives on forced marriage in Africa** - Convenor: Benedetta Rossi; Chair: Jessica Johnson; Discussant: Benjamin Lawrance

- ▶ **Eleanor Seymour (University of Birmingham): *Undesirable women: post-war reintegration and the stigma of 'LRA marriages'***

This paper will explore the phenomenon of LRA marriages and the resulting stigmatization that women who experienced these marriages face. Former bush-wives of the LRA are often subjected to stigmatization by their society upon their return and attempted reintegration. This paper will analyse these experiences using Goffman's stigma theory to explore why these women face such intense stigmatization within their community and what shape this stigmatization takes. Could it be that bride-wealth is not paid? Or are these women considered to have masculine qualities as they have been taught to fight? These questions will be explored and analysed with the intention of understanding why former LRA bush-wives experience stigmatization, what form this stigmatization takes, and what this stigmatization means in terms of their future relationships and reintegration into their communities.

This paper will explore the phenomenon of LRA marriages and the resulting stigmatization that women who experienced these marriages are facing in northern Uganda today. Former 'bush-wives' are often subjected to stigmatization by their society upon their return and attempted reintegration. This paper will analyse these experiences using Goffman's stigma theory to explore why these women face such intense stigmatization within their community and what shape this stigmatization takes. How do different factors affect these women's status and opportunities? Some studies emphasise the absence of bridewealth in connection to LRA unions as a major obstacle for returning women who try to negotiate their experience, and their LRA-born children, with their communities of origin. Other studies, including my own fieldwork data, suggest that these women - having been trained to fight - are perceived as having masculine qualities and face criticism and rejection by potential new sexual and marriage partners. These questions will be explored and analysed with the intention of understanding why former LRA bush-wives experience stigmatization, what form this stigmatization takes, and what this stigmatization means in terms of their future relationships and reintegration into their communities. It will consider struggles over definitions of legitimate and illegitimate (LRA) marriages, and the consequences of these ideas for female LRA veterans trying to reclaim their lives.

- ▶ **Allen Kiconco (Uganda Christian University): *Marriage for the 'new woman' and the LRA: experiences of female abductees in the Acholi region, Uganda***

Girls, now young women, who were abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) experience new challenges upon their return to their home community in Acholi sub region. Patterns of forced marriages of young girls in Northern Uganda to the LRA are well documented. However, the rights of the girl former abductees (now young women) post return, and the impact of culture on relationships and marriage, have been under-researched. Many young women ex-abductees lived in captivity for a significant part of their relatively young life and they have now returned to a patriarchal society where marriage confers respectability and is the very life-blood of personal recovery and well-being. Unmarried women among the Acholi are kept at the periphery of the community. Thus, if marriage

means life, getting married has been seen as an opportunity and a springboard from which to start the process of recovery and achieve reintegration. But the girls' past links with the LRA confounds their acceptance into the community as they are regarded as 'stained' and 'unmarriageable'. However, in such desperation, the girl ex-abductees casually engage in informal marriages for the sake of acceptability, as it remains difficult for them to 'get married' in the cultural sense. Interviews with 57 girls reveal high levels of stigmatization and intimate partner violence (IPV), forcing many to consider and to abandon informal unions.

This presentation will show that marriage, as a cultural institution, remains an important determinant of the socio-economic reintegration of former female abductees. Such women's experiences cannot be ignored. The presentation will analyse how their return relates to other social actors (such as potential partners), how their marriages are perceived and negotiated by the women themselves, and challenges involved in maintaining them. I suggest that the challenges and frustrations confronting women abductees' marriage aspirations are beyond their control, compounded by multiple influences, including traditions, gender inequalities, unsupportive biological families and devastating poverty.

❖ **4.45 – 6.15 pm: Cadbury Keynote Lecture**

- **Benjamin Lawrance (Rochester Institute of Technology): “*The Iniquity and Inequity of Marriage in Africa*” (Lecture Room 7)**

Marriage is central to African life and a vibrant and dynamic African institution buttressing justice and injustices, legality and illegitimacy across the continent. Marriages—by choice, by capture, by contract, by purchase—have been foundational to the instantiation of agency, autonomy, representation, reproduction, intimacy, rape, slavery, lineage, family and law. Marriage is at once the repository of tradition, a well-pool for conservative tenets, and a site of instability, innovation, and contestation.

Abstracts Friday 2 June

❖ **9.30 - 11.30 am: Panel G - Playing Roles and Pushing Boundaries: telling tales about conformity and transgression** – Chair: Rebecca Jones; Discussant: Carli Coetzee

- **Pernille Nailor (University of Birmingham) : *Writing beyond marriage: (il)legitimate sexualities in the contemporary Nigerian novel***

This paper argues that the contemporary Nigerian novel has struck out in new directions since the turn of the millennium, taking writing on gender relations outside its traditional realm of marriage and motherhood to discussions of love and sexuality, including illicit forms such as same-sex attraction and inter-generational love affairs. Since the novel genre was popularised at the cusp of decolonisation in the 1950s and early 1960s in Nigeria, several female authors have utilised it as a creative medium to raise questions of gender and marriage, and to criticise the way in which their male counterparts dealt with (or did not deal with) women's issues in their stories. Hence, with Flora Nwapa's groundbreaking *Efuru* (1966), the stage was set for female writers to deal with questions of gender by exploring wife- and motherhood. And a number of women writers have indeed followed in Nwapa's

footsteps by focusing on themes such as childlessness, polygamy and kinship.

However, focusing on Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) and Abubakar Adam Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (2016), this paper claims that a subset of Nigerian novels published in the twenty-first century simultaneously build on, and depart from, this specific literary tradition, meaning that literature is breaking new ground in representations of sexuality beyond marriage in contemporary Africa.

Whilst contemporary authors still ponder wife- and motherhood by exploring the various gender roles that take part in shaping women's lives, the writers also look at what lies beyond, as they foreground issues of sexuality and challenge the idea that sexuality is mainly a site of reproduction. Situating her story within the framework of the Biafran war, Okparanta portrays, with vivid realism, same-sex relationships between Nigerian girls and/or women alongside issues of marriage. Ibrahim, on the other hand, examines an extra-marital relationship between an older Muslim woman and a younger man, and so explores under-studied ideas about Muslim and older female sexualities. Moreover, this new section of Nigerian novelists is distinctive in that novels about gender and sexuality are written by both male and female authors who foreground the female character and her feminine condition. This generation thus recognises that contemporary literary discussions of gender and sexuality are inhabited by men as well, and are no longer simply the preserve of women writers. My analyses of the two novels in question will suggest that understandings of contemporary African sexualities are greatly enriched by readings of new Nigerian fiction, which is constantly pushing boundaries in terms of what can and cannot be said in public about illicit sexualities.

► **Anastasia Lykhovich (St Petersburg State University): *Transformation of gender roles and marital relations among Hausa in contemporary popular literature of Northern Nigeria***

This study addresses recent popular literature of Northern Nigeria. Hausa popular fiction is considered to be an influential social tool for debate on topical issues, predominantly revealing tension around conservative dominant values of Muslim Northern Nigeria and raising awareness of changing social circumstances.

Traditional views on the role, responsibilities, and behaviour of men and women reinforce women's inferior status in all social spheres. Hausa writers deeply reflect on gender roles within different contexts. Some of them portray women characters as victims, others portray them as a catalyst of social change. In either case this body of popular literature brings out into the open the image of the modern Hausa woman – an individual with a diversity of emotions, desires, unique behavioural patterns and attitudes. In this discourse such books serve as a reliable source on existing social restrictions and expectations concerning woman. They also provide evidence on how new generations perceive the social role and status of women, and on how current social changes affect gender relations.

This paper examines four works published in 2010 and 2011 by female writers: Bilkisu Funtuwa, Baida'u Muhammad Gada, Humaira Lawan Zango, and Zulaihat Sani Kagara. While cherishing and valuing highly the family life and marriage, these authors offer instructions to young women who desire to succeed in marriage. Much attention is given to interpersonal relations, gender relations, emotional and psychological reactions in contrast to conservative vision implying that a successful marriage depends mostly on woman's good character and proper upbringing. At the same

time female writers still emphasize different shortcomings of women's rights and desires for protection in marriage. Marriage is not only an essential part of human socialization; it is also a certain mechanism of social protection. Single working women, for instance, have to live in conditions of vulnerability, social risk and reputational damage. Professional development is only possible under conditions of gaining marital status. The dual nature of marriage – as a social institution and as a medium for interaction between individuals – is evident for modern Hausa writers who find their own ways of thinking about and expressing this phenomenon.

► **Paul Mason (Rhodes University): Hegemonic and counter-hegemonic representations of masculinity and gender relations in three post-apartheid novels and a Zimbabwean novella**

This conference paper will open with a brief description of the tradition-based isiXhosa social practice or institution of marriage within the context of post-apartheid South Africa, as well as that practised by the Shona grouping in Zimbabwe from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s. This description emphasises the patriarchal and predominantly heteronormative perceptions of gender and gender relations in these two social contexts. The ensuing discussion will take the form of commenting upon representations of conventional and transgressive attitudes towards marriage and gender relations in three South African novels, namely K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), Siphiwo Mahala's *When a Man Cries* (2007) and Thando Mgqolozana's *A Man Who is Not a Man* (2009). Thereafter, attention will be paid to *The House of Hunger* (1978) by Zimbabwean author Dambudzo Marechera. Examination of these texts will address a concern with the constraints these writers faced in exploring and articulating alternative attitudes toward gender and gender dynamics.

Mgqolozana's and Mahala's novels have been selected for the understanding they provide, from the narrative point of view of 'failed' men, of the lengthy initiation rites whereby young isiXhosa men are inducted into notions and performances of masculine identity. It will be shown that these rites of passage are premised upon long-established and largely unquestioned assumptions as to the marital duties the young men will be expected to honour and maintain, and to perpetuate through their sons and grandsons. Specific attention will be paid to the central and highly contentious role the act of circumcision serves in defining and setting up the governing idea and practice of black masculinity. It will be argued that the frequently damaging physical and psychological consequences of circumcision can be interpreted as symptoms of a clash between traditional and contemporary notions and performances of black masculine identity. By way of contrast, discussion will then shift to a focus on relationships between gay black men in contemporary South Africa, as represented in K. Sello Duiker's novel.

A discussion of Dambudzo Marechera's novel brings analysis of the literary texts to its conclusion. Marechera's text will be discussed in terms of its transgressive orientation towards the gender relations that prevailed in Zimbabwe from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s. The fact that Marechera spent eight years in exile, living in London from 1974 till 1982, adds another dimension to my discussion of the dominant or hegemonic notions of gender and gender relations that attach to and perpetuate a specific version of married life.

The paper will conclude by briefly indicating examples of contemporary cultural expression, notably within the fields of theatre and dance, that indicate a progressive reconceptualisation of

heterosexual relationships and relationships between gay black men in contemporary South Africa. It will be suggested that these advances or shifts, though significant and encouraging, remain at a considerable distance from a truly progressive politics of gender and racial identity.

► **Olga Zavyalova (St Petersburg State University): *Female character and models of female behaviour in Manden oral tradition***

For Manden oral tradition the female image is very significant; among the main characters we can find women's personages not only in fairy tales, but in the epic stories and in mythology, as well as in small forms of folklore. The model of female behaviour is presented by the characters of mother, sister and wife. One of the main ideas of Manden oral tradition is an opposition of consanguinity and the kinship based on marriage. The wife in epic is often the traitress of her husband whereas his mother and the sister help or even save the hero. For examples we can analyse epic legends on Sundiata, Da ka Kore Kele as well as a fairy tale about a successful hunter and his confrontation with wild animals. One can also note that in the general myth about the founders of the Hunters Union the female character Saane appears together with a male character Kondolon; in different stories she can play the role of his wife, mother, sister or friend.

Some fairy tales represent a model of female behaviour by which it is possible to identify an image of the wife, and the woman's role in Manden society. Some of them are devoted to the right choice of the husband. There are many fairy tales "for men" whose main idea is the relation of a man with his wives and his choosing of the "best" wife between co-spouses. The problem of conflicts between co-wives is typical for any polygamous society and Manden people are not an exception.

In oral tradition of Manden an image of mother, sister and an image of the wife are often in opposition. Positive female behaviour models are presented as well in proverbs of Bamana and Maninka. The interests of her family (first of all the father, the brother, or children) are the most important for woman as we can find it in oral tradition, But during our conversations in Guinean villages (2014) we could find that first of all a wife is faithful to her husband . Respect for the husband in any situation is marked as positive female behaviour as well as self-sacrifice for her children.

❖ **12noon – 1.30 pm: Guest lecture**, in collaboration with Birmingham Research Institute for History and Cultures (Lecture Room 7)

► **Silvia Federici (Hofstra University): *Women, the Body and Capitalist Accumulation, Past and Present.***

Since its inception, controlling women's reproductive capacity and turning the female body into an object of domination has been an essential condition of capitalist development. In her presentation, Silvia Federici will discuss the history of this 'war on women', focusing on the elements of continuity between past and present and women's resistance against it.
