

DASAtalks Autumn 2012

Trajectories of Emancipation



The Autumn 2012 series of DASATalks focus on the experience of enslavement and emancipation in African societies. Two papers (Deutsch and Barcia-Paz) look at contexts marked by the legacy of trans-Atlantic slavery, highlighting practices of memory and commemoration in contemporary African societies (Deutsch); and investigating the African origins of forms of resistance and warfare developed in Cuba and Bahia by slaves of African descent. Saboro's research examines songs and folklore in Northern Ghana in order to locate evidence of people's past struggles against enslavement remained crystallized in local performative arts and rituals. The remaining papers analyze the process of emancipation in twentieth century African societies. At the beginning of the twentieth century European powers legally abolished slavery in their West African colonies.

However, the colonial administration refrained from enforcing anti-slavery provisions for fear that former slaves would be difficult to control and recruit (e.g. as soldiers and forced labour). Research on the 'slow death of slavery' suggests that a conservative alliance between former masters and colonial administrators generated new forms of exploitation for slave descendants. Anthropologists and historians who focused on these issues showed that emancipation occurred mainly as a result of the agency of ex-slaves, who developed different strategies of resistance and migrated to areas where they could control their own labour.

This series of talks focuses on the agency and experience of slaves and slave descendants. It follows trajectories of emancipation in specific West African regions, including Morocco, Mauritania, Niger, Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, Chad, and Benin. In most of the contexts discussed by the speakers, slave ancestry continues to have consequences for people's identity, opportunities, and their capacity to control their labour, persons, and property. Speakers also consider human rights issues, citizenship, and the political mobilization of slave descendants today.

Programme

(click title to view abstract)

4 September

The 'invisible people': Hratin of Mauritania and Southern Morocco

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/cwas/events/2012/invisible-people.aspx>) Ann McDougall (University of Alberta).

26 September

Migration and emancipation in West Africa's labour history: the missing links

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/cwas/events/2012/migration.aspx>) Benedetta Rossi (CWAS, University of Birmingham)

2 October

History, memory and commemoration (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/cwas/events/2012/history.aspx>)

Jan-Georg Deutch (Oxford)

9 October

Memories of slavery and resistance to the slave trade in northern Ghana: the kanbong (foreign enslaver) in time and space

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/cwas/events/2012/memories.aspx>) Emmanuel Saboro (WISE)

16 October

African Warfare in Bahia and Cuba, 1807-1844

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/cwas/events/2012/african-warfare.aspx>) Manuel Barcia Paz (Leeds)

23 October

Trajectories of activism: contemporary anti-slavery movements (Niger, Mauritania, Mali and the Parisian diaspora)

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/cwas/events/2012/trajectories.aspx>) Lotte Pelckmans (MSH Paris)

6 November

Famine and post-slavery society in Tunduru, Tanzania 1929-63

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/cwas/events/2012/famine.aspx>) Felicitas Becker (Cambridge)

20 November

Property and labour in Faya-Largeau, Northern Chad

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/cwas/events/2012/property.aspx>) Judith Scheele (Oxford)

27 November

Yesterday's slaves: politics of belonging and struggles for citizenship amongst the Gando of Benin

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/cwas/events/2012/yesterdays-slaves.aspx>) Eric-Komlavi Hahonou (Roskilde)

Location and time

All talks will take place in the Danford Room on the second floor of the Arts building at 17:00-18:00.

Further information

- Please contact dasa@contacts.bham.ac.uk (<mailto:dasa@contacts.bham.ac.uk>)

