



SLAFNET
Slavery in Africa



African Legal Abolitions: Rethinking Actors, Chronologies, and Frameworks

Online Conference, 21-23 September 2021



Emperor Haile Selassie speaks before the League of Nations, detail from painting in St. George Cathedral, Addis Ababa

Please register at this link: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/history/events/2021/sep/african-legal-abolitions-rethinking-actors-chronologies-and-frameworks>

English-French and French-English simultaneous translation will be provided for all presentations/debates.

Contents

Concept note (English and French)	pp. 2-3
Program (panels and abstracts)	pp. 4-19
Timetable	pp. 20-21

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Re-centering legal abolition around African actors, institutions, and legal concepts

This workshop focuses on the ideas and actions of African rulers, politicians, intellectuals, legal and religious specialists, free commoners and enslaved persons in relation to the legal abolition of slavery in their countries and regions. When, how, and why did African actors begin to mobilise in order to delegalize or criminalize slavery within their legal and normative frameworks? What concepts did they use? What rationales did they develop in different African languages and legal traditions? How did they react to European antislavery ideas? The present workshop, organized by the research project “African Abolitionism: The Rise and Transformations of Anti-Slavery in Africa” (AFRAB), explores the legal abolition of slavery in Africa by analyzing specific African legal strategies, contextualized in local political systems, normative cultures, and interactions with international actors.

The introduction of abolitionist norms in African jurisdictions should be subjected to closer scrutiny. Although many African rulers were opposed to abolitionist ideas, at least some of them developed abolitionist strategies in the nineteenth century (and possibly earlier) and changed their legislations accordingly. The relevant literature often downplays their actions as mere posturing. But European abolitionism, too, had other agendas beyond humanitarianism. After occupying Africa under the banner of abolitionism, colonial powers became accountable for enforcing the laws they introduced. Yet, colonial administrators often turned a blind eye to lingering slavery and introduced new forms of labor coercion. Abolitionist laws, indigenous and colonial, were not necessarily applied, or perceived as just, by everyone. In most African regions, codified state law co-existed with legal norms and institutions transmitted and regulated orally. The rise and development of abolitionism in Africa happened in contexts marked by legal pluralism. Commonly accepted periodizations of African emancipation based mainly on the passing of European abolitionist laws do not account for the complex and pluralist juridical worlds in which abolitionist ideas developed in Africa. Following decolonization, all African countries abolished slavery. Most of them also criminalized it and ratified international anti-slavery conventions. Yet, in some parts of Africa pro-slavery ideologies lingered on.

The workshop aims to expand our understanding of the transformations of African legal apparatuses from pro-slavery to anti-slavery and to add precision to the inventory and periodization of abolitionist legislation in different African regions and societies. It invites close analysis of the terminology used in particular African laws or edicts, and of the local debates surrounding the passing of such laws.

Contributions to the workshop will:

- analyze sources that reveal different legal and normative approaches to the abolition of slavery in particular African locations and at different moments in time;
- illustrate circumstances characterized by legal and normative pluralism or hybridity;
- discuss tensions and/or complementarities between different legal approaches to the eradication of slavery in any one region or locality;
- document processes of legal and normative transformation in written or oral laws/norms for the abolition of slavery;
- examine the ideas and practices of the main actors involved in the development of legislation on slavery and/or abolition;
- investigate clashes between pro-slavery (including arguments in favor of amelioration) and anti-slavery positions.

Recentrer l'abolition légale autour des acteurs, institutions et concepts juridiques africains

Cette rencontre se concentre sur les idées et les actions des acteurs africains (responsables politiques, intellectuels, spécialistes juridiques et religieux, personnes libres et esclavisés) en relation avec l'abolition légale de l'esclavage dans leurs pays et sociétés. Quand et comment les acteurs africains ont-ils commencé à se mobiliser afin de rendre illégal ou criminaliser l'esclavage dans leurs cadres juridiques et normatifs ? Quels concepts juridiques et normatifs ont-ils utilisés ? Quelles logiques ont-ils développées dans leurs différentes langues et traditions juridiques ? Comment ont-ils réagi aux idées anti-esclavagistes européennes ? Le présent atelier, organisé par le projet de recherche « African Abolitionism: The Rise and Transformations of Anti-Slavery in Africa » (AFRAB), explore l'abolition légale de l'esclavage en analysant les stratégies d'acteurs africains spécifiques, contextualisés dans systèmes politiques et cultures normatives spécifiques, et en interactions avec les acteurs internationaux.

L'introduction de normes abolitionnistes dans les juridictions africaines doit faire l'objet d'un examen approfondi. Même si de nombreux pouvoirs africains se sont opposés aux idées abolitionnistes, certains d'entre eux ont cependant développé des stratégies abolitionnistes au XIXe siècle et ont modifié leurs législations en conséquence. La littérature académique réduit souvent leurs actions à de simples postures. Or les abolitionnistes européens avaient d'autres objectifs également que celui de leur seule vision humaniste. Après avoir occupé l'Afrique en utilisant l'abolitionnisme comme justification, les puissances coloniales ont été tenues par la suite de faire appliquer les lois qu'elles avaient introduites. Toutefois, les administrateurs coloniaux ont souvent fermé les yeux sur l'esclavage persistant et ont introduit de nouvelles formes de coercition du travail. Les lois abolitionnistes, autochtones et coloniales, n'étaient pas nécessairement appliquées ou perçues comme justes par tout le monde. Dans la plupart des régions africaines, le droit codifié coexistait avec les normes juridiques transmises et réglementées oralement. La progression des concepts abolitionnistes en Afrique s'est produite dans des contextes marqués par le pluralisme juridique. Les cadres chronologiques communément adoptés de l'émancipation africaine sont basés principalement sur l'adoption de lois abolitionnistes européennes et ne rendent souvent pas compte des mondes juridiques complexes et pluralistes dans lesquels les idées abolitionnistes se sont développées en Afrique. Après la décolonisation, tous les pays africains ont aboli l'esclavage. La plupart d'entre eux l'ont également criminalisé et ont ratifié les conventions internationales contre l'esclavage. Pourtant, dans certaines régions d'Afrique, des idéologies pro-esclavagistes ont persisté.

L'atelier vise à élargir notre compréhension des transformations des appareils juridiques africains du pro-esclavagisme à l'anti-esclavagisme, et à ajouter de la précision à la compréhension et périodisation de la législation abolitionniste dans différentes régions et sociétés africains. Il invite à une analyse approfondie de la terminologie utilisée dans les lois ou décrets africains, et des débats locaux entourant l'adoption de ces lois. Les ateliers auront pour objectifs de :

- analyser des sources qui révèlent différentes approches juridiques et normatives sur l'abolition de l'esclavage dans des lieux et sociétés spécifiques et à différents moments;
- illustrer des situations caractérisées par le pluralisme juridique ou l'hybridité normative;
- discuter des tensions et/ou des complémentarités entre les différentes approches légalistes sur l'éradication de l'esclavage dans une région ou une localité donnée;
- documenter les processus de transformation des lois écrites ou orales pour l'abolition de l'esclavage;
- examiner les idées et les pratiques des principaux acteurs impliqués dans l'élaboration de la législation sur l'esclavage et/ou l'abolition;
- analyser les affrontements entre positions anti-esclavagistes et pro-esclavagistes (y compris, parmi ces dernières, les arguments en faveur de l'amélioration des conditions serviles).

Tuesday 21 September
1.20pm-2.00pm UK time

Welcome and organisation (Melanie Horstead)
Introduction (Benedetta Rossi)

Panel 1: 2.00pm-4.00pm UK time
(20m presentation+10m questions)+(20+10)+(20+10)+30m discussion= 2h

EXPERIMENTATION AND CONTESTATION : LEGAL ABOLITION IN THE LATE 18th AND EARLY 19th CENTURIES

Chair : Bronwen Everill (Cambridge University)

As abolitionism started winning the ideological battle in Euro-American politics, legal abolition in Africa was in its early stages. It took different forms in different political contexts. British abolitionists imagined Sierra Leone as a place where a new society could be put in place, governed by new laws that condemned slavery in ways attuned with “local culture” (as they imagined it). Tim Soriano’s paper interrogates the assumptions underpinning these legal experiments in the “Province of Freedom”. The degree of British influence in Sierra Leone was exceptional: most African regions enjoyed greater independence from Europe in the first half of the 19th century. Henry Lovejoy discusses circumstances in a large number of locations where British officials negotiated treaties with local rulers who committed to abolish the slave trade. What were the legal consequences of these treaties? What followed the treaties’ signature in different African legal and political contexts? How did the engagements taken with British representatives translate into local legal concepts? The panel ends with Ismael Montana’s discussion of yet another entirely different scenario, the case of the Regency of Tunis, which was the first African Islamic polity to pass edicts to abolish slavery, giving rise to sustained debates among Tunisian specialists of Islamic law.

The Africanization of Abolitionism: Granville Sharp and the Frankpledge (18th Century)

Tim Soriano

The Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor, founded in 1786 in London, consisted of members who were committed to establishing an abolitionist society from former slaves in the British Atlantic World. The noted attorney and abolitionist, Granville Sharp, served as the intellectual leader of the group with his beliefs centering upon evangelical Christian principles and English Common Law. This paper analyzes how Sharp's principles served as the foundation of implanting abolitionist ideas among Africans through a reconnection to their past - a past that came before slavery and before English Common Law. This reconnection of these former slaves to their past was to be accomplished by a settlement at present day Sierra Leone. The settlers were required to be Christians as they were viewed by the Committee much like the Jews of the Book of Exodus returning to Israel. Once in Africa, Sharp believed the settlers would organically return to their pre-slavery state of a yeoman farmer lifestyle, enhanced by their return to their own legal system, the frankpledge. The frankpledge consisted of oaths taken by the settlers, promising one another protection with violations consisting of fines. According to Sharp, the Anglo-Saxon frankpledge was African customary law, both uncontaminated by the corrupt, un-Christian slave laws of contemporary Britain. Although the "Province of Freedom", based on free Blacks from the Atlantic

World, and led by the London-based Committee, failed in 1789, this first instillation of Western abolitionist principles in Africa served as the basis for subsequent colonial abolitionist policies.

Bio: Tim Soriano is a PhD candidate in history at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is also a Scholar-in-Residence at the Newberry Library, Chicago and recipient of a postdoctoral research position at the Max Planck Institute of Legal History and Legal Theory in Frankfurt. His most recent work is "'What Rascals!' Perceptions of Free Labor in the Bulama Settlement, 1792-1793" in an upcoming issue of *African Economic History*.

To Prohibit and Abolish the Purchase and Sale of Slaves: British Anti-Slave Trade Legislation along the Coast of Africa, 1817-1880

Henry B. Lovejoy

After the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, the British began aggressively signing bilateral treaties with various nations, most especially in Europe and eventually the Americas. This process led to the establishment of Courts of Mixed Commission around the Atlantic and Indian Ocean littorals, which then adjudicated on the over 225,000 individuals reclassified as “Liberated Africans.” While Britain was gaining major concessions, most especially the right to search and seize foreign ships on international waters, the British were simultaneously signing anti-slave trade treaties with Africans and their descendants along the coast of West Africa from the Gambia to Angola, as well as along the coast of East Africa, Madagascar, and the Arabian Peninsula. This paper examines over 300 pieces of anti-slave trade legislation involving hundreds of local African leading men, as well as their councils of wards, towns and villages. Between 1817 and the 1880s, the British trolled the coast and signed treaties in various waves as they renewed these treaties with the descendants of local leaders from earlier years. In some circumstances, Africans travelled from inland places to “sign” these documents, either with an “X” or in Arabic. As specified in the treaties, the primary objectives of the British were not only trying to shift the trade in human beings to free and open commerce, but also many of the terms involved ending all participation in the slave trade under the threat of conflict or invasion.

Bio: Henry B. Lovejoy is an Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado Boulder. His first book, [*Prieto: Yorùbá Kingship in Colonial Cuba during the Age of Revolutions*](#), won the Chief Isaac Oluwole Delano Best Book Prize for Yoruba Studies. He is also co-editor of the volume [*Liberated Africans and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1807-1896*](#). He engages in digital humanities methodologies and is currently directing three resources, [SlaveryImages.org](#), [LiberatedAfricans.org](#); and [YorubaDiaspora.org](#). In 2021, He was awarded a three-year New Directions Fellowship, which is supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, to develop “West Africa Historical GIS.”

Ahmad Bey’s 1846 Abolition Decree: Its Legislative Framework and Socio-Cultural Context *Ismael M. Montana*

On April 26, 1846, Ahmad Bey signed a historic emancipation decree making the Regency of Tunis the first in the modern Islamic world to formally abolish the longstanding institution of slavery. While the decree marked the first of such an unprecedented measure, attracting a barrage of compliments from anti-slavery societies around the globe, it conflicted with the local notions of enslaving practices and thus prompted an earnest process of legitimation for the formal abolition of slavery before the *Majlis al-Shari* (Sharia Council for Judicial Ordinance), without which

abolition would have remained culturally and politically contentious. The paper will assess the socio-cultural context and the plural Islamic legal framework that informed both Ahmad Bey's argument favoring abolition and the divergent responses and attitudes of the religious establishment towards the abolition decree.

Bio: Ismael M. Montana is an Associate Professor of History at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb. He is the author of *The Abolition of Slavery in Ottoman Tunisia*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013) and coeditor of *Slavery, Islam and Diaspora* (Trenton New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2009). His research interests include the social and economic history of slavery, culture, and citizenship in Northwest Africa and the western Mediterranean basin from the 18th century to the present. Montana is the Managing Editor of the Journal of Global Slavery (JGS).

Panel 2: 4.15pm-6.15pm

LEGAL ABOLITION AS AN ARENA OF STRUGGLE IN PRE-COLONIAL AND EARLY COLONIAL NIGERIA

Chair: Olatunji Ojo (Brock University)

Paul Lovejoy's paper examines how the Hausa-Fulani ruling and merchant classes of Northern Nigeria reacted to British legal measures to abolish slavery. These classes were at once those most likely to be losing-out from the implementation of abolitionist ordinances and, with local Islamic clerics and jurists, the ones with the greatest influence on the application of such laws in practice. Following Montana's discussion of abolitionism in North African Tunisia, the case of Sokoto highlights a different Islamic response to British abolitionist ideas. Moving to the southern part of the region of today's Nigeria, the two following papers focus, respectively, on the deposed Oba Akitoye of Lagos in the mid 19th century and on Igbo speaking societies along the Niger in 1870-1930. Olutayo Adesina's detailed analysis of Oba Akitoye's strategies reveals how abolitionism was used to claim political legitimacy and gain British support in power struggles between rival factions of the Lagos royal family. Moving from Yoruba to Igbo polities, Nwachukwu Uzoamaka examines the tension between British and Igbo legal and normative approaches to slavery.

Legal Status Abolition of Slavery in British Northern Nigeria

Paul E. Lovejoy

The slavery question was fundamental in the establishment of British colonial rule in Northern Nigeria, both when it was a Protectorate before 1919 and after its amalgamation with Southern Nigeria thereafter. The "secret" debate among British officials in Northern Nigeria focused on what to do about slavery. On the one hand, the suppression of slave trading and slavery was one of the reasons that the British used to justify the conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate and Borno, along with eliminating the threat of enslavement for the myriad of small states and defensive retreats that completed the political landscape. On the other hand, military occupation confronted an enormous, enslaved population. The number of people who were enslaved was certainly greater than at the time of British Emancipation in its colonies in 1834 and as large as the number of slaves at the time of the American Civil War in the 1860s. The challenge facing British authorities was how to deal with such a large slave population, the scale of which was made visible by the extensive number of people who simply refused to stay with their masters but fled back to their natal homes or to areas where it was otherwise safe. Many males joined the West African Frontier Force, while others earned wages as porters. The British answer was to abolish the legal status of slavery, decree that children born after March 2001 were free, but not otherwise to emancipate slaves. The reaction

of the aristocracy and the merchant class have to be examined more carefully because they were the principal actors in determining how colonial laws were interpreted and ultimately how colonial laws were incorporated into independent Nigeria legal discourse.

Bio: Paul E. Lovejoy is Distinguished Research Professor, Department of History, York University, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He was Founding Director of the Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on Africa and its Diasporas, held the Canada Research Chair in African Diaspora History (2000-2015), was a member of the UNESCO “Slave Route” Project (1996-2012), and is General Editor of The Harriet Tubman Series on the African Diaspora (Africa World Press). He has published more than forty books, including *Jihad in West Africa during the Age of Revolutions (1775-1850)* (2016) and *Slavery in the Global Diaspora of Africa* (2019).

Oba Akitoye of Lagos (1841-1845 & 1851-1853) and the Dialectics of Exile, Legality and Abolitionism in a 19th Century African City-State

Olutayo C. Adesina

The deposition of *Oba Akitoye* as the political and natural ruler of Lagos, his life in exile, and his eventual restoration became central to the narrative on abolitionism in Lagos and the hinterland. This paper probes the vexing questions of abolitionism and exile in an African city-state. It traces an imaginative response by *Oba Akitoye* to deposition, exile, alliances, and abolitionism. Nineteenth-century Lagos was an African city-state well known for its profitable participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Akitoye reigned in Lagos first from 1841-1845, after which Kosoko deposed him. He then fled to Abeokuta and later to Badagry. At Badagry, after mounting offensives to reclaim his throne in Lagos, Akitoye turned to the British for help with a promise to conform to the abolition of the slave trade. How was this done from a position of exile and as a deposed king? What *locus standi* did he have to still speak for the Lagos throne at that point in time? What were the implications of the fight for abolitionism for the future of Lagos? This is a historical review of how abolitionism gained support from unlikely sources in a domain that had continued to surreptitiously carry on with the obnoxious trade in slaves several years after the abolition of the trade by Great Britain. This work is a particularly significant reconstruction of how the events in Lagos from deposition to exile and eventual restoration metamorphosed into an issue of strategic importance for abolitionists.

Bio: Olutayo Charles Adesina is the current Head of the Department of History of the University of Ibadan. He is a Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL). He has been a recipient of multiple distinguished Fellowship Awards and visiting positions, including at Harvard, Oxford, New Delhi, Salzburg, Georgia (US), and Shanghai. His most recent publications include: “A Terrain...Angels Would Fear to Tread”: Biographies and History in Nigeria”, *Southern Journal of Contemporary History*, 45/1 (2020); and *Oyo: History, Tradition and Royalty. Essays in Honour of His Imperial Majesty the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba (Dr.) Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi III* (Ibadan, 2021; edited with Siyan Oyeweso). He is the Editor of *Africa Review* and is currently completing a manuscript on the *Ibadan School of History*.

Slavery, Culture, and Jurisprudence along the Niger, 1870-1930

Nwachukwu Uzoamaka

The Practice of slavery is a global phenomenon that is rooted in antiquity. In African Societies, slavery was a cultural institution which was embodied in the names and identity of people,

religious practices and settlement pattern. Among the Igbo speaking people of Arochukwu, Nsukka, Eziagu, Edda, Afikpo, and Ngwa names such as Ohu, Osu, Nsu, Oru, Oha-Njoku existed to describe people of slave descent. After 5 decades of naval blockade, the British 1807 Slave Act was only partially successful in abolishing slave trade across the Atlantic while internal/domestic slavery thrived. The institutionalization of British laws such as the House Rule Ordinance created a legal problem as cases related to slavery in the Supreme Court was often evaded by cultural practices. The paper interrogates the dynamics of slavery and law in societies along the Niger within the period 1870-1930. This paper surmises that most societies along the Niger used their customs to upstage colonial law interpretation of cases connected to slavery. The paper adopts a qualitative historical approach. It makes use of Primary and Secondary sources. Primary sources will include Oral Interviews and Archival documents such as intelligence reports, letters of correspondence, petitions, edicts and ordinances, diary entry and missionary reports. While the secondary sources will include published books, unpublished project work, journal articles, speeches and organizational reports.

Bio: Nwachukwu Uzoamaka resides at Abakaliki, Ebonyi State of South Eastern Nigeria. She got her Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Art Degree in History from the University of Ibadan. She is also a Ph.D candidate of The Department of History, University of Ibadan. Uzoamaka is avidly interested in Social, Economic and Sports History. She has some published and unpublished articles in these fields.

Wednesday 22 September

Panel 3 – 10.00am-12.00pm

ABOLITIONIST PLURALISM IN GHANA AND CAMEROUN

Chair: Kate Skinner (University of Birmingham)

Which anti-slavery logics were marginalised as colonial legal abolition imposed itself? How many rationales of, and paths to, abolition co-existed and clashed in West Africa? Michael Odijie considers these questions in relation to a particular abolitionist discourse developed in Fante society in what today is southern Ghana, contrasting it with Ashanti and British approaches to slavery and anti-slavery in two stages of colonial abolition: 1874-1900 and 1928-1960. Ahmadou Sehou traces the reconfigurations of abolitionist pluralism in the Camerounian space across three periods marked by different political conjunctures. Mengolo Mbel Samson then zooms-in on the case of the memorialisation of abolition and emancipation in the town of Bamendjinda in Western Cameroon. His paper discusses local perceptions and reassessments of “the end of slavery” as visible in contemporary heritage sites.

Local Abolitionism in 19th and early 20th century Gold Coast

Michael Odijie

This paper draws on a variety of primary sources to first illustrate the rise of African abolitionism in the Fanti region in the mid-19th century and then situate this trend in the context of legal (colonial) abolition in the Gold Coast. The legal abolition of slavery in the Gold Coast in 1874 coincided with an evolving local anti-slavery movement among the Fanti, which was anchored on a dialectic process of identity formation fashioned against the “barbaric” Ashanti (as well as the rise of Christian teaching). Due to their different visions of emancipation, tension arose between the flagbearers for the local movement (Fante intelligentsia) and British colonial elites, disrupting the legal abolition process. This paper shows that the 1874 abolition was initially opposed by

members of the anti-slavery Fante “movement” (an opposition often misread as indicating that the latter were pro-slavery or against the idea of abolition). The paper also situates these local abolition efforts in the second age of colonial abolition in the Gold Coast, from 1928 onward. It examines, in turn: the rise of local abolitionism among the coastal Fante – tracing ideas, individuals and events; local abolitionism in the “first age” of colonial abolition in the Gold Coast, 1874–1900; and local abolitionism in the “second age” of colonial abolition in the Gold Coast, 1928–1960.

Bio: Michael Odijie is a Research Fellow in the UCL-based AFRAB project ‘African Abolitionism: The Rise and Transformations of Anti-Slavery in Africa’. His university training was at Ambrose Alli University, Nigeria (BA [Hons] History and International Studies) and University of Sheffield, UK (MA and PhD). His latest publications include: "Cocoa and Child Slavery in West Africa." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (2020) and (with Elias Courson), "Egbesu: An African Just War Philosophy and Practice." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* (2020): 1-16.

Les sources légales de l’abolition de la traite et de l’esclavage au Cameroun, 1840-1967

Ahmadou Sehou

Dans son histoire, l’espace camerounais a expérimenté plusieurs types de traites et d’esclavages. Par la côte au Sud, il fut raccordé à la traite transatlantique dès le XV^e siècle ; par le Nord il fut connecté à la traite transsaharienne à partir du XVI^e, avec une plus grande intensité au XIX^e siècle. Avant et après ces traites exportatrices, il a vu se développer des formes d’esclavage qui subsistent encore dans certaines de ses régions. Cette forte implication dans tous ces processus a permis la production d’une diversité de sources légales tendant à abolir la traite et l’esclavage. Successivement plusieurs traités, décrets et lois ont été signés ou adoptés, entre les puissances étrangères et les chefs locaux ou dans le cadre de l’action de l’Etat après la proclamation de l’indépendance marquant la fin de l’occupation coloniale. Trois périodes essentielles seront ainsi prises en compte : l’abolition dans le monde atlantique et ses répercussions sur la côte camerounaise à travers la poursuite de la traite illégale (1807-1859), l’occupation allemande et française (1884-1959) et le contexte du Cameroun post-colonial à partir de 1960. Dans cette étude il s’agit de présenter ces différents instruments légaux produits entre 1840 et 1967, qui ont contribué à la lutte contre la traite et l’esclavage, les contextes de leur production, les acteurs et les intérêts qu’ils ont mobilisés, et enfin leur portée sur l’évolution du système. Notre analyse se basera sur les documents d’archives que nous avons pu consulter dans les fonds disponibles.

Bio: Ahmadou Sehou est enseignant-chercheur à l’Université de Maroua au Cameroun et chercheur-résident à l’Institut d’Etudes Avancées de Nantes (2020-2021). Ses travaux portent sur l’histoire de l’esclavage, des traites et de leurs mémoires. Il est auteur de plusieurs publications et rapports d’études sur ces questions. Il est le directeur du Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches Pluridisciplinaires sur l’Esclavage et la Traite en Afrique. Il est membre de plusieurs projets portant sur ces thématiques entre l’Europe et l’Afrique.

Le mémorial d’affranchissement de Bamendjida, symbole d’une substitution de la mémoire du « cannibalisme sorcier » dans une société post-esclavagiste de l’Ouest-Cameroun

Mengolo Mbel Samson

Cet article questionne la pertinence de l’affranchissement comme processus d’abolition locale à partir du monument-mémorial édifié dans l’enceinte de la chefferie de Bamendjida à l’Ouest-

Cameroun. Considéré comme un médiateur symbolique du processus d'affranchissement de l'esclave après une période déterminée, la lexicographie de ce mémorial est obstruée par la reproduction du statut d'esclave et de la condition servile en cours de transmission par l'esclavage de cour présent dans les chefferies. La réflexion se fonde donc sur cette paradoxale production de sens de l'élite traditionnelle de l'Ouest-Cameroun relativement à la notion d'affranchissement. Elle analyse cette ambivalence sous le prisme des considérations politiques traditionnelles dans un contexte historique et mémoriel où l'instance traditionnelle, initiatrice et promotrice du travail de mémoire de nos jours, a toujours été accusée d'esclaviser ses propres concitoyens, mangeant ses enfants par la métaphore animale du « cannibalisme sorcier ». Les observations morpho-stylistiques de ce mémorial et une enquête de terrain auprès d'un certain nombre de responsables politiques traditionnelles ont permis de conclure que, loin d'être un symbole d'affranchissement, le mémorial de Bamendjida participe de la substitution d'une mémoire conflictuelle entre le pouvoir traditionnel et son peuple. La mémoire officielle de l'affranchissement véhiculée par ce mémorial s'inscrit dans la démarche de légitimation de l'esclavage coutumier par opposition à la traite négrière, et par extension, un instrument de légitimation du pouvoir traditionnel mis à mal par le travail de mémoire en cours dans la région.

Bio: Mengolo Mbel Samson, est Assistant Lecturer, Département d'Histoire, Université de Buea, Sud-Ouest (Cameroun). Thèse de doctorat en cours sur le thème : Patrimonialisation et mémoire de l'esclavage entre les Hauts-Plateaux de l'Ouest et le Littoral atlantique

Panel 4, 2.00pm-5.15pm

FAILURE OF LEGAL ABOLITION IN FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICA ?

Chair : Martin Klein (University of Toronto)

Can laws end slavery? What happens when laws are applied but are not supported, not only by those who resisted their passing, but also by those responsible for their introduction and enforcement? Two presentations on Senegal, by Cheikh Sene and Henriette Yague, respectively, focus on the limitations of the application of colonial abolitionist laws, and the ideological survival of slavery's legitimacy in spite of reiterations of abolition in successive colonial and independent legislations. The following paper, by Leah Durst-Lee, Nolwelnn Marconnet and Lotte Pelckmans, compares the circumstances surrounding the development of a legal apparatus for the abolition and criminalisation of slavery in Mali, Niger and Mauritania. It is followed by Valerio Colosio and Ngar Alkoa Madjyera's analysis of similar circumstances in Chad, where anti-slavery activists are faced with the threat of a hostile state and groups with a vested interest in the legacies of slavery. Both papers discuss the struggles of national political movements committed to legal abolition in spite of the limited efficacy of laws that, once passed, can remain ineffective. In contrast with these first four papers, Brahim Kaba examines the anti-slavery policies and laws passed by Guinée's first President Sekou Touré, who early in the postcolonial period took a public political and legal stance against traditional hierarchies and legacies of slavery.

Le décret de l'émancipation des esclaves de 1848 : une application difficile

Cheikh Sene

« *Le sol de France affranchit l'esclave qui le touche* ». Tel fut l'article 7 du décret du 27 avril 1848 abolissant l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises. Ce décret fut enregistré au Sénégal le 23 juin 1848, pour prendre effet à compter du 23 août 1848. Au Sénégal, Saint-Louis et l'île de Gorée sont

considérés comme des territoires français. Les propriétaires d'esclaves de Saint-Louis et de l'intérieur du pays (les maures, marchands de gomme) réclament à ce que l'article 7 fut suspendu en ce qui les concernent. Le principe du sol libérateur risquerait de provoquer un afflux d'esclaves en quête de liberté à Saint-Louis et à Gorée. L'application de l'article 7, tel qu'il était formulé, posait pour les comptoirs commerciaux du Sénégal la question même de leur existence. Les autorités coloniales justifient l'impossibilité d'appliquer l'article 7 du décret du 27 avril 1848 par la nécessité de ne pas heurter les susceptibilités locales et par la nécessité de préserver les intérêts français ainsi que les alliances avec les chefs africains. Cette communication permettra de comprendre les raisons qui font que le décret du 27 avril 1848 n'a jamais été appliqué entièrement au Sénégal. Il permet de saisir les formes de dépendances des acteurs vis à vis de l'esclavage et de comprendre comment le décret du 27 avril 1848 a été instrumentalisé par l'administration coloniale dans l'unique but de protéger son entreprise économique.

Bio : Cheikh Sene, jeune docteur affilié à l'Institut des Mondes Africains Aubervilliers, Spécialité : Histoire politique, économique et sociale, Domaine de recherche : Les rencontres entre les sociétés africaines et européennes à l'époque moderne et contemporaine : fiscalité, taxe, commerce, diplomatie, colonisation ; Les débuts de l'Afrique moderne ; Empire, impérialisme et colonialisme en Afrique ; Traites, esclavage et dépendance

L'abolition de la traite et de l'esclavage au Sénégal : entre négation des populations et laxisme des autorités de 1815 à nos jours

Henriette Yague

La traite et l'esclavage furent très ancrés dans les habitudes socio-économiques de la population sénégalaise. La France, décida au XIXe siècle d'imposer les abolitions de ces pratiques aux populations conquises. Ces abolitions se heurtèrent à la résistance des populations. Ces dernières continuaient de s'appuyer sur leur propre organisation sociale et leurs lois relatives à l'esclavage. Cet attachement à la servitude poussait les autorités administratives à sursoir à l'application des lois dans certains milieux. Des fois les mesures étaient adaptées aux réalités sociales afin de ne pas provoquer l'ire des autorités étatiques autochtones et des propriétaires d'esclave. Durant la colonisation, les lois métropolitaines réussissent à prendre le dessus petit à petit sur les lois autochtones, et avec beaucoup de compromis. Cependant, elles n'arrivèrent pas à gommer la mentalité servile des populations. À l'indépendance, le Sénégal est régi par les principes d'un État de droit. Tous les Sénégalais devenaient égaux devant la loi. Toutefois, l'État de droit est impuissant face à la stigmatisation de certains héritiers d'esclaves. Pire, certaines populations subissent des formes d'exploitation pas très éloignées de la traite et de l'esclavage à l'insu ou sous le regard impuissant des autorités politico-religieuses.

Bio: Doctorante à l'université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, enseignante du moyen secondaire et membre du Centre Africain de Recherche sur les Traites et les Esclavage (carte) dirigé par le professeur Ibrahima Thioub. Prépare une Thèse de doctorat en Histoire sur les raisons et les manifestations de la persistance des mentalités serviles au Sénégal. A travaillé en maîtrise sur le rôle des missionnaires chrétiens dans l'abolition de l'esclavage à Saint-Louis du Sénégal (1848-1905), en DEA (diplôme d'étude approfondie) sur les mineurs affranchis après l'abolition de l'esclavage à Saint-Louis du Sénégal.

Forging ahead: local and diasporic anti-slavery activists' continued use of the courts

Leah Durst-Lee, Nolwenn Marconnet, Lotte Pelckmans

In Mali, as opposed to Mauritania and Niger, there is no law directly criminalizing descent-based slavery. But in ways comparable as in Mauritania and Niger, only a relatively small number of lawsuits advanced by victims of slavery against their former masters have resulted in favorable judgments for the victims. Why then do local anti-slavery activists continue to push for remedy for injuries resulting from slavery within the court system? In a culture in which legal pluralism recognizes the authority of both religious and legal judgments, why do local and diasporic activists continue to push for a legal solution for the practice of slavery? How do activists see the strengths and weaknesses of a purely legal approach towards victims' remedy and, ultimately, toward the end of the practice of descent-based slavery in the country? Our presentation analyzes the considerations and intentions of local and diasporic anti-slavery activists toward the socio-legal struggles they face in their fight to end the practice of descent-based slavery and provide remedy for its victims.

Bios: Leah Durst-Lee is a graduate student of Advanced Migration Studies at the University of Copenhagen researching socio-legal issues of forced migration, slavery and human rights. She is a Research Fellow on the Slavery and Forced Migration in Western Mali (SLAFMIG) project and this fall will study International Law and Human Rights at the United Nations University for Peace. Nolwenn Marconnet is a graduate student of Advanced Migration Studies at the University of Copenhagen researching the transnational involvement of the West African diaspora in antislavery movements through social media. As Research Fellow on the SLAFMIG project, she conducts interviews with anti-slavery activists, monitors social media interactions and researches diaspora and social movement literature. Lotte Pelckmans is an anthropologist researching the crossroads between migration and slavery studies. Trained at Leiden University, she has worked in Dutch, French, German and Danish academia on rights, social and spatial mobilities of people with *slave* status, conflict and social media, and antislavery movements in West Africa and the diaspora. Her work has been published in *Politique Africaine*, *Journal of African History*, *Revue Européenne des migrations* and others. Based at the Centre for Advanced Migration Studies at the University of Copenhagen, she works on the SLAFMIG project researching the history of protracted (invisible) displacements in Mali.

Société civile, mémoire des razzias et post-esclavage : pourquoi l'esclavagisme demeure un problème extrêmement grave et un sujet très sensible dans le Tchad contemporaine ?

Valerio Colosio and Ngar Alkoa Madjyera

Malgré l'introduction d'une constitution démocratique en 1996, le code pénal de 8 Mai 2017, la promulgation de la loi 12 portant lutte contre la traite des personnes en République du Tchad et la présence d'un fort réseau d'associations des droits de l'homme, les lois introduites pour garantir les droits des minorités et groupes vulnérables ne sont pas vraiment appliquées. L'exploitation économique et la marginalisation sociale connectées à l'esclavage sont évitées dans les débats nationaux, tandis que les groupes qui peuvent être stigmatisés en tant que descendants d'esclaves nient généralement ce passé et les descendants des esclavagistes sont en majeure partie proches du régime en place. Pourquoi les lois promulguées suite à la constitution démocratique du 1996 n'ont pas été capables d'exposer et combattre les héritages sociaux laissés par l'esclavage ? Est-ce qu'il y a une continuité entre vestige de l'esclavage et pratiques d'esclavage moderne ? Nous aborderons ce sujet à travers l'expérience d'ARED, une ONG tchadienne activement engagée pour exposer et

combattre des pratiques de ce qu'on définit d'esclavage moderne et les vestiges de l'esclavage. ARED lutter pour briser le silence sur ce sujet au Tchad, où il est interdit de parler d'esclavage et les militants abolitionnistes font l'objet de menaces, d'intimidation et d'arrestations quand ils dénoncent les carences de l'Etat. L'inapplicabilité des lois et la fragilité historique et contemporaines des institutions étatiques, affectée par le népotisme, le trafic d'influence et la corruption occupent une place centrale dans la reproduction des vestiges de l'esclavage et le développement de l'esclavage moderne et seront le sujet principal de cette présentation.

Bios : Valerio Colosio est Assistant Professor au département de African Studies de la Social Science University of Ankara depuis 2020. Il a obtenu son doctorat en anthropologie à la University of Sussex en 2018, avec une thèse sur les vestiges de l'esclavage dans la province tchadienne du Guéra. Ngar Alkoa Madjyera travaille depuis 20 ans dans plusieurs organisations de la société civile au Tchad et est président et fondateur de l'Association pour la Réinsertion des Enfants et la Défense des droits de l'Homme (ARED), une association des droits de l'homme qui dénonce les vestiges de l'esclavage et l'esclavage moderne au Tchad depuis 2001.

Sékou Touré and abolitionism in Guinea from 1957 to 1984

Brahima KABA

The Southern Rivers (current Republic of Guinea) were between the 15th and 19th centuries a hotbed of the slave trade. Slavery lasted in Guinea until the beginning of the 20th century. The question of the abolition of slavery in this area has certainly been the subject of work which is for the most part scattered. The urgency is to collect and analyze, through archival research and from resource persons through oral inquiries, more detailed information on the issue of the abolitionist struggle within Guinean societies and national political structures. A man is featured in this struggle in Guinea, Sékou TOURÉ. In fact, as early as 1957, in a speech, he took a stand for the liberation of the captives still exploited by the Guinean aristocracy. Once president of the young Guinean nation, in October 1958, he led a fight for abolitionism by putting in place both textual and oral mechanisms. This article examines this legislation, both written and oral, through such sources as the constitution, national laws, certain important speeches by Sékou TOURÉ (and perhaps other politicians who were involved in the issue of slavery and its abolition), newspaper articles, and the oral testimonies of people with knowledge of the legal and political processes surrounding the issue of slavery in the first decades after decolonization.

Bio: Brahima KABA is Assistant in Modern and Contemporary History at the Julius Nyerere University of Kankan (Guinea). His main publications are: "Guinean migrants or candidates for death in the Mediterranean (2000-2016)", in *Folofolo, Journal of African Humanities and Civilizations*, N° December 2018, pp. 46-64 ; "Explanatory approach to the conflictual relationship between Léopold Sedar Senghor and Sékou Touré (1958-1973), in *Performances : Multidisciplinary scientific journal*, N° 8, December 2018, pp. 79-94 ; "Ethnic belonging and political life in Guinea from 1945 to 2015", *Societies & Economies Magazine*, Special issue - Colloquium 2019, pp. 25-41.

Thursday 23 September
Panel 5, 10.00am-12.30pm

ETHIOPIA : OWNING, CHAMPIONING, AND RECONFIGURING ABOLITIONISM IN THE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES

Chair : Ahmed Hassen (Addis Ababa University)

*In Ethiopia abolitionism has a long history, inseparable from the country's development of a political identity shaped partly in opposition to European abolitionist imperialism. This panel starts with Takele Merid's analysis of the scarcely studied abolitionist decrees of Emperor Menelik, contextualised in the political strategies developed in response to both European pressures and sub-regional relations. Menelik's abolitionist reforms set a precedent for the following decades. Alexander Meckelburg zooms-out and extends the panel's discussion of Ethiopia's anti-slavery legislation into the times of Haile Selassie's confrontation with the League of Nations, British abolitionist diplomacy, and Italian invasion. The significance of autonomous abolitionism to Ethiopia's national identity is further explored by Sara Marzagora through a close reading of Käbbädä Mikael's *Ityopyanna Məährabawi Səlättane* ("Ethiopia and Western Civilization", 1949) that presents legal abolition as a charter of Ethiopian civilisation injured by the false allegations of Italian Fascism. Finally, Yonas Ashine discusses "manumission" as an Amhara legal concept and a powerful moral and political metaphor in circumstances marked by intensified reformism.*

The Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Ethiopia: Legal and Practical Issues during Menelik's Rule

Takele Merid

Both slavery as a system and slave trade as a practice were part and parcel of Ethiopian history. For those who practiced the slave trade it used to be the major source of income, and slave holding was connected to political, economic and social status. However, due to internal, external and personal factors, particularly, since the mid-19th century there had been attempts by Ethiopian Kings to abolish the system and the activity of slavery and the slave trade respectively. Among others, Emperor Menelik (1889-1913) outlawed slavery and the slave trade, but seemed unsuccessful in suppressing both. Menelik's reign is particularly interesting and ambiguous with regards to his abolitionist agenda. Menelik appealed to British anti-slavery interests, and attempted to suppress slavery in his dominions. At the same time the process of state expansion and negotiations with provincial rulers in these new dominions contributed heavily to the prevalence of slavery and the slave trade and made the Emperor's attempts futile. This paper deals with Emperor Menelik's proclamations and policies which attempted to outlaw slavery and slave trade and the major factors that stood in the way of abolition.

Bio: Dr. Takele Merid is an assistant Professor of Social Anthropology and Director of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), Addis Ababa University (AAU). He graduated with BA in History in 2004 and MA in Cultural Studies and PhD in Social Anthropology, 2016 from Addis Ababa University. Between January 2005 and February 2008, he worked as a heritage expert for the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ethiopia. In March 2008, he joined IES and AAU, where he is still working as a researcher and Professor of Social Anthropology. Dr. Takele was a research fellow of University of Bath Spa, United Kingdom (2018) and is currently research fellow of Hamburg University. He is an active researcher in the ERC funded SLAFNET Network.

Anti-Slavery Legislation in Ethiopia: Actors, Texts and Contexts, ca. 1884-1941

Alexander Meckelburg

This presentation focuses on the changing debates over abolition and slavery in the Ethiopian context and how discursive changes reflected rearrangements in Ethiopia's inter-regional and international relations during the late 19th and early 20th century. At the time, the Eurocentric abolitionist discourses of travelers, diplomats, or the British Anti-Slavery Society overshadowed a nascent Ethiopian anti-slavery discourse. The abolition of slavery became a priority of Ethiopian foreign politics during the contested inclusion of Ethiopia in the *League of Nations* in the 1920s and a matter of state survival during the Italian invasion. The presentation focuses on the preparation and background of legal texts that governed anti-slavery measures between 1884 and 1941. Thus, it aims at identifying Ethiopia-specific anti-slavery perspectives and present them in the context of the diplomatic complexities of multiple colonial aspirations.

Bio: Alexander Meckelburg is a historical anthropologist. He is Research Fellow at UCL's Department of History within the ERC-funded project "African Abolitionism: The Rise and Transformations of Anti-Slavery in Africa (AFRAB)". He carries out research on the history of slavery and abolition in Ethiopia. His research focuses on Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. His PhD thesis "From "Subject to Citizen"? History, Identity and Minority Citizenship: The Case of the Mao and Komo of western Ethiopia" (Hamburg, 2017) is a historical ethnography of minority citizenship and intergenerational marginalization of Koman-speaking ethnic communities in western Ethiopia.

Slavery, colonialism and abolition in Ethiopia: Käbbädä Mikael's political thought (1949)

Sara Marzagora

Published eight years after the end of the Italian occupation, Käbbädä Mikael's *Ityopyanna Məəhrabawi Sələttane* ('Ethiopia and Western Civilization', 1949) is a historical refutation of Italian propaganda about the persistence of slavery in Ethiopia, written at a time when Ethiopia was pursuing legal action through the UN to demand reparations. My paper analyses how Käbbädä theorizes the relationship between slavery and modernity. *Ityopyanna Məəhrabawi Sələttane* interrogates precisely, as the title suggests, Ethiopia's march towards *sələttane*, or civilisation, internally reworking Western modernisation theory to defend Ethiopia's agency in both world history and the present. Käbbädä's appraisal of the history of slavery within this framework is nevertheless deeply ambivalent. The Fascist invaders had depicted Ethiopia as a backward land where people suffered under the barbaric yoke of slavery. On the one hand, Käbbädä attacks Italian propaganda by listing the obstacles Ethiopian emperors had faced in trying to abolish slavery, emphasising the legislative steps forward in this direction. But on the other hand, the Italian insinuation that Ethiopia was internally disunited had clearly struck a chord among the members of the Ethiopian elites, concerned as they were about the precarity of national unity. Käbbädä was, at the time, one of the major exponents of those Christian, Amharic-speaking intellectuals which Emperor Haylä Səllase promoted as his crucial political allies. The paper contributes to the history of slavery in Ethiopia from the perspective of the state centre, tracing the links between political thought and state policies in the late 1940s.

Bio: Sara Marzagora is a Lecturer in Comparative Literature at King's College London. She is an intellectual historian of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, and currently completing a book

manuscript on Ethiopian political thought in the first half of the twentieth century, provisionally titled "The True Meaning of Independence: Ethiopian intellectuals in a colonial world (1901-1919)". She has published extensively on Ethiopian historiography and intellectual history, Amharic print culture, world literature, and global intellectual history.

Legacy of Manumission on Political Reforms in Ethiopia

Yonas Ashine

Anchoring on the genealogy of manumission in Ethiopian slavery, this paper explores how the praxis of manumission left its own legacy on the political development of modern Ethiopia. The paper reads comparatively two debates: the debate about manumission, if not abolition, in early 20th century Ethiopia and with debate on political reforms (the making of the constitution and) until 1974. In this diachronic and ethnographic navigation, archival documents, memoirs, newspapers will be used. The aim is to historicize the two debates and explore how manumission impacted the political reforms and development in Ethiopia. Manumission is conceptualized here as political reform where the freedom of slaves is born without problematizing the positions and power relations both of the *géta* and *baäya* in the *géta-baräya* (master-slave) power continuum. Mainly the power position of the *géta* remained intact even after manumission. Therefore, the political reforms hitherto implemented in Ethiopia used the template of manumission in which the privileges and powers of the political elite remained unchanged. Moreover, the justification for controlled, gradual, top-down, and paternalist political reforms in Ethiopia appear similar to the justification exhibited in the praxis of manumission in the country.

Bio: Yonas Ashine is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Addis Ababa University. He earned his PhD in interdisciplinary Social Studies from Makerere Institute of Social Studies, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda. His research interest includes political theory, and historical and comparative politics of state-society relations in Africa and from Africa.

Panel 6, 2.00pm-4.00pm

TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP ENGAGEMENTS WITH ABOLITIONISM IN EAST AFRICA

Chair: Elisabeth McMahon (Tulane University, New Orleans)

The abolitionist decrees passed by the Sultans of Zanzibar were among the most iconic and debated abolitions in missionary and colonial circles. While much has been written on “the end of slavery” in Zanzibar and the east African coast, these edicts have not been subjected to close critical analysis. Michelle Liebst asks what debates and strategies the edicts gave rise to within Zanzibari official circles, which legal concepts were utilized, and with what consequences for different groups. Salvatory Nianto and Felicitas Becker focus on the reception and uses of abolitionist decrees at the grassroots. They examine public declarations of slaves and witnesses at the Tabora mission between 1907 and 1930; consider the strategies of the enslaved and their networks, and their ability to influence the legal apparatus of colonial Tanganyika. The panel’s focus then moves to Kenya with Samuel Nyanhoga’s reassessment of the role played by the “Bombay Africans”, local educated actors of slave descent who, through their personal experience, were aware of the implications of legal abolition and mobilized for emancipation.

Sultans of Zanzibar and the abolition of slavery in East Africa

Michelle Liebst

In 1890 Sultan Ali of Zanzibar declared in writing that ‘we wish by every means to stop the slave trade’. Statements like these, in addition to the actual passing of anti-slavery legislation, call into question the generally accepted scholarly understanding that the sultans of Zanzibar only agreed to pass and enforce anti-slavery legislation because they were under duress from European, mainly British, powers, who negotiated favourable political and economic benefits in return for (gradual) abolition. A close analysis of the sources tells a more complicated story of both collaboration and conflict between the Zanzibari sultans, their subjects, and the British agents. Moreover, each sultan had distinctive political and religious beliefs, as well as individual personal experiences and outlooks. To date, not enough evidence has been found to conclude that the sultans and their advisors were devoid of any ideological interest in ending slavery. Equally, we must not remake the same mistakes of earlier accounts of British agents and explorers in the region who were all too hastily hailed as abolitionists. This paper explores the anti-slavery legislation passed under three sultans of Zanzibar: Barghash bin Said (1870-1888) who prohibited the transport of slaves by sea in 1873, Ali bin Said (1890-1893) who passed the Slave Trade Prohibition Decree of 1890, and Hamoud bin Mohammed (1896-1902) who passed the Abolition Decree of 1897. By analysing draft treaties and correspondence before and after the passing of legislation, this paper will determine the roles and perspectives of these sultans in relation to abolishing slavery.

Bio: My work has focused mainly on the themes of religion, labour, humanitarianism, gender and citizenship. Since completing my PhD, I have worked at the University of Birmingham and the University of Edinburgh. My book, *Labour and Christianity in the Mission*, will be published in 2021 by James Currey. Now at UCL, I am working on the ERC-funded project, African Abolitionism: The Rise and Transformations of Anti-Slavery in Africa (AFRAB) as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow and historian of East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania).

In Pursuit of Freedom: Legal Abolition of Slavery, Tensions, and Creation of Mission Communities in Western Tanzania 1905-1930

Salvatory S. Nyanto and Felicitas Becker

This paper centers on primary and secondary sources to examine ways in which individual slaves and missions used public declarations and witnesses to carve out a separate space of legal procedures as a prerequisite for certification of emancipation in German East Africa (Tanzania mainland). The preconditions for emancipation demonstrated slaves’ intellectual creativity in shaping the German and British legal system in western Tanzania. Colonial administrators relied on public declarations and witnesses as requirements for certification of freedom to slaves who desired to leave their owners at will. Statements of assurance and witnesses avoided tensions which would arise between owners and slaves, and between slave owners and missions. In the end, the paper intends to show that the legal abolition of slavery in German East Africa was a long drawn out process involving struggles between slaves and their owners, individual initiatives, and slaves’ own creation of a legal procedure which had bearing on shaping colonial states’ legal system. In weaving through the legal abolition of slavery in western Tanzania, I will rely on public declarations of slaves and witnesses at Tabora mission between 1907 and the 1920s to show ways in which they had effect on the legal system of Tanganyika. In 1920, following the persistent use of public declarations and witnesses as preconditions for certification of emancipation, the British colonial state enacted Evidence Act, and Oaths and Affirmations Act. The laws were followed by

the enactment of the Involuntary Servitude (Abolition) Ordinance of 1922 which legally ended slavery in Tanganyika.

Bios: Salvatory S. Nyanto is Lecturer at the Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam and Post-doctoral fellow, Ghent University. Research interests: Religion and Empire, Slavery and Missionaries, Christian-Muslim Relations. Felicitas Becker is Professor of African history at Gent University, Belgium. She is a specialist in modern East African history with a particular focus on the aftermath of slavery, Islam, poverty and development. Her latest monograph is *The politics of poverty* (CUP, 2019) and her articles have appeared in *Journal of African History*, *Journal of Global History*, *Africa*, *Journal of Religion in Africa* and *African Studies Review* among others. She is primary investigator for the ERC consolidator grant *The Aftermath of Slavery in East Africa (ASEA)*, 2019-2024.

Bombay Africans: From Slaves to Abolitionists

Samuel A. Nyanchoga

The “Bombay Africans” were freed from slavery by the British Navy in the Indian Ocean and relocated to Bombay India in an attempt to protect them from further enslavement. They acquired the name “Bombay Africans”. They were educated by CMS missionaries and later re-located to East Coast settlements of Frere town, Rabai and Jilore. They numbered approximately 3000. With the kind of education and skills they acquired, they constituted the African elites in the margins of the early British colonial empire in east Africa. They served as explorers, interpreters, catechists and teachers. They also were commonly referred to as “black liberators” for their anti-slavery campaigns. In the thinking of the Bombay Africans, the legal abolition of the status of slavery in the beginning of 20th century did not lead to emancipation. Consequently the “Bombay Africans” began to apply the abolition edicts and laws in their own circumstances and hence acquired the image of “black liberators” Their perception of abolitionism was twofold. They reacted vehemently against subjugation that in their thinking was similar to the slave environment that they were liberated from. Secondly, some of them were at the forefront of anti-slavery campaigns, providing protection to runaway slaves and seeking freedom for the enslaved population. The CMS slave settlements along the Kenya coast became important loci in the anti-slavery campaign. At times the Bombay Africans resorted to the use of arms to resist irate Arab slave owners. Some went further and used local media as a mouthpiece not only for evangelization, but also in the campaign against slavery. The most vocal among them were evidently visible in the ceremonies of the issuance of the certificate of freedom in the late 19th century to freed slaves from what they termed as “cruel and merciless masters to the sweet liberty”. Having internalized Christianity, they mobilized against slavery and subjugation in their midst in the 19th century.

Bio: Samuel A Nyanchoga is a professor of history and the former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. He serves as an external reviewer for the Commission for University Education; National Cohesion and Integration Commission and the Kenya Human Rights Commission. He is also an external examiner to several local universities. He sits in the Cultural and Scientific Committee of the Kenya National Commission for the UNESCO; editorial board member of *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*; *Africa Humanities and Social Sciences Journal* and the *Eastern African Journal of Historical and Social Sciences Research*. He has membership to several professional and academic Organizations. He is an active researcher within the SLAFNET and AFRAB ERC-funded projects.

KEYNOTE LECTURE by Professor Mahamane Tidjani Alou, Université Abdou Moumouni de Niamey, Niger

Title: Propos liminaires sur la lutte contre l'esclavage au Sahel

Bio : Mahaman Tidjani Alou is Professor of Political Sciences in the Law Department (Faculty of Economic and Legal Sciences) and former Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Legal Sciences of the Abdou Moumouni University of Niamey. He is also researcher at the LASDEL Research Centre, former President of the national Antislavery Taskforce of Niger, and former Special Advisor to the President of the Republic. He held visiting professorships at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* (France), the Ethnology Institute of Mainz (Germany), the African Studies Centre of Bayreuth (Germany), the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium), the University of Anvers (Belgium), and the University Gaston Berger of Saint Louis (Sénégal). He has over forty years of experience conducting research and coordinating research collaborations, and in 2018-2020 was National Coordinator of the Project “Legacies of Slavery in Niger” (LESLAN). He has many publications, including “Démocratie, exclusion sociale et quête de citoyenneté : cas de l'association Timidria au Niger.” *Journal des Africanistes*, 70/1-2 (2000).

TIMETABLE

London Time (GMT+1 or BST)	Panels
Day 1: Tuesday 21st September – link:	
13.20 – 14.00	Welcome and organisation (Melanie Horstead), Introduction (Benedetta Rossi)
14.00-16.00	<p>Panel 1: EXPERIMENTATION AND CONTESTATION : LEGAL ABOLITION IN THE LATE 18th AND EARLY 19th CENTURIES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tim Soriano, The Africanization of Abolitionism: Granville Sharp and the Frankpledge (18th Century) 2. Henry B. Lovejoy, To Prohibit and Abolish the Purchase and Sale of Slaves: British Anti-Slave Trade Legislation along the Coast of Africa, 1817-1880 3. Ismael M. Montana, Ahmad Bey’s 1846 Abolition Decree: Its Legislative Framework and Socio-Cultural Context <p>Chair and discussants: Bronwen Everill</p>
16.00-16.15	Break
16.15-18.15	<p>Panel 2: LEGAL ABOLITION AS AN ARENA OF STRUGGLE IN PRE-COLONIAL AND EARLY COLONIAL NIGERIA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paul E. Lovejoy, Legal Status Abolition of Slavery in British Northern Nigeria 2. Olutayo C. Adesina, <i>Oba</i> Akitoye of Lagos (1841-1845 & 1851-1853) and the Dialectics of Exile, Legality and Abolitionism in a 19th Century African City-State 3. Nwachukwu Uzoamaka, Slavery, Culture, and Jurisprudence along the Niger, 1870-1930 <p>Chair and discussant: Olatunji Ojo</p>
	End of day 1
Day 2: Wednesday 22nd September – link:	
10.00-12.00	<p>Panel 3: ABOLITIONIST PLURALISM IN GHANA AND CAMEROUN</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Michael Odijie, Local Abolitionism in 19th and early 20th century Gold Coast 2. Ahmadou Sehou, Les sources légales de l’abolition de la traite et de l’esclavage au Cameroun, 1840-1967 3. Mengolo Mbel Samson, Le mémorial d’affranchissement de Bamendjida, symbole d’une substitution de la mémoire du « cannibalisme sorcier » dans une société post-esclavagiste de l’Ouest-Cameroun <p>Chair and discussant: Kate Skinner</p>
12.00-14.00	Lunch

NOTES

Draft papers (5000-8000 words) will be pre-circulated among participants by Friday 3 September 2021. A selection of papers will be developed into a collective publication.

- Presentations can be in English or French.
- Presenters have up to 30 minutes each for their presentation. We suggest that these be divided in 20 minutes presentation and 10 minutes for focused questions. Presentations are followed by 30 minutes for questions/discussion.
- For questions, please contact: Melanie Horstead (m.horstead@ucl.ac.uk)

Day 2: Continued	
14.00-17.15	<p>Panel 4: FAILURE OF LEGAL ABOLITION IN FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICA ?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cheikh Sene, Le décret de l'émancipation des esclaves de 1848 : une application difficile 2. Henriette Yague, L'abolition de la traite et de l'esclavage au Sénégal : entre négation des populations et laxisme des autorités de 1815 à nos jours <p><i>Short break (15 minutes)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Leah Durst-Lee, Nolwenn Marconnet, Lotte Pelckmans, Forging ahead: local and diasporic anti-slavery activists' continued use of the courts 4. Valerio Colosio and Ngar Alkoa Madjyera, Société civile, mémoire des razzias et post-esclavage : pourquoi l'esclavagisme demeure un problème extrêmement grave et un sujet très sensible dans le Tchad contemporaine ? 5. Brahima Kaba, Sékou Touré and abolitionism in Guinea from 1957 to 1984 <p>Chair and Discussant: Martin Klein</p>
17.15-17.45	Questions and discussion (general)
Day 3: Thursday 23rd September – link:	
10.00-12.30	<p>Panel 5: ETHIOPIA : OWNING, CHAMPIONING, AND RECONFIGURING ABOLITIONISM IN THE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Takele Merid, The Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade in Ethiopia: Legal and Practical Issues during Menelik's Rule 1. Alexander Meckelburg, Anti-Slavery Legislation in Ethiopia: Actors, Texts and Contexts, ca. 1884-1941 2. Sara Marzagora, Slavery, colonialism and abolition in Ethiopia: Käbbädä Mikael's political thought (1949) 3. Yonas Ashine, Legacy of Manumission on Political Reforms in Ethiopia <p>Chair and Discussant: Ahmed Hassen</p>
12.30-14.00	Lunch
14.00-16.00	<p>Panel 6: TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP ENGAGEMENTS WITH ABOLITIONISM IN EAST AFRICA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Michelle Liebst, Sultans of Zanzibar and the abolition of slavery in East Africa 2. Salvatory Nyanto and Felicitas Becker, In Pursuit of Freedom: Legal Abolition of Slavery, Tensions, and Creation of Mission Communities in Western Tanzania 1905-1930 3. Samuel A. Nyanhoga, Bombay Africans: From Slaves to Abolitionists <p>Chair and Discussant: Elisabeth McMahon</p>
16.00-16.15	Break
16.15-17.30	<p>KEYNOTE LECTURE: Mahaman Tidjani Alou</p> <p>Chair and Discussant: Benedetta Rossi</p>
17.30-17.45	Closing remarks and comments by Marie-Pierre Ballarin and Benedetta Rossi (chair)