Over the last decade, the study of slavery and of different forms of slave trade has attracted increasing attention in African academia. This growth followed partly from the organisation of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, in Durban, South Africa from August 31st to 7th September 2001. The Durban Conference highlighted the close relationship between some of the most significant social injustices in the contemporary world, and the historical experiences of captivity, inequality, domination, the slave trade and the enslavement of humans... The current revival of slavery studies can also be attributed to the increasing visibility, in various African states, of social and political conflicts rooted in the vestiges of slavery and servility. Social, religious, and political ideologies that created inequalities within communities have become contested, and the memories of oppressed groups have been allowed to enter the domain of public debate.

A closer look at the results of research on slavery reveals an imbalance in terms of knowledge production between different parts of the world affected by slavery and the slave trade. The areas most represented in historical, anthropological, economic, literary and artistic studies, are the Americas and the Caribbean islands. The link between historical experiences of slavery and
contemporary social forms of discrimination has also been explored differently in different regions. The long ignored question of the role of slavery and the slave trade in nation-building started being raised in Europe and the USA, where previous research had focused consistently on colonization and multiculturalism. In North Africa and the Middle East, the silenced issue of the enslavement of sub-Saharan Africans transported through the trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean slave trades is now coming to the fore. Silences are currently being broken.

Important efforts have been made in African research, primarily in the study of the Atlantic slave trade, but also to some degree of the Indian Ocean and Sahelian regions. Following the pioneering work of Claude Meillassoux, Suzanne Miers, Igor Kopytoff, Harris Memel Foté and more recently, Akosua Perbi, Paul Lovejoy, Martin Klein, Roger Botte as well as Charles Becker, new research on slavery in Africa has emerged, but with limited consequences for African academic research and debates. All over the continent, the daily life of many communities is influenced by the legacy of slavery and its capacity to shape contemporary systems of domination and inequality. Although slavery is a central issue in contemporary African societies, many questions still remain un-answered.

2. Conference themes

A. Slavery and its legacies in Africa

Though the importance of slavery and the slave trade is well attested in contemporary African societies, the silence on this subject should be questioned: does it not reveal dynamics of power that impact on academic research? Didn’t African anti-colonial movements perpetuate silence on these issues in order to hide internal conflicts in African societies in the name of unity? Didn’t they even contribute to silencing the voices of subalterns, who are mainly slave descendants? Slavery and its legacies have greatly influenced important issues such as access to land, education, freedom to exercise political, religious or administrative duties, as well as the recognition of citizenship or social marginalization of servile groups and their descendants. For example, in some contexts, the residential discrimination suffered by slave descendants confined them to segregated neighborhoods or villages with limited access to public resources.

Taking advantage of the recent reconfiguration of public and political spaces characterized by protest movements for human rights and citizenship, the victims of former or contemporary slavery have raised their voices, demanding recognition of their past by their governments and sometimes compensation for the damages they suffered. This resulted in debates that bring to the surface the continuing relevance of slavery. And yet, the social sciences and humanities are still lagging behind with regards to recording and analysing these historical processes. Thus, issues and debates that are very popular and visible in the Internet and various social media figure only marginally in African academic research.

B. Logics of legitimization

The integration of slaves in fictive systems of kinship enabled their lifelong subordination and their confinement to inferior roles (cadet, junior, etc.) within kinship and social networks: these were rhetorical strategies to hide their continuous marginalization and otherness.
Does this way of managing slaves suggest that the system of servitude in Africa should not be characterized as slavery? In Africa, as elsewhere, the system reproduced itself by the acquisition of new captives or by changing the slave status to that of second-generation slave-descendants. Each slave system produced an ideology of legitimization, a specific cultural and social environment as well as a legal framework governing relationships between masters and slaves. But clearly these relationships are governed by power dynamics that are an expression of the will of the powerful, who could alter social laws and traditions.

The integration of slavery in the kinship system was part of power relationships. It is necessary to question the existence of "an African slavery" supposedly more humane or benign. How can we analyse "slavery in Africa" as an institution taking different forms and contents, in permanent evolution, and reflecting changing relationships between masters and slaves?

Religion was a major factor particularly in north-African and Eastern Africa coastal societies, which used Islam to legitimize the enslavement of sub-Saharan populations. This resulted in the "racialization" of relationships based on slavery. Which impact did this combination between religious and racial factors have on societies of the Middle East, East Africa and North Africa? How can specific African systems of slavery be compared to forms of slavery and the slave trade in the Atlantic world? Research on Atlantic slavery emphasized the analysis of racial categories, for example "blackness" in the 18th century. Did this way of defining slaves influence the perception of slaves and slavery in African societies?

Did slavery in the Sahelian space influence Atlantic categories? What are the similarities and differences between the Atlantic, Indian-Ocean and Sahel, for example with regards to the transition from religious to racial criteria in the definition and perception of slavery?

How did classifications change with the coming of abolition and colonization? What kind of "African slavery" was hidden behind the concept of "domestic slavery" emerged under colonialism, and later used by nationalist movements and descendants of slave-owners to deny the status of their slaves? Questions of definition and representation need to be discussed.

C. Forms of contestation: resistance and abolition

Revolts, individual or collective flights, and other forms of resistance were frequent and diverse. In some parts of Africa, slave rebellions resulted in the creation of states led by former slaves. From the seventeenth century there were many incidents related to flights, as well as victorious or repressed riots in slave trade posts on the Atlantic coast. Victorious political revolutions in different parts of the continent frequently challenged the slave trade.

The contestation of slavery has taken several paths, some paradoxical. The abolitions that accompanied the colonial expansion of the nineteenth and twentieth century made available new opportunities to the victims of internal trade who collectively rejected servitude, organized massive exoduses, and - when they knew where they came from - returned to their country of origin. Manumission and redemption were also ways to access emancipation.

The manumission or redemption of a slave, achieved through the master’s will or other legal proceedings, often left the beneficiary in a state of dependence and/or social inferiority that guaranteed the endurance of the bond of servitude for him and his descendants.

Different logics of manumission and emancipation in former servile systems in Africa will be questioned during the conference. The aim is to highlight their characteristics in relation to their historical contexts and the legal and ideological frameworks that govern them.
3. Objectives

The present international conference, to which our institutions wish to invite all interested researchers, has the ambition to mark a significant moment in the reactivation and intensification of research on slavery in Africa. The conference will look at all types of sources, oral, written and audio-visual, with a particular focus on the collection and analysis of testimonies by slaves and their descendants. Moreover, the conference aims to promote a better understanding of the links between African slavery and different slave trades, which have been studied extensively in African historiography.

We invite proposals for papers or panels from a variety of perspectives, disciplines, and fields, on topics including (but not limited to):

1. Slavery and slave trade in African Societies (from origin of slavery until 7th century)
2. Slavery and slave trade in African Societies (8th century until 15th century)
3. Slavery, slave trade and colonisation in Africa
4. Anti-slavery movements and abolitions in Africa
5. The vocabulary of Slavery: terms describing slaves and slave-descendants in Africa
6. Slave and bonded labour in Africa
7. Slavery, citizenship and power relations, past and present
8. Slavery and land tenure in Africa
9. Ideologies of slavery in Africa: “blood,” “race” and the construction of "otherness"
10. Slave social formations in Africa
11. Relationship between slavery in Africa and external slave trades
12. Contemporary slavery and human trafficking in Africa
13. Slavery and legal systems in Africa
14. Slavery and culture in Africa: literature, arts, music, cinema etc.
15. Slavery and religions in Africa
16. Biographies and slave voices in Africa
17. Slavery, international debates, and their impact on Africa
18. Heritage and memories of slavery in Africa
19. The silencing of slavery: silences and denials of the slave experience
20. Migrations, mobility, and slavery
4. Honorary Committee

Edward Alpers
Thierno Mouctar Bah
Boubacar Barry
Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch
Martin Klein
Doulaye Konaté
Paul Lovejoy
Elikia M'Bokolo
Amadou Mokhtar Mbow
Binetou Sanankoua

5. Scientific Committee

Patrick Abungu
Zekeria Ahmed Salem
Antonio Almeida Mendes
Anthony Asiwaju
Mamadou Badji
Marie Pierre Ballarin
Maurice Bazémo
Alice Bellagamba
Giulia Bonacci
Alpha Boureima Gado
Myriam Cottias
Mamadou Diouf
Patrick Harries
Alioum Idrissou
Herman Kiriama
Catarina Madeira Santos
Henri Médard
Samuel Nyanchoga
Solofo Randrianja
Benedetta Rossi
Ahmadou Sehou
Ibrahima Thioub
Salah Trabelsi
Ephraim Wahome
6. Conference Organization

The deadline for submission of paper and panel abstracts is February 28th 2014.

*Individual papers*: please submit a paper title and abstract of up to 300 words (including spaces) in French and English. Please include a brief biographical note (about 150 words), specifying institution affiliation, full address and email contact.

*Panels*: please submit a panel abstract of up to 450 words (including spaces), along with the names and paper titles and abstracts of each presenter, contact information (phone and email) for the primary contact person, and a short bio-note for each participant (about 150 words). Panels should include 4-5 presenters.

The scientific committee will make a selection by **March 31st 2014**. Communications won’t exceed 8000 words (Times 11 point or equivalent, spaces, notes and bibliography) and should be submitted no later than **July 31st 2014**.

Each participant will have to ensure adequate funding for his or her participation in the conference. Financial support may be available for young researchers from Africa who are submitting papers. An application form for financial support will be posted on the conference website in due course.

During the conference, each participant will have 15 minutes to present. A moderator will take 10 minutes to discuss the presented papers for each panel session. There will be 30 minutes for questions and discussion. The conference languages will be French and English.

Proposals are welcome from academics, as well as graduate and undergraduate students. Representatives of anti-slavery movements will be invited to take part in public fora to discuss with researchers, and a film festival on slavery and the slave trade will form part of the conference.

Please send proposals and queries to slafco2014@gmail.com. The conference will be held in Nairobi, information about accommodation will be provided. All useful information will be available on the following blog: http://slafco2014.blogspot.com/ from January 2014.

**Organizing Committee:**

- Patrick Abungu - National Museums of Kenya, Shimoni Slavery Museum, Mombasa, Kenya
- Marie Pierre Ballarin - IRD / URMIS – Nice, France
- Giulia Bonacci - IRD / URMIS / CFEE, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Myriam Cottias - CNRS- CIRESC "Centre International de Recherches sur les Esclavages", Paris, France
- Alioum Idrissou - Centre d'Études et de Recherches Pluridisciplinaires sur l'Esclavage et la Traite en Afrique (CERPETA), Yaoundé, Cameroun
- Herman Kiriama - Australian Cultural Heritage Management (ACHM), Melbourne, Australia
- Samuel Nyanchoga - Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya
- Ahmadou Séhou - Centre d'Études et de Recherches Pluridisciplinaires sur l'Esclavage et la Traite en Afrique (CERPETA), Yaoundé, Cameroun
- Ibrahima Thioub - Centre Africain de Recherches sur les Traites et les Esclavages – UCAD, Dakar, Sénégal