Slavery and the African Diaspora from a Global Perspective

2nd Series
February - March 2014

Organised by the Department of History, the Centre of African Studies, and the Centre for Migration & Diaspora Studies at SOAS.

Khalili & Djam Lecture Theatres
College Buildings
SOAS, University of London
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG

For more information, email cas@soas.ac.uk
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Our film series and panel discussions with the filmmakers propose to make visible people of African descent in the world.

By including films from Africa (Mali and Benin) and the Indian Ocean World (Sri Lanka), we aim to throw light on slavery in the African continent as well as its eastwards dimension. Slavery has all too often been studied in isolation from Africa. The focus has mainly been on the North Atlantic World. Indeed, the cultural dimension of Diasporas has long been observed in the North Atlantic World, but it has received only scant attention within the context of emancipated slave communities elsewhere.

The films and the discussion panels aim to question the biases in understanding slavery.

Organised by Dr Marie Rodet (Department of History, SOAS), Dr Shihan de Silva (Institute of Commonwealth Studies), Dr Parvathi Raman (Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies, SOAS) and Angelica Baschiera (Centre of African Studies, SOAS).

These events will take place in the Khalili Lecture Theatre & Djam Lecture Theatre (formerly G2). Each screening will be followed by a Q&A with the director.

Exhibition

An accompanying exhibition of photographs by Fanny Challier entitled Malian Landscapes of Freedom will be displayed in the Wolfson Gallery, SOAS Library, 24th February - 21st March 2014

Thursday 6th March, 7pm, DLT (formerly G2)
Memorializing a Traumatic Past: West African Slavery on Film

Keynote Speaker: Ana Lucia Araujo (Howard University) ‘Public Memory and Legacies of Slavery from a Global Perspective’

Film: ‘The Diambourou: Slavery and Emancipation In Kayes (Mali)’
2013, dir. Marie Rodet (SOAS) & Fanny Challier
African slavery was officially abolished in French Sudan (present day Mali) by the colonial administration in 1905, but effective emancipation of former slaves was in fact a lengthy process, the repercussions of which were still felt long after Mali’s independence in 1960. This documentary tells the story of those who resisted slavery by escaping their masters and founding new independent and free communities in the district of Kayes in the first half of the 20th century. The film presents a unique audiovisual archive of slave emancipation.

Panel discussion:
Professor Kevin MacDonald
(UCL London)

Thursday 27th February, 7pm, KLT
Cultural Heritage of the African Diaspora In the Indian Ocean; Musical and Linguistic Traditions of Afro-Asians on Film

Film: ‘Indian Ocean Memories and African Migrants’
2014, dir. Shihan de Silva (Institute of Commonwealth Studies)
This film explores the cultural memories of the largest Afro-Sri Lankan community. Dances and songs (in creolised Portuguese, the language of trade and commerce for 350 years on the island), connect the Afro-Sri Lankans to Africa, now no longer an imagined homeland. Africans were prominent in the Indian Ocean World in various spheres but now the majority of Afro-Asians are pushed to the margins. Performing tradition enables Afro-Sri Lankans to carve out a niche in the cultural arena of their hostland. Fading memories of slavery and the slave trade can still be heard in the narratives of their oral histories.

Panel discussion:
Professor Parvati Nair (Queen Mary University, London)
Professor Tope Omoniyi (Roehampton University)

Thursday 20th February, 7pm, KLT
Memorializing a Traumatic Past: West African Slavery on Film

Film: ‘Mémoire promise’ (‘Promised Memories’) 2014, dir. Gaetano Ciarcia (Montpellier University) & Jean-Christophe Monferran (Cnrs Paris)
This film, shot in 2012, tracks two paths of historical memory between the towns of Ouidah and Abomey in Benin. Memories of the transatlantic slave trade and memories of Voodoo (Vodun) seem to be closely entangled and preserved as heritage on this UNESCO slave route.

Panel discussion:
Dr Toby Green (Kings College)
Professor Robin Law (Stirling)