

Being of slave descent in Africa: Dynamics of exclusion and inclusion in post-slave societies

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This panel proposes to address two closely related themes. The first concerns the condition of slave descendants in contemporary Africa. In many African post-slave societies, groups of people are marginalised because of their slave ancestry, whereas in others former slaves and their descendants have been more easily integrated into free society. We welcome papers describing the various experiences of slave descent individuals or groups within this broad spectrum - from marginalisation to integration - as well as those offering insights on what it means to be of slave descent in Africa today. In the case of 'marginalised' slave descendants, it would be particularly interesting to pay attention, for example, to the strategies used to resist or escape the stigma attached to slave descent. In the case of 'integrated' slave descendants, the contributions could focus on how individuals or groups achieved their status and ask to what extent the memory of their slave ancestry is kept alive in spite of their integration into free society. The second theme of the panel invites researchers to look at the factors explaining the presence or absence of a stigma on slave descent in African post-slave societies, and at the corollary question of how the dynamics of exclusion could possibly be changed in societies where slave descendants are marginalised. We seek papers investigating, for example, how religious or kinship practices determine the exclusion/inclusion of slave descendants, and what kind of social policies could be implemented to help reduce the stigma of slave descent.