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"The Portuguese Atlantic: Africa, Cape Verde and Brazil"

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**CFP for "The Portuguese Atlantic:
Africa, Cape Verde and Brazil"**

Call for papers:

Conference: The Portuguese Atlantic: Africa, Cape Verde and Brazil

Date and place: 6 July - 10 July 2005

Mindelo, Sao Vicente, Cape Verde Islands

The conference held at King's College in London in September 2004, entitled Creole societies in the Portuguese and Dutch colonial empires, focussed on the emergence of Creole societies in Africa and the Indian Ocean. The Conference proposed for Cape Verde will now shift the focus to the Atlantic.

The historiography of the last forty years has shown clearly that Africa, far from being an isolated backwater, cut off from human development, has been a crossroads, mediating contact with a wide range of peoples and cultures. One result of this has been the emergence of contact societies where Africans met, absorbed and engaged with others from outside the continent. Most -- but not all -- of these societies were involved in trade and most developed distinctive characteristics as a result of this encounter. Many were highly mixed brokerage societies like those of the West and East African islands and coastal regions; others, such as those of the Zambesi prazos were more territorially based, while the Coloureds of South Africa were pastoralists or developed as artisans and wage earners within a white dominated colonial society. What links these disparate groups is that they and their contemporaries often stressed the mixed nature of their cultural heritage and maintained ties, however tenuous, across the seas. The Conference will therefore also look at the connections these societies maintained with the African diaspora(s) in the Atlantic and the Americas.

Could this be called creolisation? The debate is a lively one with many Africanists hostile to the use of such a term. Yet 'hybridity' and 'creole identities' are widely accepted terms and receive much attention in the context of the Caribbean and America (North and South); they form a significant strand of the 'new' British imperial history and in the development of the concept of a 'shadow empire' in Portuguese historiography. In a wider context the Conference will also make a significant contribution to the urgent discussions -- academic and practical -- on identity, culture, nationalism, ethnicity and political power which are of critical importance in the twenty-first century. With some particular exceptions, this debate has largely taken place without much input from Africanists, as if the continent had little to contribute to the discussion of such issues.

This Conference aims to fill this gap by exploring African 'creole' societies and the communities with which they maintained contacts in the Americas. Questions such as how these societies developed, how issues of identity were negotiated and re-negotiated, what roles they played in economic, political, cultural and social histories of Africa, the US and Brazil and what lasting impact they have had, will be central to the Conference. The concept of a 'Black Atlantic' will be extended from its original focus on the Anglophone world to the Lusophone Atlantic and will look at the economic, cultural and social contacts maintained between Africa, the United States and Brazil, often using the 'creole' islands of the Atlantic as the conduits of migration and cultural exchange.

The Conference will result in a volume which will contribute to the debate on development and cultural exchange in the Atlantic community and on the historic links between Africa, the creole societies, the United States and Brazil.

Logistics:

There will be no Conference fee.

Those attending the Conference must find their own travel and accommodation costs. (The Conference organisers can make a hotel booking at a cost of 50Euros per night and can arrange air tickets if this is required).

Visits to Sao Vicente and the other islands can be arranged.

Paper Titles and Abstracts:

Those wishing to attend the conference should send the title of their proposed paper and a 300 word abstract by 22 April 2005.

Contact details:

Those interested should contact Professor M. Newitt, Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies, King's college, Strand, London WC2R 2LS: tel 020 7848 1827: E- mail: malyn.newitt@kcl.ac.uk.

Posted on H-Africa discussion group by: Charles Becker.