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Searching for the African Voice: Studying Slavery and the Slave Trade in Africa

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**Searching for the African Voice:
Studying Slavery and the Slave Trade in Africa**

Buea, Cameroon, December 14-16, 2010



The export of men, women and children from Africa to the America lasted over four hundred years and touched most communities in Africa, directly or indirectly. We now know a great deal about this trade: its gender and age composition, the ways in which individuals and communities responded to the trade, the extent to which warfare, kidnapping, legal mechanisms, economic processes and religious institutions generated a pool of people to be bought and sold. We know about resistance, the formation of slave-trading states and the increased use of slaves within Africa. We have some autobiographical accounts by those who were literate or achieved literacy after their capture, but these are few. Most of the sources used to write the history of slavery in Africa are European, but the memories of the Atlantic slave trade remain and are embedded in African ritual, song, and memory.

We are inviting proposals dealing with the exploration of new methodologies and the re-examination of old ones. Our major objective is to make available to students and scholars African sources on slavery, enslavement and the slave trade and to improve our understanding of these documents. The conference is open to any methodology that taps African voices. Our goal is to seek out and explore new methodologies to find more African sources, and if possible, to look for the voices of the slaves themselves as well as the enslavers, and buyers and sellers on how they perceived their own actions and experiences. We also want to make these sources more widely available. We can accept sources originating from other continents only if they involve memories of Africa and the trade from Africa.

This is the third gathering on this subject. When we organized the recent Toronto conference on Tales of Slavery: Narratives of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Enslavement in Africa, we received 26 abstracts from Africa. Many of them described interesting and innovative research. We were only able to bring seven of those 26 scholars to Toronto. Our enterprise clearly was of interest to African scholars. Our goal was to find new African sources for slavery and the slave

trade, and through that, to give a more varied picture of the African experience. Historians of the slave trade have depended too much on European information.

As a result, a group of us sought funding from the West African Research Association for a workshop in Cameroon, where much of the best research is being done. WARA has come through with a small grant for a workshop to be entitled Searching for the African Voice: Studying Slavery and the Slave Trade in Africa. It will be held in Buea, Cameroon December 14 to 16 of 2010. That is approximately a year from today. Those interested in participating should send a title and an abstract to Denis Fomin at fomin_esd_1999@yahoo.com. Denis Fomin and Idrissou Alioum (idrissoualioum@yahoo.fr) will be handling local organization. Ibrahima Thioub and Paul Lovejoy are also involved in the planning of the conference. At present, we do not have a lot of money to fund travel. Most of the funds we have will be used to bring participants from Cameroon and Eastern Nigeria. We hope to find some additional funds, but right now, that is not guaranteed. Please feel free to communicate this call for papers to other scholars doing research on the slave trade. Organizing Committee: Denis Fomin, University of Yaounde; Idrissou Alioum, University of Yaounde; Ibrahima Thioub, Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar; Paul Lovejoy, York University, Toronto; Martin Klein, University of Toronto.