

Extrait du CODESRIA

<http://www.codesria.org/spip.php?article337>

Writing the History of Women in Africa: Past, Present and Future

- Conferences - SOS African History Conference -

Date de mise en ligne : Wednesday 30 December 2009

CODESRIA

18-20 October 2009, Nairobi, Kenya

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is pleased to announce the second edition of its annual conference on critical themes in the history of Africa. The conference is part of CODESRIA's initiative aimed at achieving the triple objective of promoting the study of the history of Africa, mobilising support for the discipline of history in African higher education, and networking African historians both for these purposes and also as a worthy cause in its own right. Packaged under the label 'SOS African History', the initiative is motivated by the strongly held view of the CODESRIA membership that the current conjuncture in the development of Africa marks a moment when the continent is, more than ever before, in need of history and historians. Given the fact that across Africa, engagement with the history of the continent, the financing of historical research, and the teaching of History are severely endangered, the CODESRIA SOS African History initiative is designed to galvanise local and continental responses that could add up to stem and reverse the tide of decline that has been underway for at least two decades.

The inaugural conference within the CODESRIA initiative on African History was held on the 27th- 29th of October 2008 in Kampala, Uganda, on the theme: Re-Reading the History and Historiography of Domination and Resistance in Africa. The second conference scheduled for Nairobi, Kenya will have as its theme: Writing the History of Women in Africa: Past, Present and Future. The study of women in Africa has in recent years experienced a great leap forward in terms of output, theoretical development and visibility. The changes which can be principally attributed to the adoption of new frameworks such as life-histories, oral histories, genealogies, religious records, cultural lore and fables, and a focus on women's resistance have challenged the silences on African women in African history. The new approaches, though not without their limitations, have stimulated a renewed interest in the study and writing of the history of African women; and are, more importantly, acting as a catalyst for the revitalisation of African history and historiography by stimulating a re-examination of familiar themes in African history, such as African labour history and class relations, colonialism, African economic history, African elites and African religions.

Despite the success of efforts to restore women to African history, African women's history is still largely absent from mainstream African historiography and is consistently confronted with the possibility of disciplinary provincialism. Furthermore, limitations of scope to the 19th and 20th centuries, and the absence of studies on women before the 1800s, restrict efforts to integrate and properly situate women's history into African history. However, African women are making their own history and writing it. They are also actors in the making of African history. Part of this has been captured in a number of publications including the "Women Writing Africa series". The writing of the history of African women is also not the exclusive preserve of historians as contributions from anthropology, political science, gender studies and sociology have widened the scope and deepened the content of African women's history.

The continued marginalisation of African women in African historiography, despite advances in theory and method, is a source of concern; especially at a time when African history itself is facing the threat of obscurity, giving the reduced significance of its research works on other historiographies and the severely endangered nature of popular and academic engagement with history on the continent, due to poor financing of historical research, which itself is a consequence of a devaluation of the discipline in favour of more "marketable" ones. What then can be done to move the history of women in Africa beyond the stage of compensation or that of writing women into African history? What lessons can be learnt from the greater attention in African history to craft, theory and diverse sources linking the past to the present that has been observed in recent years? What can be learnt from theoretical advancements in women's studies in anthropology, sociology and political science? Through a critical examination of recent developments in the history and historiography of African women, African scholars are being invited to engage with issues of representation, sources, methodology and periodisation, class, labour and economic history, and political

mobilisation in African history. They are most especially encouraged to assess the consequences of recent theoretical developments in the history and historiography of African women, for the future of African history, and the rescuing of the study of Africa from faulty analogies drawn from a unilineal reading of the history of Europe and the United States of America. The conference is expected to act as a forum for assessing the state-of-the art in African women's history; that is, draw attention to new questions, reassess old ones and suggest new ways of proceeding in African women's history in particular, and African history in general.

In developing their abstracts, potential conference participants are encouraged to focus on, but not limit themselves to, any of the following sub-themes:

- ▶ Historiography of African Women's History
- ▶ Women, Law and Justice in Africa
- ▶ Women in African Colonial Histories
- ▶ Women and Migration in Africa
- ▶ Women in African Labour History
- ▶ Women and Politics in Africa
- ▶ Women, Sexuality and Emancipation in Africa
- ▶ Women and the Economy in Africa