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L'Afrique et les défis du XXIème siècle
Africa and the Challenges of the Twenty First Century
A África e os desafios do Século XXI

إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

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Archives on Social and Labour History:
The International Institute of Social History and Africa"

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**Archives on Social and Labour History:
The International Institute of Social History and Africa**

Stefano Bellucci

Abstract

The International Institute of Social History (IISH) is one of the world's largest documentation and research centres in the field of social history. Since its foundation in 1935, the Institute has dedicated itself to the collection, preservation and accessibility of the heritage of social movements worldwide. The IISH research department is particularly interested in the historiographies of labourers and labour movements especially in Europe. In 2000s the Institute decided to expand the study, recording and preservation of labour history in the so-called "global south" with a programme aimed at strengthening the collection building activity of the IISH in the field of social movements in regions of the world such as: Central Asia, South Asia, South-East Asia, Latin-America and Africa. The Africa Desk of the IISH will shortly be opened in Addis Ababa and its purpose is to find and preserve records of African social history, and to transform those records or collections into archives or to preserve already existing archives – for example by digitalising them. The IISH does not cover the *res gestae* of politicians, military personnel or administrators because the history of these people is systematically recorded in State-owned archives. Instead the IISH focuses on those documents that are not traditionally conserved in State-archives and might therefore be lost if no efforts to safeguard them were made. Such a loss would seriously jeopardise the ability of scholars and researchers to gain a wider understanding of African social history.