

Euro-African shared history of artifacts and commemorations

Deadline: Dec 15, 2022

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Edited Volume on Euro-African shared history of artifacts and commemorations.

Iconographies of oppression? Revisiting Europe and Africa's shared history through artifacts and commemorations is the proposed title for an interdisciplinary, multi-contributed volume examining material artefacts and immaterial (practices of) commemorations of personalities, places and events that represent a tangible evidence of encounters between Africa and Europe.

The Atlantic slave trade and the imposition of European colonialism in Africa have impacted significantly on the modern relations between the two continents, and have left behind also many forms of memorialization that today are contested and interpreted differently than in the past. The volume intends focusing especially on the links between such historical legacy and current disputes, protests, or revisionist attempts occurring on both sides, in order to contribute to the overall understanding of contemporary Europe-Africa relations.

The "Rhodes Must Fall" campaign and the "Black Lives Matter" movement have recently shed light on the continued racial oppression of black people as well as on issues of discrimination and social justice in contemporary European/Western and African societies. With their protests, these and other movements have rightly called against inequalities and discrimination and, among other things, have denounced vehemently the celebration and the preservation of the memory of personalities connected to white suprematism, colonialism, imperialism. In most cases, they have demanded the removal of the contested statues from public spaces. In several countries, among which Belgium, Cameroon, Italy, Senegal, the United Kingdom, monuments that bear witness to the legacy of Europe-Africa encounters have been vandalized, destroyed and removed. Besides the case of the statue of Cecil Rhodes (which was removed at the University of Cape Town but not at the University of Oxford), statues of British slave trader Edward Colston and Belgium King Leopold II especially have also been the focus of protests in the past few years. Other examples include the memorials of Philippe Leclerc de Hauteclocque, Louis Faidherbe.

In some cases, public authorities have agreed to remove controversial statues; in other situations, they have refused to do so or have proposed alternative solutions. It should be also underlined that especially in Europe, different and often opposed views on the matter were expressed by historians, intellectuals, political parties, activists and rightwing groups. In presenting their position, some have touched on race and ethnicity argumentations in order to offer their own interpretation of the past.

The main implications of the global wave of protests have been the expansion of the “public appetite for reconsidering the past” (Mark-Thiesen, Mihatsch e Sikes 2022, 3), as well as vibrant public debates and divisions in European and African societies.

However, such delicate questions should not be answered emotionally, or without a serious pondering and a community agreement on how to “handle” the past represented by monuments, statues and other forms of material and immaterial commemoration that are found in contemporary African and European states. In light of the above, academia is best equipped to provide relevant, innovative and qualified perspectives that are currently missing and needed in public debates.

Authors who wish to contribute to the volume should therefore problematize the aspects mentioned above and contribute by delivering fresh evidence from case studies regarding material and immaterial forms of commemoration and memory linking Africa and Europe. These include (non-exhaustive list):

Statues, monuments, busts, memorials

Public/national holidays, days of remembrance, rituals

Street names, landmarks

Residential buildings, flagship architecture

Plaques, images, symbols, iconographies

Prospective authors should propose a significant case study for empirical analysis. A non-exhaustive list of key research questions that can help framing the analysis is found below:

-What types of links do material and immaterial forms of commemoration and memory reveal about Africa and Europe and their encounters?

-What do these forms tell us about amnesia, collective/selective memory and remembrance regarding slave trade, colonialism, and other significant episodes in the mutual history of Europe and Africa? What should be done to enhance shared memories and to overcome amnesia?

-What is the relation between mass protests and memory? How to explain the escalation of protests in recent years?

-What is the politics of commemorations in different countries? How do statues are used instrumentally to achieve political goals?

-What do iconographies tell us about current understanding of race and ethnicity?

-How do countries across the two continents negotiate and elaborate among each other shared memories and forms or memorialization? Or what is missing to achieve such result?

-Is the removal of a statue a form of deprivation of knowledge (including of what is not being told or represented) for future generations?

-What does the erection of a new statue reveal about the narratives shaping in the society?

-How do changing societies and demography in both continents (e.g. after migration) affect the relation between colonialism/imperialism and its victims, or between the remembered and the forgotten?

-Are there examples of “best practices” for dealing with the past as represented by material and immaterial forms of commemoration and memory?

The overall aim of the volume is that of reflecting on the shared legacy between the continents, which keeps generating both new interpretations of the past as well as new forms of appropriation of the past by those in the present. Material artefacts and immaterial commemorations are instrumental for this scope, as they represent and/or reproduce certain views of the past, which may be contested or come into conflict with new emerging narratives.

The volume aspires to become a reference point for the study and research on Europe-Africa relations and memory/cultural studies, providing multiple case studies for the understanding of these issues from different point of views. A clear, comprehensive collection of case studies in a single volume is still missing to a great extent.

Authors are asked to provide analyses of a specific case study, focusing on forms of commemorations in one or more countries as explained above. Such case study should 1.target an example of material and immaterial form of commemoration and memory located in Africa and/or Europe, which reveals and deepen the understanding of the cultural, political, economic or social relations between the two continents 2.address, ideally, one or more key questions indicated above.

The volume may host also a very limited number of theoretical contributions, exploring for example the relation between memory and protests or other relevant topics in the context of Europe-Africa encounters.

Submissions are welcome that contribute directly to cultural, social history, cultural studies, memory studies, political sciences, anthropology, women’s and ethnic studies, sociology, or related fields. Africa-based scholars are highly encouraged to submit their proposal.

All prospective contributors are invited to submit a Word document with the title of the proposed chapter, and an abstract (800-1000 words) with indication of the case study, methodology and sources. Moreover, a brief bio of the author(s) should be included (including affiliation, titles and list of publications)

Proposals should be submitted via email attachment to Dr. Marco Zoppi (marco.zoppi2@unibo.it) by 15 December, 2022. Invited authors will need to submit full text by July 15, 2023. Final chapter length will be 7500-8000 words (including bibliography), and submitted chapters should not have been previously published, as the book will be peer-reviewed before publication.

Prospective contributors are welcome to get in touch with the editor for further information.

The editor will contact international publishing houses for publication in print and e-book format.

Briefly about the editor: Marco Zoppi is Post-doc Research Fellow at the University of Bologna, Department of Political and Social Sciences. His main fields of studies include migration and integration policies and dynamics; EU’s relations with Africa and the Balkans. He is the author of the book “Horizons of Security: The Somali safety net in Scandinavia” (Rowman and Littlefield, 2021) and the editor of the volume titled “A Tight Embrace: Narratives and Dynamics of Euro-African Relations” (Rowman and Littlefield, 2020).

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