

Int. Conference on Controversial Cultural Heritage 2027 (Kilifi, 17–18 Feb 27)

Pwani University, Kilifi, Kenya, Feb 17–18, 2027

Deadline: Oct 15, 2026

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Black Histories, Slavery, and Colonialism: Interpretation, Valorization and Preservation of Controversial Cultural Heritage.

Pwani University, Kilifi, Kenya, in collaboration with its partners in the European-funded project CIRCE – InClusive valorisation model foR Controversial cultural hEritage in the Mediterranean Harbours and beyond (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Staff Exchanges, Project No. 101235092), is pleased to host the 2027 International Conference on Controversial Cultural Heritage.

Cultural heritage is not always celebratory. Monuments, artworks, archaeological sites, museum collections, religious buildings, archives, and public spaces may preserve histories of domination, slavery, racialization, exclusion, and conflict. Such legacies raise difficult questions about what is preserved, how it is interpreted, and whose perspectives are represented.

The conference will focus primarily on African cultural heritage, with particular attention to East Africa and the East African coast. This region offers an especially significant context, having experienced centuries of interaction with African, Arab, Portuguese, and later British political, commercial, and religious networks, as well as different forms of domination connected to slavery, imperial expansion, and colonial rule.

European case studies are also strongly encouraged, not only in comparative perspective, but also because Europe preserves a substantial African and Afro-descendant heritage. Museums, churches, collections, monuments, archives, and public spaces contain images, objects, and traces connected to Black presence, slavery, colonialism, servitude, migration, and cultural exchange.

Particular attention will therefore be given to the historical connections linking East Africa, the Mediterranean, Europe, the Atlantic world, and the Indian Ocean, and to the movement of people, objects, images, and systems of knowledge across these spaces.

The conference aims to explore how controversial cultural heritage can be interpreted, preserved, and valorized without erasing difficult histories or reproducing inherited stereotypes and power relations. We welcome proposals from scholars, heritage professionals, museum practitioners, artists, and researchers working in history, art history, archaeology, anthropology, religious studies, heritage and museum studies, architecture, cultural studies, and related fields.

Suggested Research Lines

Abstracts may address, but are not limited to:

- Black presence and Black representation in European, African, Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Indian Ocean cultural heritage
- Images of Black people, enslaved people, servants, and racialized minorities in comparative perspective
- Slavery and its visual, material, social, and cultural legacies
- European heritage connected to slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and racialization
- Colonial heritage and postcolonial approaches to preservation and interpretation
- Museums and the critical reinterpretation of historical categories of race and difference
- Religious heritage, conversion, minorities, and practices of inclusion and exclusion
- Contested monuments, memorials, artworks, archaeological sites, and public spaces
- Decolonial approaches to museums, archives, collections, and urban heritage
- Restitution, repatriation, provenance research, and heritage justice
- Community participation, co-creation, and inclusive heritage practices
- Trauma, memory, silences, and the ethics of interpretation
- Heritage, identity, migration, and contemporary multicultural societies
- Digital approaches to the preservation and interpretation of controversial heritage

Submission Guidelines

- Abstract length: 250–300 words
- Include: Title, author(s), institutional affiliation(s), and contact details
- Provide 3–5 keywords
- Submissions must be original and not previously published
- Abstract Submission Deadline: 15th October 2026
- Notification of Acceptance: 30th October 2026
- Conference Dates: 17-18th February 2027
- Send to: Prof. Stephen Muoki Joshua [s.muoki@pu.ac.ke] and Prof. Giuseppe Capriotti [giuseppe.capriotti@unimc.it]

Reference:

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