

## Archaeologies of enslavement in eastern Africa and the Western Indian Ocean, c. AD 500 – 1900: analytical and interpretive challenges

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### Abstract

Much of the research on slavery in Africa relies heavily on documentary and oral sources and uses archaeology more as a means to materialize the practices of slave trading and ownership than as an independent source of evidence. This is understandable given that their marginal status generally meant enslaved persons left far fewer material traces of their presence than other labour categories. Moreover, even where material evidence has been interpreted as indicative of either slave trading or slave ownership, alternative explanations can usually be forwarded. In the absence of supporting documentary evidence, verification of the presence of slaves, therefore, may be hard to achieve. Nonetheless, as recent studies demonstrate, undocumented information about the lives of enslaved individuals, the wider impacts of slave raiding and the organization of slave trading can be gleaned from analysis of material evidence at multiple spatial scales. When several different material and landscape indicators occur together, convincing arguments for the presence of slavery can be made. The aim of this presentation is to review these emerging approaches and assess their relevance for the study of slavery systems in eastern Africa and the Western Indian Ocean.

**Thursday 12th April, 4-5 pm**  
**Physics Building, Lecture Room 215.**  
**All welcome!**

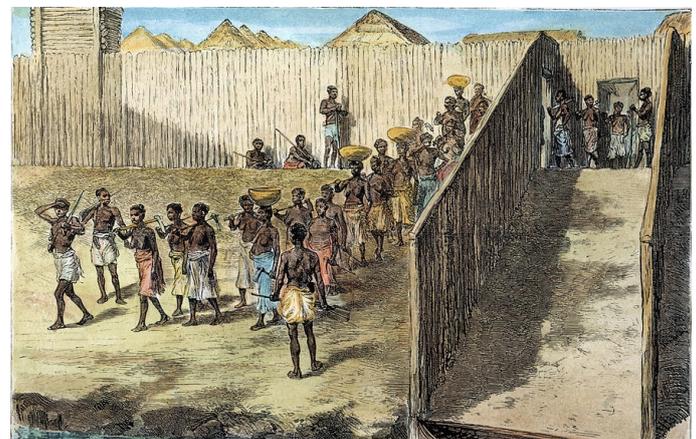
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### Biography

Paul Lane is a specialist in the later Holocene archaeology of sub-Saharan Africa. His interests include landscape historical ecology, the archaeology of colonial encounters, the materialisation of memory, maritime archaeology, and the transition to farming in Africa. A former Director of the British Institute in Eastern Africa and President of the Society of Africanist Archaeologists, he is currently Professor of Global Archaeology at Uppsala University.