



**Harriet Tubman
Resource Centre
on the
African Diaspora**



**No.8
September 2002**

Inauguration



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Department of History, York University, Toronto, Canada

Opening: Harriet Tubman Resource Centre on the African Diaspora



President Lorna Marsden welcomed international scholars, representatives of the University administration, faculty and students, members of the diplomatic community and private industry, gathered for the formal opening of the Harriet Tubman Resource Centre on the African Diaspora at York University Thursday, 12 September 2002. The Tubman Resource Centre is a global research centre, as well as a digital library and archive of materials relating to the history of African peoples in the Americas, Europe, and the Islamic world. (www.yorku.ca/nhp) It is part of the York University Department of History in the Faculty of Arts, and is located at 202B Founders College. Associated with the UNESCO Slave Route Project and the Canada Research Chair in African Diaspora History, the Centre is funded by grants from the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), the Ontario Innovation Trust (OIT), the

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and IBM.

The opening ceremony included messages from President and Vice Chancellor Lorna Marsden, vice-president of Research and Innovation Stan Shapson, Dr. André Kramp, Director of the UNESCO Slave Route Project, Dr. Carmen Charette, Vice President of the Canada Foundation for Innovation, Professor Marlene Shore, chair of the History Department, Dr. Dominic Lam, IBM and Paul E. Lovejoy, Director of the Harriet Tubman Resource Centre. The opening was also attended by David Bogart, executive director of the OIT who commented, "The powerful collaboration between York's industrial partners and its research team led by Prof. Lovejoy has created a unique facility to help Canadians and the world community, preserve and understand these vital historical resources."

Named for the heroine who led many African Americans to freedom in Canada before the American Civil War, the Harriet Tubman Resource Centre will increase the accessibility of documentary evidence of the slave trade and the plight of enslaved Africans in the Americas and the Islamic world. It is the culmination of an internationally supported effort to document the slave trade and bring to light the cultural and personal intermingling of Africans, Europeans and Amerindians that resulted from the forced encounters of slavery. This work furthers the aims of the UNESCO Slave Route Project, to recognize a new pluralism that acknowledges, respects and promotes this cultural diversity and the impact of Africans on the history of the modern world



Focusing upon the preservation and dissemination of historical documentation dealing with the history of Africa and Africans in the Diaspora, the Tubman Centre blends innovative state-of-the-art technologies with more traditional historical materials and methodologies. The cornerstone of the Centre's holdings is its new digital library, designed to house millions of digitized historical sources ranging from documents, images, oral histories, music, to videos. Designed specifically to facilitate the collection and preservation of at-risk historical sources, the digital library also provides tremendous possibilities for access and dissemination of these materials, one of the Centre's prime mandates. Its customized softwares have been developed to accommodate historical methods and to provide a wide range of search capabilities. The centre is also working on software innovations to manage the variety of multilingual data, which will be processed in Toronto at York, and at research centres in Benin, Jamaica, Costa Rica and Brazil, as well as at partner institutions in the United States and Britain.

A centrepiece collection at the Harriet Tubman Resource Centre is Dr. Anthony MacFarlane's Library. Dr. MacFarlane, is a noted bibliophile of Caribbean history and literature. His generous donation will enable the digitalization of this rich collection and thereby permit access to its holdings at various research centres and universities in Latin America and Africa, where such materials are currently not available. The collection also gives York University many first editions and rare books, priceless for the study of Caribbean history and culture. Dr. MacFarlane sent his greetings through a pre-taped message.

The Harriet Tubman Resource Centre is the physical manifestation of the research efforts of a team of international scholars and graduate students committed to the study of Africa and African Diaspora history based upon a spirit of collaboration and mutual support.



"Canada and Canadian researchers offer a unique perspective to the world on the notion of diversity and multiculturalism," said Carmen Charette, senior vice-president of CFI. "This state-of-the-art infrastructure will afford our researchers the opportunity to collaborate with the best in the world and help advance research in the global social sciences."



Address by André Kramp, Director UNESCO Slave Route Project

On behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO, and on my own behalf, I would like to commend York University and Professor Paul Lovejoy for this eventful opening of the Harriet Tubman Resource Centre on the African Diaspora. I would also like to express my appreciation to him for inviting me to share in this experience. Whether as a United Nations civil servant or as the descendant of a former slave in the African Diaspora, I am strongly committed to the study of the African Diaspora for the elimination of prejudice and the acceptance of diversity and cultural difference; and for fostering a true intercultural dialogue among all the peoples of the world.

If the transatlantic slave trade and slavery were about violence and human rights violation, they were also about resistance, survival, and above all, liberation. Harriet Tubman had what it took to emancipate herself and hundreds of fellow-sufferers from subjugation and bondage. She was the light which enlightened the darkness of the slaves' world, not only as a kindled lamp, but rather as a natural luminary, a flowing light-fountain of heroism. Although her kind is not included in Thomas Carlyle's famous classification of heroes, her legacy as the torch-bearer of liberations bears an indelible stamp. I feel privileged to be part of this event, especially considering my educational and cultural background.

Dealing with the subject of the slave trade and slavery as it manifested itself through history is tantamount to going from slavery to multiculturalism. It is most challenging, although no less painful, to pause and reflect on the timeline of slavery, that is, to trace the transformation or the development of black people's self-consciousness from the period of the slave trade through slavery and its abolition, and to consider the subsequent continuous movements for racial and social equality, and for acceptance of pluralism in our own day. In the final analysis, the notion of human dignity as a moral invariable and as it pertains to the former slaveholding societies is inextricably linked to a cultural diversity without racial prejudice and cultural dominance, on the one hand, while being enriched by peace and harmony, on the other.

In spite of the emergence of multicultural populations in western societies, pluralism in these societies is still a long way from being acknowledged and from acquiring the human face that is so basic to a peaceful and meaningful coexistence.

It is in an effort to bring the slave trade and slavery experience into focus that UNESCO launched the international "Slave Route Project" in 1994. This project is one of UNESCO's "Flagship Projects". The project seeks to probe into the historical facts of this tragedy, and to objectively study its underlying causes and modalities in the African Diaspora, more particularly the pluralism inherent in the intercultural dialogue ensuing from the contacts between the peoples of Europe, Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean.



The *Slave Route Project* is composed of four interlinked programmes. The most important of these is the scientific research programme. It is the linchpin of the project, and is carried out by an international Scientific Committee, in cooperation with UNESCO.

I would at this point like to recognize the presence of three distinguished members of this committee, that is, Professor Elisée Soumonni from Benin, Professor Paul Lovejoy, and Professor Robin Law from Great Britain.

On behalf of UNESCO I would like to pay special tribute to Professor Lovejoy for the fruitful cooperation with him since the inception of the project, and for his great contribution to the project, through the Nigerian Hinterland Project, and we are looking forward to continuing and strengthening this cooperation for the remainder of the project.

The second programme is the Education and Teaching Programme, and is carried out through UNESCO's associated schools network. It is structured around an international task force which, among other things, is responsible for the preparation of teaching material for teaching the history of slavery from a fresh perspective. Professor Soumonni is also a member of the International Task Force.

The third programme is on the Promotion of Living Cultures and Artistic and Spiritual forms of Expression. This programme seeks to give recognition to the richness of distinctive cultures, the intangible heritage generated in the African Diaspora, namely the Americas, Europe, and the Caribbean.

We should never ignore the cultural implications involved in the Black Experience of the African Diaspora. Culture was the driving force of the contacts among the slaves, and it has demonstrated its power of survival. The cultures of these regions were to a considerable extent the achievement of resistance. In our teachings, we must not lose sight of the valuable contributions that Africa made to the development of the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe and the world at large. This new culture generated strength for the slaves to confront the institution of slavery. Special attention should be paid to the rich musical heritage that has originated from the Black Diaspora and has contributed to the flowering of many different musical genres that have come to be taken for granted in our present-day world. The strong African influence that pervades the music, dance, the arts, and religious practices, in Latin America and the Caribbean is reminiscent of the variety of African cultures that the slaves brought with them and were unwilling to relinquish.

The fourth and final programme is on the Memory of Slavery and the Diaspora. The objective of this programme is to keep alive the memory of the trade, through the development of cultural tourism, by identifying, restoring and promoting the sites, monuments and places of memory linked to the slave trade in Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean; and contributing to the establishment of museums on slavery and to travelling exhibitions on the slave trade and the Diaspora

Thus the project imposes upon us the duty to remember. Its primary emphasis is on the study of historical facts with the greatest objectivity and with a view to presenting the outcome to the international

community.

The slave route project will ensure that our children, irrespective of the societies in which they live, will acquire a thorough grasp and understanding of the past, not only the glorious and extraordinary historical achievements of humanity, but also the tragic episodes and events which occurred, so that they can better understand the present and be better prepared to build a bright future, a true humanity, without racial prejudice.

Learning about slavery must involve learning about the formidable cultural and economic contributions of the slaves to the socio-cultural developments of the societies in which they lived and struggled. It is the memory of the pride, courage, and intelligence of the enslaved that should motivate us to cherish the fruit of their struggle and fully emancipate our minds.

In this framework, the self-perception of the descendants of the former slaves, as well as that of the descendants of the former slave owners is of crucial importance and significance to understand the multiracial interactions and ensure the removal of prejudice and stereotyping. The “slavery mentality” on both sides was never fully eradicated from the mind, it would seem, and it continues to be the determining factor for the socio-economic development and well-being of individuals in multiracial western societies.

The Slave Route project has, so far, enabled us to acquire a profound understanding of the slave trade and slavery experience, and their obvious effects upon the culture and the personality of the descendants of the former slaves, that is, the psycho-social impact of slavery on Black people. The project has provided the basic and forceful elements for a true humanity and it has mapped out the road towards lasting intercultural dialogue. By dint of its increasing global visibility through diversified activities, the Slave Route Project has succeeded in reaching out to an ever growing public in the academic world and civil society.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

How do we deal with the cultural diversity, that is, the cultures resulting from the contact of Africans, Amerindians, and Europeans who were forced to live together under slavery? What recognition do we give to the rich intangible heritage that is part of our common world heritage? The question that needs to be answered basically in respect to the former multi-cultural slaveholding societies of the Western world is what can be done to promote and sustain genuine cultural pluralism, locally and across nations. Given the racial configuration of these societies, what is called for here is the readiness to deal unconditionally with a diversity of cultural viewpoints in an atmosphere of openness and responsiveness rather than with mistrust and rejection. We must accept the challenge of cultural diversity, in order to develop pluralism and cultural integrity and increasingly eliminate prejudice. This is basic to human dignity. Anything less is a narrow view of civilization and sustainable living. The intellectual stereotyping, racism, and xenophobia, which date back to the less enlightened periods in history, are some of the major obstacles to the fruitful development of a truly multicultural society, that is, a society sustained by intercultural relations, rather than by a division into majorities and minorities.

We cannot escape the challenge of cultural pluralism, since much of our wealth resides in our intangible heritage, in our cultural diversity. In order to ensure a bright future for ourselves, it is important that we reaffirm our identities, self-confidence, pride in one’s origin and in one’s culture, and openness to others and to other cultures.

In conclusion, I would again like to congratulate one and all for this milestone event, and I can assure you of UNESCO’s readiness to continue to work together with York University for the realization of the objectives of the Slave route Project.

Thank you

Inauguration


Harriet Tubman Resource Centre on the African Diaspora
 Department of History
 York University
 12 September 2002

Prof. Paul E. Lovejoy



President Marsden, VP Shapson, Mr. Kramp, distinguished colleagues, students, guests, I am very pleased to open the Harriet Tubman Resource Centre on the African Diaspora on this occasion. I am particularly pleased that my colleagues, Robin Law, Elisée Soumonni, Mariza Soares, and Jane Landers could be with us today and will participate in the Symposium that we are holding tomorrow in connection with this Opening. Each has made an important contribution to the development of African diaspora studies here at York and they are representative of the network of scholars from all parts of the African diaspora who have participated in the endeavour that is being consolidated here today. I also welcome those who

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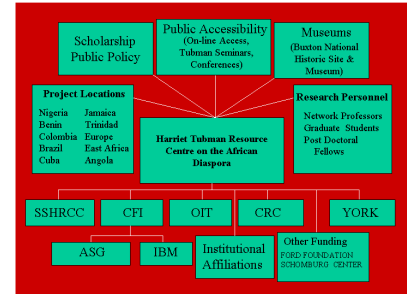
Harriet Tubman (1820-1913)
 Political activist and feminist, personally led hundreds of African Americans to freedom in Canada before the American Civil War



www.yorku.ca/nhp

have supported our initiative in various ways – those representing our sponsors as listed in the program. The Resource Centre is named in honour of Harriet Tubman (1821-1913), feminist and political activist associated with the Underground Railroad that moved thousands of Black refugees from the United State to Canada before the American Civil War. Harriet Tubman escaped from Dorchester County, Maryland, in 1849, and personally assisted at least 200 people in their flight from slavery.

The Harriet Tubman Resource Centre on the African Diaspora is a digitalized research facility that focuses on the history of the African diaspora and the movement of Africans to various parts of the world, particularly the Americas and the Islamic lands of North Africa and the Middle East. The Tubman Centre is part of the Department of History, York University, and includes a digital library and repository as well as facilities for the digitalization of materials.



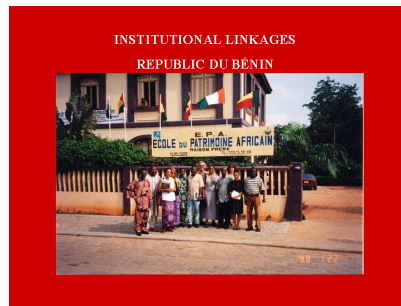
International in focus, with strong linkages, as reflected in the scholars associated with the Centre, and various institutional linkages.

Institutional Linkages

LATIN AMERICA:
 UNIVERSIDAD DE COSTA RICA
 UNIVERSIDADE NACIONAL DA BAHIA
 UNIVERSIDADE NACIONAL FLUMINENSE
 ARCHIVO GENERAL DE LA NACION, COLOMBIA

CARIBBEAN:
 UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
 INSTITUTE OF FRENCH AND TORONTO
 DIXON INSTITUTE, CURAÇAO

WEST AFRICA:
 INSTITUT BÉNINOIS D'ÉTUDES ET DE RECHERCHES DIASPORA AFRICAINE (IBERDA)
 ÉCOLE DU PATRIMOINE AFRICAINE (EPA)
 NIGERIAN NATIONAL ARCHIVES, ENUGU
 NIGRIAN HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION BUREAU



Institutional Linkages

UNESCO SLAVE ROUTE PROJECT

CANADA: BUCKTON HISTORIC SITE AND MUSEUM, BLACK CREEK PIONEER VILLAGE

UNITED STATES: SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON BLACK CULTURE, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, FRANKLIN UNIVERSITY, BUTLER UNIVERSITY, ADRIAN COLLEGE

BRITAIN: UNIVERSITY OF STERLING, UNIVERSITY OF BULL

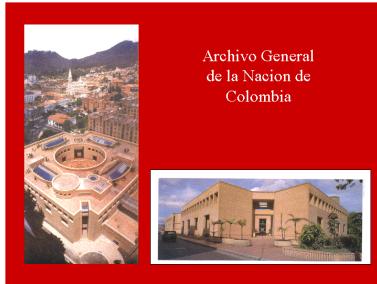
Partnerships – Links with Benin, L’Ecole du Patrimoine Africain (EPA) and Institut Béninois d’études et de recherché sur la diaspora africaine (IBERDA), Costa Rica, UWI-Mona, Fluminense, (Brazil) Vanderbilt, Rutgers, Schomburg, and the Archivo General de la Nación Colombia.

Research agenda is multifaceted and extensive, with a program of research financed initially by SSHRCC through its MCRI Program on the “Nigerian Hinterland” and the African diaspora; but also now including the research program of the Canada Research Chair in African Diaspora History, which I hold.

Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
 Affiliated with the UNESCO Slave Route Project

Data collection has been targeted as a major goal of this research agenda, which was developed with the intention of implementing many of the goals of the UNESCO Slave Route Project, an initiative begun in Ouidah, in Benin, in 1994.

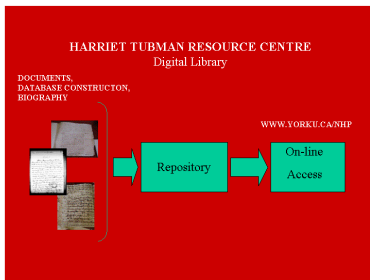
A digital facility is dependent upon access to documentation and to the willingness to engage in issues relating to the preservation of vital documents, the accessibility of those documents to users, and a commitment to the recovery of information about the importance of the African diaspora in the development of the modern world.



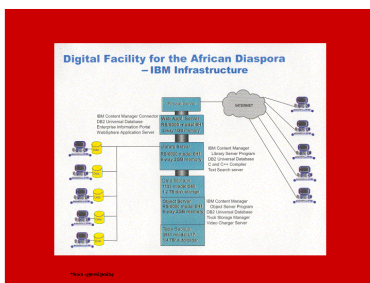
We have developed partnerships with such institutions as the Archivo General de la Nación in Bogotá, Colombia; and also in Nigeria and elsewhere.



Also, we have organized portable units for digitalization, which involve training and development, that is associated with the graduate program in history at York but also with graduate programs at partner institutions in the countries of the African diaspora.



The digital facility at York University, which we are formally opening here today, is a repository, a large one, that in fact doubles the capacity of the York University computer system.-- The intention is to allow various means of access to materials that are being deposited in this library. First, however, it is essential to enter data into the library and this is our current preoccupation. Later, there will be more general access for scholars and public, perhaps 6-9 months from now.



Databases and the digital library – an important distinction, relating to how people can access information and how that information can be analysed. The digital library will store the digital images of original historical sources and provide the raw data of history. The databases that will also be available through the library are constructed through the processing of this raw data and provide different possibilities for effective analysis.

Delivery/accessibility:

The Template through which images will be organized in Content Manager, having been imported through a software called Ascent Capture. These tools have been customized to our needs through collaboration with IBM and Advanced Solutions Group, particular through close work with Richard Pompili.

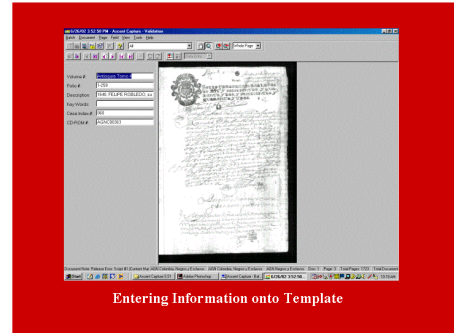
They provide the possibilities for a variety of different types of searches, including Virage audio; key word; Arabic etc.

Searches will also be possible in derived databases, images of individuals, maps, music, interviews in Hausa and other languages

The aim of this project is to make materials accessible in a variety of ways. First, we are making selected documents readily available through a series that is named in honour of Mary Ann Shadd, which will allow access to documents and summaries of their contents, depending upon language of the documents

Second, we are constructing a text-based database that will be a biographical dictionary of those Africans who were enslaved, and indeed others affected the institution of slavery. Materials relating to the Underground Rail Road are an important component of this project.

Third, a Historical Atlas of Slavery, relating to ethnicity, geography, identity and place is also being constructed.



STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA - DOCUMENTS

- Mary Ann Shadd (Cary)
- Editor, *Provincial Freeman*, Chatham, Canada West (Ontario), 1851-56

Biographical Dictionary

“Slaves of different nations”
Jean Baptiste Debret
1834-1839

Historical Atlas of Slavery

Historical Atlas
African slavery, diaspora and ethnicity

In closing, I would like to thank the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Ontario Innovation Trust for the funds to establish the Tubman Resource Centre, and IBM for its contributions and encouragement. It has allowed us to develop a unique world-class facility based on international collaboration and networking, a center that includes the training of graduate students and the development of advanced methodologies in research. I think that the CFI/OIT vision of innovation and the commitment of IBM to research have been essential in fashioning the Harriet Tubman Resource Centre on the African Diaspora. Their contributions, and the support this represents from Government and Private Sector, have nurtured the ideas and visions of those of us in the universities who are committed to research and the advancement of knowledge. It is our real concern that Knowledge be accessible to those most directly affected by the development of the African diaspora, so that we can understand past wrongs and implement a better future. The support of CFI/OIT/IBM, I believe, has the possibility of making technology work for people and the pursuit of knowledge in ways that are good for our society and our economy because of the technology that we are developing. We have a lot of work to do in constructing the Tubman Resource Centre and its digital facilities, and that work also involves a considerable amount of research and collaboration with our partners, both those who are currently collaborating with us and those with whom we will be collaborating. There is a lot of work to do, but this is a great start, and I thank you for attending and hope that you will join us tomorrow for the Symposium, Religions across the Atlantic. We cannot erase the pain and suffering that Africans had to endure under slavery, but we can work to erase the legacy of racism that is a product of that slavery.

Ouidah Monument Commemorating the Slave Route



Special thanks to Eugene Onutan, Renée Soulodre-La France, Mariza Soares, Mihai Dude, and Nadine Hunt

Statement from Dr. Tony Macfarlane.



This statement is for the formal opening of the Harriet Tubman Resource Centre on the African Diaspora, Department of history, York University. Shortly after I entered what is now the University of the West Indies in 1957 I made the acquaintance of Dr. Elsa Goveia who was then senior lecturer in the department of history. Her book on the historiography of the British West Indies had just been published and most undergraduates had a copy of this book on their shelves. At the time I did not understand the importance of this book. Several years later in 1966, I began collecting books related to the history of the West Indies. I was fortunate enough to be able to visit bookshops in England and France, and to put together the nucleus of a West Indian collection. Dr. Goveia's book became one of the sources that I used to put the collection together. I did have occasion to speak to Dr. Goveia in the 1970s about the collection, and she was particularly interested in the idea of reprinting some of the classic works in this area, especially the works of Edward Long and Brian Edwards. She felt it was important for these works to be available to the man on the street so that they would begin to understand the effects that slavery had in shaping the societies of the Caribbean that we now live in. Last year, 2001, I had the pleasure of attending the Harriet Tubman Lecture given by Dr. Verene Shepherd of the University of the West Indies. Dr. Shepherd now gives the courses that Dr. Goveia gave. I learned from her of the initiative at York of the Nigerian Hinterland Project and it seemed to have a potential for a good match for my collection. The collection, in addition to the classic works on the subject, includes material that will help in understanding the West Indian personality, a great deal of which is included in ephemera. Such items as a ticket to a dance or a posture showing the body of an assassinated don from the ghetto are not easily found as they tended to disappear shortly after being printed. It has been said that the person who doesn't read is in the same position as one who cannot read. Book collecting has been viewed in the past as an elitist enterprise, but a lot of our history is in books and we ignore them at our peril. Some folk have objected to reading books written by Europeans, citing bias. Dr. Goveia was very clear upon this issue. She said that these writers were actually there at the time, they were first-person observers of the events that they described, and we can easily make adjustments for their patterned bias. The Macfarlane collection is then, in itself, an historical artifact. It includes works beginning in the middle of the 17th century, *du Tertre*, and goes up to the scholarly works written in the 20th century, for example "Crime in Trinidad" written by David Trotman, one of the collaborators on the Nigerian Hinterland Project. It is my hope to continue with the collection and in this way to add to the collection. The idea put forward by Dr. Paul Lovejoy, of digitalizing the collection, seems to be one in keeping within the scope of the Tubman Centre and one with which I look forward to being involved. Who knows? Perhaps this will be the impetus for students at York to begin collecting themselves, and thus bring greater texture and nuance to the study of the African Diaspora.

Symposium presentations



In keeping with this tradition of intellectual exchange a symposium “Religion Across the Atlantic” was held on Friday September 13. The program included two panels of international scholars presenting their research focusing upon religion in disparate parts of Africa and the diaspora.

Morning Session:

Chair: André Kramp, Director, UNESCO Slave Route Project, Paris.

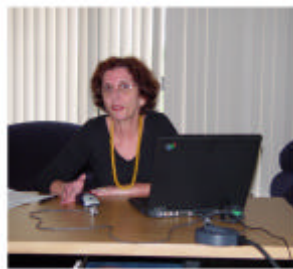
Robin Law, University of Stirling

“Le berceau du vodun: Religious Practice in Ouidah in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade”

Olatunji Ojo, York University “A Temple of Multiple Divinities: Research Notes on Porto Novo Vodoun”

Jane Landers, Vanderbilt University

"Ecclesiastical Sources in the Reconstruction of the Religious Experience of Enslaved Africans"



Afternoon Session

Chair: Renée Soulodre-La France, York University

Mariza de Carvalho Soares, Universidade Federal Fluminense and Vanderbilt University

“Mina Kings in the Celestial Court of the Church of Santo Elesbão (Rio de Janeiro)”

Elisée Soumonni, l’Université Nationale du Bénin

“The Religion of the Brazilian and Cuban Returnees to West Africa”

David V. Trotman, York University “Yoruba Religious Tradition in Trinidad”



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