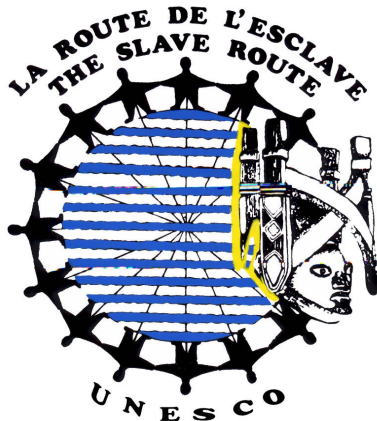




**YORK/UNESCO NIGERIAN
HINTERLAND PROJECT
NEWSLETTER**

No. 1 May 2000



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The Nigerian Hinterland Project

focuses on the development of the African diaspora stemming from the "Nigerian" hinterland during the era of the slave trade from approximately 1650 to 1900. The region under investigation includes the interior of the Bights of Benin and Biafra, from where approximately 40 per cent of all slaves who went to the Americas trace their origins. In addition, slaves from this region were sent to various parts of the Islamic world. The project concentrates on the effects of this population displacement on historical developments both in Africa itself and in the African diaspora. The region identified here as the "Nigerian" hinterland today comprises modern Nigeria, the République du Bénin and, to a lesser extent, neighbouring countries (Togo, Ghana, Niger and Cameroon).

The Project explores the historical impact of Africa on world history as reflected in the development of the African diaspora and the extent to which enslaved Africans and their descendants in the Americas and elsewhere contributed to the making of both the "Atlantic world" and the "Islamic world". The Nigerian Hinterland Project coordinates a programme of research collaborative in nature, involving a network of scholars and institutions, and is affiliated with the UNESCO Slave Route Project.



The Nigerian Hinterland Project is financed by a five-year grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada under its Major Collaborative Research Initiative (MCRI) Programme.



ACTIVITIES

The York/UNESCO Nigerian Hinterland Project facilitates a broad range of activities designed to assist in promoting international collaboration in research and training on subjects relating to the African diaspora. To this end, the Nigerian Hinterland Project sponsors the research agenda outlined below. In addition to supporting specific research ventures, the Project collects and disseminates primary

source materials to select repositories, co-sponsors international conferences, seminars and workshops, assists graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and established scholars, and otherwise encourages interaction and cooperation in the advancement of scholarly knowledge about the African diaspora and the importance of the Nigerian hinterland to that development.



AREAS OF RESEARCH

- **Archival Inventory and Preservation of Primary Sources**

Creation of an inventory of archival and library holdings that are relevant to the study of the diaspora and its “Nigerian” origins. Major aim is the dissemination of primary source materials, including oral data, archival documents and translations of selected texts.

- **Biographical Data Base of Enslaved Africans**

Creation of a computer-based data retrieval system of biographical information, to enable on-line access to archival and published materials on enslaved Africans during the era of the “Slave Route”.

- **Historical Atlas of Slavery**

Collection, organization and analysis of geographical, ethnic, linguistic and other factual material that relate to the history of the Slave Route, into CD-ROM and Internet format.

- **The Ports of the “Nigerian” Hinterland**

An examination of the ports of the “Nigerian” hinterland in comparative perspective, including the linkages and movements of reasons among ports in Africa and elsewhere on the Atlantic rim.

- **The Muslim Diaspora in the Era of the Slave Route**

The collection and analysis of European accounts; Arabic texts, and Hausa and other oral data on the trans-Saharan slave trade and the place of enslaved Africans in the Islamic world.

- **Ethnic Identity in the Diaspora and the “Nigerian” Hinterland**

Establishing the extent to which the movement of enslaved Africans into diaspora was similar to other population migrations by considering how slaves, even though involuntary migrants, behaved like

other immigrant groups, especially with respect to the "creation" of ethnic identities.

- **Linkages between the Diaspora and the “Nigerian” Hinterland**
Examination of ongoing social and cultural linkages across the Atlantic arising from the heritage of Africans in the Americas under slavery and emancipation.



CONFERENCES

The York/UNESCO Nigerian Hinterland Project has assisted in the organization of the following conferences:

APRIL 1998

Rethinking the African Diaspora: the Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil
Institute of African Studies
Emory University
Atlanta
April 17-18, 1998

JUNE 1998

Ports of the Slave Trade (Bights of Benin and Biafra)
Centre of Commonwealth Studies
University of Stirling
June 1998

SEPTEMBER 1998

Transatlantic Slaving and the African Diaspora: W.E.B Du Bois Institute
Dataset of Slaving Voyages
The College of William and Mary
September 11-13, 1998

NOVEMBER 1998

Dialogues in the Spirit: Caribbean Religions in Comparative Perspective
Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean
York University
November 12-15, 1998

FEBRUARY 1999

1824-1999: 175 Aniversario de la abolición de la esclavitud en Centro América
Reunion: la ruta del esclavo en hispanoamerica Universidad de Costa Rica
February 24-26, 1999

APRIL 1999

Colloque International “Borgou’98”
Parakou/Nikki
République du Bénin
April 6-9, 1999

APRIL/MAY 1999

The Black Experience in the Islamic Mediterranean
Program of African Studies
Northwestern University
April 30-May 2, 1999

FEBRUARY 2000

Forum on European Expansion and Global Interaction
Third Biennial Meeting
Flagler College, St. Augustine, Florida
February 17-19, 2000

MAY 2000

Workshop on "Slave Systems in Asia and the Indian Ocean: Their Structure and Change in the 19th and 20th Centuries"
CERINS, University of Avignon,
May 18-20, 2000



WORKSHOPS

OCTOBER 1999

Workshop on "Transatlantic Connections: the Contribution of the New Slave Trade Database"
By David Eltis
York/UNESCO Nigerian Hinterland Project
York University
Toronto
October 4, 1999

MAY 2000

Workshop on "Islamic Thought in Africa"
Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa
Northwestern University
Evanston
May 12-14, 2000

APRIL 2000

Workshop on "Graduate Student Research and Methodology"
By R.S. O'Fahey
York/UNESCO Nigerian Hinterland Project
York University
Toronto
April 5, 2000



TUBMAN SEMINARS

The Tubman Seminar meets each week during the academic year in the Department of History, York University. Papers are distributed electronically and are available upon request.

In 2000-01, the Tubman Seminar will highlight Network Professors Elisée Soumonni and Verene Shepherd.

The Harriet Tubman Seminar is named in honour of Harriet Tubman (1821-1913) who escaped from Dorchester County, Maryland, in 1849, and subsequently became a major figure in the Underground Railroad to Canada West, assisting at least 200 people in their flight from slavery.

Harriet Tubman Seminar 1999-2000

September 13 - Paul Lovejoy (York University) and David Richardson (University of Hull), "Letters of the Old Calabar Slave Trade, 1760-89"

September 28 - Ivana Elbl (Trent University), "The King's Business in Africa: Decisions and Strategies of the Portuguese Crown, 1450-1521"

October 4 – David Eltis (Queen's University), "Gender and the Slave Trade in the Early Modern Atlantic World"

October 18 - Gwendolyn Hall (Rutgers University), "African Ethnicities in the Americas: The Uses of Historical Databases"

November 1 - Femi Kolapo (York University), "Missionaries and Traders' Reports and the Creation of a Slave Biographical Database for the Nigerian Hinterland: Challenges and Prospects"

November 8 - Robin Law (University of Stirling), "On the African Background to

the Insurrection in Saint-Domingue (Haiti) in 1791: The Bois Caiman Ceremony and the Dahomian 'Blood Pact'"

November 15 - Edward Alpers (UCLA), "Becoming 'Mozambique': Diaspora and Identity in Mauritius"

December 1 – Julie Winch (University of Massachusetts, Boston), "Immoralities and Criminalities Excepted: the Antebullum Debate on Class and Respectability in the Free Black Communities of the Northern United States"

January 24 - Monica Schuler (Wayne State University), "Liberated Central Africans in Nineteenth-Century Guyana"

January 31 – Ann O'Hear, "Elite Slaves and their Descendants: Ilorin in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries"

February 7 – Thabit Abdullah (York University), "Overview of Basra's Commercial Links and their Decline in the Eighteenth-Century"

February 28 - Philip Morgan (College of William and Mary), "The World of Books and the Real World: An Eighteenth-Century Jamaican Perspective"

March 6 - Renée Soulodre-La France (York University), "Socially Not So Dead! Slave Identities in Bourbon Nueva Granada"

March 20 - Jose Curto (York University), "The Story of Nbená: From Illegal Enslavement Back to Freedom in Benguela, Angola, 1816-1819"

March 27 – Verene Shepherd (University of the West Indies, Mona), "Slavery Without Sugar: The Experiences of Enslaved Women"

April 4 – Sean O’Fahey (University of Bergen), "Islam, Language and Ethnicity in Eastern Africa"



NETWORK PROFESSORSHIPS

We are very pleased to announce the appointment of three Network Professors to be affiliated with the Nigerian Hinterland Project. These include Dr. Elisée Soumonni, who is the director-designate of the new research institute in the République du Bénin. He will also be coordinating the collection of oral and written materials on Afro-Brazilians in the lagoon towns of the Bight of Bénin, among other activities. Dra. Rina Caceres Gomez, who is currently graduate director of el Centro de

Investigaciones Historicas de la Universidad de Costa Rica. She will continue her research on the presence of Africans in early Central America. Dr. Verene Shepherd, of the University of the West Indies, Mona, presently in residence at the College of Charleston. She will continue her research on "Contested terrain, Jamaica in slavery and Freedom."



POST DOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWS 1999-2000

Dr. Femi Kolapo (Ph.D. York University, 1999) is working on the construction of a biographical database of enslaved Africans from the region of the Niger-Benue confluence and the larger Nigerian hinterland.

Dr. Christine Ayorinde (Ph.D. University of Birmingham, 2000) is currently in Cuba conducting additional research on Afro-Cuban Religions, including the audiovisual documentation of Santeria practitioners and their ceremonies.



OTTAWA SHOWCASE REPORT

By Ibrahim HAMZA

INTRODUCTION

The occasion of the Ottawa SSHRC MCRI Showcase held in the Parliament buildings in November 1999 provided a wonderful opportunity for research team members to disseminate their research to a wide and varied audience. The positive effects of the showcase were felt on many levels. These ranged from the advantages of presenting the research project's mandate and the dissemination of research findings, to the benefits derived on a personal level for the project representative. The showcase process proved to be very valuable and this participant encourages the SSHRC MCRI program to continue in this initiative.

PROJECT LEVEL

The Nigerian Hinterland Project was able to promote its research mandate to a wide and varied audience through this forum. Since one of the major goals of the project is to foster better understanding between different ethnic and racial groups, the dissemination of our research is of prime importance. One of the challenges of the project is to bridge the distance between academic processes and the perception of Canadian society at large, in order to encourage tolerance and social cohesion. The need to explain the relevance of research on the Nigerian Hinterland has enabled us to critically analyze our mission and to explain its importance to

non-specialists in lay terms. The interest displayed by the visitors to the showcase stimulated discussions and enabled us to present our research findings in greater detail.

PERSONAL LEVEL

This experience enhanced my personal communication skills. It led me to hone my ability to concisely and clearly explain the many and varied theoretical and concrete ideas developing out of, and around this research project. The chance to interact with other presenters and to learn about the various research projects supported by SSHRC was also most enriching. It helped me to place the Nigerian Hinterland project within the context of the larger Canadian research agenda in the Humanities and Social Sciences. I also drew tremendous benefit from the training session on dealing with the Ottawa press and M.P.s, an experience which could hardly be repeated in other circumstances.

BENEFITS OF PROCESS

The many benefits of this experience were recognized by the participants. Probably the most important of these was the level of communication between researchers and the public that was facilitated by the process. The showcase provided an opportunity for a self-conscious assessment of the project and the stage of the research at this moment. Beyond this, it helped develop communication channels that are easily

accessible to the public and opened a dialogue between academia and Canadian society generally. The level of communication between SSHRC and the participating projects was excellent and helped in the design of posters, pamphlets, and the presentation. The description of the atmosphere at the showcase and the audience encountered helped to overcome potential problems.

CONCLUSION

Overall this was a most positive experience. We believe that it benefited the participants on many levels. We welcomed the opportunity to explain our research to a diverse audience and look forward to future participation in this type of activity.



UNESCO NEWS

In his letter of March 2000, UNESCO director of the Department of Intercultural Dialogue and Pluralism for a Culture of Peace, Doudou Diène, addressed the issue of the implementation of the “Slave Route” Project. The International Scientific Committee agreed at their Lisbon meeting that the Project will be presented in the form of four programmes: (1) the “Scientific Research Programme”, (2) the “Programme on Education and

Teaching about the Slave Trade and Slavery”, (3) the “Programme on the Promotion of Living Cultures, and Artistic and Spiritual Forms of Expression”, and (4) the “Programme on the Memory of Slavery and on Diaspora: Tourism of Remembrance and Museums”. It was also announced that the Project will now cover the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans as well as the Mediterranean, and will include the trans-Saharan trade.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 2000

Liberty, Identity, Integration and Slavery in the Muslim World.

*Université al-Akhwayn, Morocco
June 29-30, 2000*

The aim of this conference is to examine the issue of slavery in the world of Islam and the implications of this history in the formation of modern Muslim society. The themes of liberty, identity and integration have been selected as a means of focusing discussion on the backgrounds of the enslaved population, especially those coming from the sub-Saharan Africa, and the processes of incorporation and exclusion to which the enslaved were exposed in their captivity.

Sponsors: Fondation Alizes,
UNESCO/SSHRCC Nigerian Hinterland
Project, York University, CA

JULY 2000

Workshop on "Control and Resistance in the Post-Emancipation Caribbean"

*University of Warwick, England
July 6-7, 2000*

The aim of the workshop is to bring a small group of scholars who work in this area for a concentrated discussion of some of the issues relating to various themes. For example some of the themes addressed will be cultural conflict, social unrest, mechanisms of control, and patterns of resistance.

Sponsors: Centre for Caribbean Studies
(Warwick University), UNESCO/SSHRCC
Nigerian Hinterland Project

JULY 2000

Repercussions of the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Interior of the Bight of Biafra and the African Diaspora

*Conference to be hosted by His Excellency,
Governor Chimaroke Nnamimi, Enugu State,
Nigeria at the Nike Lake Resort, Enugu,
Nigeria,
July 10-14, 2000*

The aim of this conference is to explore the repercussions of the trans-Atlantic slave trade on both the Biafran interior and on the diaspora, especially the emergence of ethnic identities, both in diaspora and in the Biafran hinterland. The conference will explore religious, cultural, linguistic, and social factors associated with the slave trade, including the rise of the Aro commercial and religious network, the role of slavery in the interior of the Bight of Biafra, the social and economic structure of the coastal ports, adjustments after the abolition of the slave trade, and the responses of enslaved individuals to conditions of slavery, both in the Biafran interior and in the Americas.

Sponsors: UNESCO/SSHRCC Nigerian
Hinterland Project, York University, CA
Department of History and African Studies
Center, Rutgers University
History Department, University of Nigeria,
Nsukka, Nigeria
Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria
The Enugu Historical Documentation Bureau
Centre for Oriental Studies, Berlin

OCTOBER 2000

Enslaving Connections: Africa and Brazil
During the Era of the Slave Trade

York University, Toronto
October 12-15, 2000

The focus of this conference is the cultural, demographic, economic, linguistic, political, and religious connections between Brazil and Africa during the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The conference will discuss the major themes emerging from these connections: the supply of African slaves to Brazil, the making of African identities within and outside of Africa, the

transmission of African cultures to Brazil, Africa and Africans in Brazil, African ethnicity and slavery in Brazil, the Brazilian impact upon Angola, Mozambique, and West Africa, and a comparison of enslaved Africans in Brazil, Spanish America, and the Caribbean.

Sponsors: Department of History, York University, CA
UNESCO/SSHRCC Nigerian Hinterland Project, York University, CA