

## **The African Diaspora: Revisionist Interpretations of Ethnicity, Culture and Religion under Slavery<sup>1</sup>**

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*Abstract:* Lovejoy argues that sufficient information exists about individuals taken as captives in the slave trade to allow historians to dispense with a generalized notion of a "traditional" African background for New World blacks and, accordingly, to articulate the African-ness of the black diaspora with ethnic and historical specificity. Lovejoy concedes there are difficulties involved with absorbing the "extensive documentation on the African-ness of the slave communities of the diaspora," but he lays out a program for future diasporic studies. Prominent in this program are the compilation of biographical data on captives and slaves (including oral source material), the analysis of the sites of the slave trade and movements of Africa-derived peoples, the analysis of cultural activities, and an unprecedented form of international, inter-institutional cooperation, most notably among African, American, and European institutions which promote education and research.

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*"Il ne servirait a rien non plus de dissimuler nos propres responsabilités dans les désastres qui se sont abattus ou continuent de s'abattre sur nous. Nos complicités dans la traite [en esclaves] sont bien établies, nos divisions absurdes, nos errements collectifs, l'esclavage comme institution endogene...."*

Nicéphore Dieudonné Soglo

### **The UNESCO Slave Route Project**

With these words, the Président de la République du Bénin launched the UNESCO "Slave Route" Project on 1 September 1994 at the old slaving port of Ouidah.<sup>2</sup> To achieve world peace, Soglo continued, it is necessary to come to terms with the legacy of slavery, not only the brutalities of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and chattel slavery in the Americas but also the legacy of the blood-soaked ritual houses in the royal palaces at Abomey, the capital of the Kingdom of Dahomey. The "Slave Route" began within Africa, and its impact was often severe for both deported Africans and those who remained as slaves in West Africa as well.

The pursuit of the "Slave Route" represents a departure in the study of the history of Africa and the African diaspora. Hitherto, Africa and the diaspora have generally been discrete subjects of enquiry. Despite the work of Pierre Verger, Roger Bastide, Melville Herskovits and others, scholars have rarely pursued common links between Africa and the Americas.<sup>3</sup> To address this disjuncture in scholarship is the target of the UNESCO Project, which aims to trace the slave trade from the original points of enslavement in the

African interior, through the coastal (and Saharan) entrepôts by which slaves were exported from the region, to the societies in the Americas and the Islamic world into which they were imported.<sup>4</sup>

The selection of Ouidah as the venue for the announcement of the Slave Route Project was auspicious, since Ouidah had witnessed the deportation of hundreds of thousands of slaves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> The enduring memories of the trade were on display, as a tour of museums in Ouidah, Porto Novo and Abomey revealed. The Porto Novo palace was the venue for a display of contemporary Béninois art, which depicted the tragedies of the slave trade in several mediums. The current depiction of the African past through art stood in sharp contrast to the racism of French society during the late nineteenth century as depicted through posters and advertising from the age of the Scramble; the legacy of slavery and the slave trade were readily apparent. The horrors of slavery emerge in a most grotesque form in the Abomey palace of King Ghezo. The walls of the shrine where thousands of war captives were sacrificed contain the dried blood used to make the bricks. In this setting, the opening words of President Soglo became all the more poignant. As the President proclaimed, "we are all responsible for the slave trade." At the closing of the colloquium, the Minister of Education and Culture disclosed the fact that he is the son of a slave and that he wanted to know about the descendants of his brothers and sisters in the diaspora; the pain of the past era could not have been sharper. With the UNESCO initiative, an effort is being made to bridge that almost unbridgeable gap that separates the academic study of slavery and the slave trade from a full and general appreciation of the heritage of Africa in the diaspora and the modern world.

The emphasis on the "slave route" draws attention to the consequences of the trade on Africa and the continuities that rooted the deported slave population in Africa. Some slave descendants and former slaves returned, particularly in the nineteenth century. And there seems always to have been a small movement of individual freemen, especially merchants and their sons, within the diaspora. The settlement of liberated slaves in Sierra Leone and their subsequent dispersal represented one of several patterns of population movement that was a consequence of the slave trade. Besides the slaves taken off slave ships and settled in Sierra Leone,<sup>6</sup> other former slaves returned from Brazil, especially after the suppression of the Male revolt of 1835.<sup>7</sup> A few came from the United States, the Caribbean and other parts of the diaspora, a migration that tended to increase after the emancipation of slaves in the different parts of the Americas.<sup>8</sup> As these demographic patterns suggest, the return of former slaves and their descendants to Africa was one mechanism by which the diaspora influenced West Africa. "African history" not only followed the slave route to the Americas and the Islamic world, but "diaspora history" came back to Africa with the repatriates, thereby complicating the African component in the evolution of the diaspora. The African diaspora came to embrace Africa itself. A revisionist interpretation of the dispersal of enslaved Africans in the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and by extension to the Islamic world and the Indian Ocean basin, concentrates on the role of Africa in the genesis and ongoing history of the diaspora. This revisionist approach emphasizes the continuities in African history and the extension of that history into the diaspora. The identification of disjunctures in that history is essential, but in contrast to previous interpretations of the diaspora, these disjunctures are analysed in terms of the continuities that have been largely overlooked. There were often

concentrations of slaves from similar backgrounds in particular slave societies in the Americas, and in some cases where the number of slaves was sufficiently large, several distinct historical backgrounds had a determining influence on the formation of identifiable communities. That is, in most parts of the Americas, slaves tended to perceive of themselves in terms of communities that had roots in Africa.<sup>9</sup>

Although the relevance of the African background is usually admitted, the continuities and discontinuities of African history in the diaspora are usually minimized or ignored.<sup>10</sup> With rare exceptions, such as the identification of a Muslim factor,<sup>11</sup> it is as if Africa had little impact on the development of slave society and identity in the Americas, except in a generalized sense.<sup>12</sup> Marketing behavior, credit institutions, religious rituals, naming practices, funeral ceremonies, and other features of culture are recognized as sharing traits with a generalized and often timeless Africa, but there has been little attempt to demonstrate how these cultural traits developed in the context of specific historical situations in Africa from which identifiable groups of enslaved Africans actually trace their provenance. Identification of cultural traits is hardly sufficient for the purposes of analysing the development of the African diaspora, however.

The analysis and discussion in this paper depends upon the concept of diaspora.<sup>13</sup> A diaspora, like the ethnic group with which it is identified, requires the recognition of a boundary; those on one side are associated with the homeland, if there is one, and those on the other side are in the diaspora. Individuals define themselves in opposition to their, often many and varied, host societies through the identification with the homeland and other diaspora communities. Individuals in the diaspora are usually in contact with the homeland, however irregular and indirect. Political and environmental factors can temporarily disrupt or impede this interchange, but the diaspora ceases to have meaning if the idea of an ancestral home is lost. While abroad, individuals maintain their social identity by living in communities which trace their origins to the homeland. As the case of the Jewish diaspora demonstrates, the inability to access a homeland for a prolonged period can prompt a quest that in itself becomes an important component of the identity of the diaspora. In the case of the African diaspora, identification with the homeland varied considerably. In many places, individuals participated in organized communities whose origins in Africa distinguished among several ethnic, religious and political backgrounds. White masters and overseers regularly acknowledged ethnic and religious differences among slaves in the conduct of the economic life of plantations. Their perceptions of differences among slaves are important in reconstructing the hidden dimensions of slave communities, but only through careful study.

Slaves, as was the case with members of other diasporas, did not readily accept the categorization of their masters and hosts, the "African-ness" of the diaspora emerged in tandem with the evolving racism that provided the moral and liminal means of upholding the enslavement of blacks. In general discussion, masters referred to all slaves as a category, rarely distinguishing among them as individuals. Racial designations and stereotypes blur the historical identities of the various ethnic communities that formed under slavery. How and when racist influences shaped slavery and the lives of slaves obviously varied. Racial stereotyping was constantly reformulated, just as ethnicity and community were perpetually redefined under slavery. Diasporas had their particular tensions with their host societies; in the Americas that tension expressed itself through racism.

Enslaved Africans defined their membership in their own communities in a variety of ways, often involving layers of identity with overlapping and frequently competing interests. As with other diasporas, enslaved Africans subordinated internal divisions and differences in language, religion, and other aspects of culture to their circumstances. The different sub-cultures of the diaspora developed an orthodoxy that was "traditional," indeed "creole."

Diasporas, as made very clear in the case of enslaved Africans, operated outside of or along side the political and legal structures of the host countries where members of the diaspora found themselves. In many circumstances, people join larger diasporas, often losing any sense of cultural purity as a sub-group. In the African context, there were a number of diasporas, and these were made up of slaves and free-born alike. Moreover, past relationships, including pawnship, apprenticeship, enforced marriage or concubinage, and indenture, might well influence the interaction among members of the diaspora. Surely people who spoke the same language must have discussed their personal histories.

## **Creolization and African History**

The discussion the African diaspora here stands as a critique of the "creolization" school.<sup>14</sup> According to this interpretation, enslaved Africans did not generally share a common culture; their religious beliefs, languages, and social structures varied too greatly to influence the economies and societies of the Americas more than on occasion. The African dimension was marginal in the genesis of the societies of the Americas, according to this interpretation: the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the slave population ostensibly limited the extent to which the African background could provide a common core.

The "creolization" school emphasizes the needs of enslaved Africans to generate defensive mechanisms to protect themselves from the arbitrary brutality of slavery; that is "creolization" was essentially a reaction to slavery. Cultural "survivals" have symbolic and ritual value in this interpretation, but otherwise have little substance in bridging the Atlantic gap. The extent to which strong African influences affected the process of "creolization" generally remains an understudied topic. To what extent did enslaved Africans perceive their personal histories as a direct continuation of their experiences in Africa?

While the "creolization" theorists have emphasized the amalgamation of diverse cultures and historical backgrounds into a set of common sub-cultures, revisionists search for the African component in the evolution of the "Afro-American", "American", "Latin", and "Caribbean." Revisionists shift the emphasis from the birth of a new culture and society to the maintenance of ties with the homeland. The exchange of ideas and people between the diaspora and the homeland under slavery and as a consequence change was not only mediated through Europe but in far more complex ways. To what extent were enslaved Africans able to determine their cultural survival; to what extent were they agents in the continuation of traditions and the re interpretation of real historical events? This emphasis on agency and continuity questions the Eurocentrism and the American-centrism that have dominated much of slave studies. Instead, Africa and the various layers of its

diaspora are perceived within a world perspective that attempts to understand historical patterns and change without being tied to nationalist, ethnic or racial considerations, but rather tries to explain them.

The pursuit of African history into the diaspora demonstrates how slaves could create a world that was largely autonomous from white, European society.<sup>15</sup> Too frequently, the discussion of the African background has been too vague to establish many concrete links with the homeland. As Melville Herskovits and others have demonstrated, it is possible to identify "survivals" or "Africanisms" that link people of African descent to a common, albeit vague, background.<sup>16</sup> But it is premature to conclude that there was no continuous historical experience for the enslaved Africans who came to the Americas. Enslaved Africans were victims of their predicament, but were still agents of their own identities within the confines of slavery. As an extensive scholarly literature now documents, slaves were often successful in asserting their autonomy from white society and European culture. The analysis of the "African" content in this quest for autonomy varied considerably among the different areas of slave concentration in the diaspora. Specialists studying Brazil have long appreciated the dynamism of these links. By contrast, the study of the United States, until recently, has largely ignored the specific African backgrounds of the enslaved population. Thus Herbert Gutman uses contemporary documentation to examine family patterns and the roots of Afro-American society, but is unable to tie specific individuals or groups to the historical context of the contemporary Africa from which enslaved people were drawn.<sup>17</sup> This "near-autonomous" approach identifies a creole population without much African content. The challenge is to correct the Eurocentrism that has dominated slave studies by establishing the significance of specific "survivals" in historical context.

The failure to study enslaved Africans in the Americas from the perspective of African history is largely a result of the way in which African history developed as a sub-discipline. The effort to identify an autonomous African past consciously or not affected the decisions of scholars to concentrate on particular themes in African history that were divorced from the study of slavery in the Americas. This political decision separated the study of Africans in the Americas from the history of continental Africa, and Afro-American Studies or Black Studies remained virtually distinct from African Studies. The rise of pseudo-historical Afro-centrism in this context is hardly surprising. Afro-centrism promotes an attitude that counteracts racism and emphasizes Africa's place in the Americas and other parts of the diaspora. But Afrocentrism has denied itself the rigors of historical methodology. The revisionist approach to the study of religion, ethnicity and culture in the Americas corrects this ahistoricism by emphasizing African history; the evolution of slave cultures in the Americas was tied to a specific set of African contexts that must be analyzed historically. The context of enslavement and the experiences of slaves in Africa before deportation to the Americas then become relevant.

If African history holds the key to the diaspora, then the study of the diaspora must begin in Africa, not in the Americas or elsewhere. The African diaspora has to be dissected in its entirety. The personal histories of individual enslaved Africans then have to be examined for historical patterns that stem from Africa. By examining the African history of the trade, the focus shifts. Instead of focussing on the Americas, the method follows cohorts of slaves from Africa to the various places in the diaspora to which they might have gone, whether in the Americas, Islamic North Africa, or elsewhere in Africa.

Inevitably, a focus on the Americas selects slaves that were assembled in each slave economy (Jamaica, Bahia, Cuba, etc.), regardless of the different places of origin of these many slaves. The study of slave culture from this American context emphasizes the common features of society and thereby focussing on "creolization;" the origins of individual slaves are ambiguous and generalized. By contrast, slaves can be followed from the different parts of Africa by extrapolating from known shipping records, verifying such data in the Americas. This approach balances the homogenizing tendency of the creolization model. It follows enslaved individuals who coalesce as communities, either on the basis of Islam, other religious and cultural institutions, and/or language.

## **African History in the Americas**

The contributions of anthropologists aside, it is time to add an historical perspective that is rooted in African history to the examination of slavery in the Americas. The slave trade and the movement of identifiable groups of people have to be tied to specific historical events and processes in Africa, and it must be demonstrated what was and what was not transferred to the Americas. From this perspective, specific historical circumstances determined who was exported and who was not, and these circumstances might well have influenced who was active in promoting adjustments under slavery and preserving knowledge of Africa. The different reasons for enslavement have to be distinguished as crucial variables in determining what factors were important to the enslaved population. Whether an individual became a slave as a result of war, famine, commercial bankruptcy, judicial punishment, or religious persecution mattered. The conscious deportation of political prisoners has to be distinguished from impersonal transactions in the fairs and market-places of Africa. Instances of "mistakes" need to be documented as a means of determining why individuals ended up in the Americas or North Africa who legally should not have been so enslaved. Such examples include arbitrary alterations in the terms and conditions of pawnship, failure to ransom kidnapped victims, and "panyarring", i.e. the seizure of individuals for debt or other compensation.<sup>18</sup> Slaves can be examined as individuals and as recognizable groups of people who had personal and collective histories.

I am suggesting that the methodologies and research results of the past several decades of Africanist history can be used much more effectively in the examination of the conditions of slaves in the Americas than has been the case until now. In the process of applying these methodologies and research results, we will also know more about the history of Africa itself. Specifically, because it is now possible to say much more about the identities of the enslaved people who were brought to the Americas from Africa, we can now see the slaves of the Americas as not just an enslaved black population but also as Africans who constituted a displaced population that behaved in ways that were similar to other displaced people at other times. The fact that people were forcibly transported from Africa in the case of slaves should not disguise the similarity with other migrations. By comparing the movement of slaves across the Atlantic with other trans-Atlantic migrations, it is possible to see Africans as active agents in reformulating their cultural and social identities in the Americas, despite the oppressive setting to which they were subjugated.

The issue of agency is important in unravelling the history of Africans outside of Africa. Scholars have taken the conscious actions of slaves into consideration in studying slave resistance, even extending their analyses to the ethnic origins of those involved in revolt and marronage. The extent to which specific historical situations influenced this resistance has not been explored sufficiently, however. The study of religion, cultural expression (including music, cuisine, naming patterns, etc.), and social relationships (kinship, ethnicity and ship-board friendships) also hinges on the recognition that people found ways to determine their identities on their own terms. Much more so than previously, these aspects of slave culture are not perceived as "survivals" but rather as features of conscious and not-so-conscious decisions by people themselves in selecting from their collective experiences those cultural and historical antecedents that helped make sense of the cruelty of slavery in the Americas. While many slaves were brutalized to the extent that they died without entering into meaningful and sustainable forms of social and cultural interaction with their compatriots, many other slaves more or less successfully re-established communities, reformulated their sense of identity, and reinterpreted ethnicity under slavery and freedom in the Americas. More than simply the foundation for individual and collective acts of resistance, these expressions of agency involved the transfer and adaptation of the contemporary world of Africa to the Americas and were NOT mere "survivals" of some diluted African past. Despite the "social death" of which Orlando Patterson speaks,<sup>19</sup> slaves created a new social world that drew on the known African experience. Certainly the horrors of enslavement, the rough march to coastal ports and the trauma of the Middle Passage affected the psychological and medical health of the enslaved population, but not to the extent imagined by Elkins, at least not in most cases. While their resurrection from Patterson's "social death" was distorted by chattel slavery, many enslaved Africans were none the less fit enough to participate in the "200 Years' War" of which Patterson also writes.<sup>20</sup>

From the perspective of Africa, therefore, it is fruitful to examine the condition of slaves in the Americas on the basis that they were still Africans, despite their chattel status, the deracination that accompanied their forced migration, and the sometimes haphazard and sometimes deliberate attempts of Europeans to destroy or otherwise undermine this African identity. I am not here suggesting that enslaved blacks conceived of themselves in pan-African terms of recent times; the evolution of such solidarity has to be examined historically for different times and different places. Rather, I am arguing that many slaves in the Americas, perhaps the great majority, interpreted their lived experiences in terms of their personal histories, as anyone would, and in that sense the African side of the Atlantic continued to have meaning. Often slaves, former slaves, and their descendants still regarded themselves as Africans -- in the broad sense that they had come from Africa, no matter whether they reinterpreted that identity in reformulated ethnic terms (Nago, Coramantee, Mandingo, Pawpaw, etc.), in religious terms (Male/Muslim, Kongo Christian, animist), or in some other manner. Efforts to return to Africa by boat or by joining the world of the ancestors through suicide have special meaning in this sense. They are perhaps the starkest examples of the continued association with Africa for some slaves.

The process of creolization comes much more in focus when the merger of cultures -- European and African -- is perceived in terms that are more equal than is often the case. The Africa that entered the creole mentality was neither static nor ossified. We can go

beyond the pioneering work of Herskovits and his students, who identified sets of cultural traits -- "survivals" -- that provided colour to the sub-culture of slaves and their descendants. This anthropological approach explores the formulation of distinct societies in the context of slavery; current research is adding an historical perspective to this analysis. For many slaves in the Americas, Africa continued to live in their daily lives. That experience included a struggle to adapt to slavery in the Americas and to re-interpret cultural values and religious practices in context, but frequently maintaining a clear vision of the African past and more than a fleeting knowledge of developments in Africa after arrival in the Americas. Only when fresh arrivals stopped coming from a specific homeland did the process of creolization take root.

## **Problems of Methodology**

As I have suggested, enslaved Africans sometimes interpreted their American experience in terms of the contemporary world of Africa, and consequently, efforts to understand their situation in the Americas has to take full cognizance of the political, economic and social conditions in those parts of Africa from where the individual slaves had actually come. That is, the conditions of slavery were shaped to a considerable extent by the personal experiences and backgrounds of the slaves themselves. They brought with them the intellectual and cultural lens through which they viewed their new lives in the Americas, and they made sense out of their oppression through reference to Africa as well as the shared conditions of auction block, mine and plantation. How to get at this carry-over of experience presents difficulties for historians and other scholars, but there is no reason to doubt that there was a transfer of experience, any more than was the case with other immigrants, whether voluntary or involuntary.

As a first approximation, it is essential to unravel the complicated and often incompletely-known movement of individuals from point of enslavement to coastal port and from there to the different parts of the Americas. This exercise includes a study of the demography of the trade, an effort which has made considerable advances in the past 25 years, since the pioneering study of Philip D. Curtin.<sup>21</sup> Despite ongoing critique and revision, the regional origins of slaves by specific time period and according to age and sex are now known with reasonable certainty. The correlation of these quantifiable data with local political events and economic factors in broad outline is now possible as well.<sup>22</sup> The numbers in themselves do not blame or condemn the participants in the slave trade; no matter how they are viewed - large or small - numbers cannot adequately express the terrible suffering of the people who were caught up in the trade. What demographic analysis can do, however, is contribute to our knowledge of the regional and ethnic origins of the exported slave population. Statistical data are therefore useful in determining why, when and how individuals were enslaved and indirectly may assist in revealing what aspects of personal experience were important to slaves in the Americas. Although not all contemporary events in Africa continued to have meaning to people once they arrived in the Americas, the reasons for enslavement and deportation almost certainly did. There are at least two ways of getting at these underlying factors: first, through an understanding of the history of specific regions, states, and places in as much detail as possible, and second through biographical accounts of individuals and a



sociological analysis of such accounts. This approach can help in understanding not only where individual slaves came from and how they were enslaved but also can assist in analyzing the process by which individuals formed new communities and new identities under slavery.

The first task is the assignment of all historians of Africa and clearly does not only relate to the study of slavery and the slave trade. Indeed, the relative importance of trans-Atlantic slavery is subject to debate in the study of the African past.<sup>23</sup> This agenda of historical reconstruction is now being pursued both in national universities within Africa and among scholars world-wide to an extent that is often daunting to specialists and perhaps more so to non-specialists. For scholars of slavery in the Americas who seldom venture across the Atlantic to the homeland, the rapid and voluminous changes in documentation and analysis are a special problem. It is hard enough staying abreast of advances in any area of specialization, and crossing the Atlantic to look closely at African history is a big task. But difficulties duly considered, it is fully as important to keep abreast of advances in African history as in European history. The proper study of slavery in the Americas requires the study of two, overlapping diasporas -- European and African -- and their inter-relationships with their home cultures and societies and with each other.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, but perhaps to be expected if no longer acceptable, the African dimension has suffered from an inferior status and neglect while the European background and ongoing history have not.

The methodology that is required to uncover the active linkages between Africa and the Americas must begin with a comprehensive knowledge of African history. Then the same historical techniques must be applied in reconstructing the past of Africans who were forcibly moved to the Americas as in the migration of Europeans into their diaspora. It is a sad comment on the state of slave studies in the Americas that this common sense is often ignored. Some of the best scholarship makes assumptions about the African past that abuse standard historical methodology; including the central importance of chronology, the examination of change over time, the critique of all available source material, the insistence that later events and phenomena not be read back into the distant past, and other aspects of the discipline that are or should be taught in virtually every introductory history course.

In defiance of these fundamental principles of historical scholarship, slave studies are too often imbued with ahistorical generalizations about the nature of the African past.

Raboteau identified the problem as unavoidable because of a lack of sources "for writing the history of nonliterate cultures." In his study of slave religion, he found that "written [European] sources contemporaneous with the slave trade are...often marred by ethnocentric bias, but as a genre they do give a general, if distorted and fleeting, view of some elements of religious belief and practice in West Africa during the centuries of the slave trade."<sup>25</sup> But is the problem with sources their scarcity? The UNESCO Slave Route Project has already demonstrated that sources are extensive, though widely scattered. Breakthroughs in technology that allow the scanning of primary documents onto the computer suggest that the problem will soon be an excessive quantity of material from archives that many specialists have never been able to consult. The question of biased sources is a problem common to all historical research, and hence Raboteau's comments on the ethnocentrism of European sources are not unique to the study of the African diaspora.

The technique that many scholars have adopted in overcoming the supposed paucity of sources is the application of anthropological observations from the twentieth century to the past.<sup>26</sup> "When correlated with later anthropological accounts," according to Raboteau, "some of the distortion and confusion can be neutralized (though it would be naive to assume that some modern accounts of African religions do not also suffer from bias)." But can anthropological insights be used without verification through the usual methods of historical scholarship? Without the verification of contemporary documents, the findings of anthropology are nothing more than speculation. Unfortunately, specialists of slavery in the America generally have failed to document their analysis of religion and culture on the basis of the lived experiences of the enslaved Africans themselves.<sup>27</sup> In discussing Igbo customs and practices, for example, Sterling Stuckey uses twentieth-century data to demonstrate the continuity and longevity of African customs and practices, but he does not establish how and when culture was transferred.<sup>28</sup> The result is bad anthropology and even worse history. A critical examination of the condition of slaves must begin in Africa, and that examination must use the same rigorous historical methodology that characterizes other areas of history. In Raboteau's words, the issue is "the question of the historicity of 'traditional' African cultures."

Can it be assumed that African cultures and religions have not changed since the close of the Atlantic slave trade a century ago? To simply use current ethnological accounts of African religions without taking into account the possibility of change is methodologically questionable. Due to pressures from without -- intensified Muslim and Christian missions, European imperialism, Western technology and education -- the growth of African nationalism during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, African traditional religions have changed and continued to do so.... Besides external pressures to change, there are also indigenous processes of change within traditional African societies themselves....<sup>29</sup>

Despite Raboteau's caution, the examination of religion is usually treated in static terms; it is not shown what people believed and how they expressed these beliefs in different times and places. Nor has there been any serious attempt to demonstrate how religion was related to ideology and political structure. Instead, the concept of "traditional African religion" has been presented as an unchanging force that was all-embracing over vast parts of the continent; observations from a variety of sources are merged to fabricate a common tradition that may or may not have had legitimacy. For want of historical research, the religious histories of Africans from the Bight of Bénin, the Bight of Biafra, Kongo, and the interior of Angola are accordingly reduced to the meaningless concept of "traditional". Hence the concept "traditional" has little functional or analytical use.<sup>30</sup> The same standards of historical reconstruction should apply to the study of the African religious tradition as in the examination of the impact of Christian missions and evangelicalism and the spread of Islam. Unlike the study of "traditional" African religion, the conversion of slaves to Christianity in the Americas has been the subject of extensive research. Consequently, scholarly analysis has not been prone to ahistorical generalization, except with respect to the African background. Until recently, moreover,

the African contribution to the spread of Christianity in the Americas was overlooked. As Thornton has demonstrated, some Africans from Kongo and Angola were already Christian before reaching the Americas, and hence enslaved Christians were also a factor in spreading the faith among slaves in the Americas.<sup>31</sup> Thornton's discovery indicates that the interaction between African religious traditions and Christianity was more complex than previously thought. Moreover, the context for analyzing the conversion to Christianity includes Africa as well as Europe and the Americas. Clearly the complexities of African religious history are blurred because there has been little research done on this important topic. The possible exception is the study of Islam among slaves, where the historical context of enslavement has sometimes been identified with concurrent political developments in West Africa.

Another area of analysis that is particularly fraught with ahistorical generalizations concerns issues relating to ethnicity.<sup>32</sup> With few exceptions, the study of slavery in the Americas has tended to treat ethnicity as a static feature of the culture of slaves. Twentieth-century ethnic categories in Africa are often read backwards to the days of slavery, thereby removing ethnic identity from its contemporary political and social context. Michael Mullin, for example, is certainly correct in noting that "tribal" is no longer "good form", but not for reasons he supposes, and certainly "ethnicity" is not "a euphemism for tribal", as he claims.<sup>33</sup> The concept of ethnicity is a particularly valuable tool for unravelling the past because it is a complex phenomenon tied into very specific historical situations. By contrast, Gwendolyn Hall's account of Africans in colonial Louisiana traces the movement of a core group of Bambara from Africa to Louisiana, although for whatever reasons, Hall has not been able to carry her findings forward very far.<sup>34</sup> What does it mean that "Bambara" arrived in Louisiana in the eighteenth century? To answer this question requires a detailed study of how the term "Bambara" was used in different contexts at the time, not only in Louisiana but also in other parts of the diaspora and in West Africa. Since specific ethnic identifications had meaning only in relation to other ethnic categories, their importance has to be examined with reference to the boundaries that separated different ethnic categories from each other, including the political, religious, and economic dimensions of these differences and how these changed over time. Certainly historical associations with Africa were also essential features of these definitions of community, and rather than being static, the links with Africa were seldom disconnected from events across the Atlantic.

Ethnicity underwent redefinition in the Americas. On the one hand, European observers developed categories for African populations which involve problems of interpretation: The "Chamba" of slave accounts refers to the Konkomba of the upper Voltaic region, not the Chamba of the Benue River basin in Nigeria; Gbari are an ethnic group referred to as Gwari by Hausa-speakers, but Gambari is a Yoruba term for Hausa; Nago is a subsection of Yoruba speakers but was sometimes used as a generic term for Yoruba; Tapa refers to Nupe. These labels had meanings that have to be deciphered in context. In the Sokoto Caliphate, conversion to Islam often meant becoming Hausa, which became the language of commerce and empire. Hence the recognition of Hausa-speakers in the diaspora does not necessarily establish that these "Hausa" have much in common with twentieth-century "Hausa", since many probably were non-Hausa in origin. The imposition of European labels for African populations further compounds the problem, since these were not necessarily the names used by enslaved Africans themselves. As the

study of ethnicity in Africa has demonstrated clearly, ethnic identities and can only be understood in context of the times; present ethnic categories cannot be applied backwards in time any more than present religious practices can be.

Ethnicity, religion and culture of the enslaved population kept changing. Before the abolition of the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans, new slaves were constantly arriving and thereby infusing slave communities with new information and ideas which had to be assimilated in ways that we do not always understand at present. The movements of former slaves, both before British abolition and especially afterwards, continued these contacts. Being "Nago" in Bahia in the early nineteenth century was not the same as being "Yoruba" in West Africa, but uncovering the difference and what was meant by these labels at the time is a major task whose undertaking must inform any analysis of the slave condition.

## **Resistance to Slavery and the Abolition Movement**

While the African dimension has sometimes been emphasized in the analysis of slave resistance in the Americas, the study of resistance is too often divorced from a study of the abolition movement. The emphasis on African history that is being advocated here suggests that these two subjects should be treated together; the preliminary work on the ethnic component in slave resistance should now be supplemented with an investigation of the role that Africans played in the abolition movement and the spread of anti-slavery doctrines. Once more the issue of agency and the African background are paramount. Resistance and abolition must be re-examined in the light of the additional research being conducted in Africa and after renewed consideration of methodological issues arising from the interpretation of new data.

The study of the African component of slave resistance may appear to be the exception to the general state of slave studies, which has tended to pay more attention to the European influences on the Americas rather than the continuities with African history. Palmares is identified as an "African" kingdom in Brazil; an early and important example of the quilombos and palenques of Latin America which also often revealed a strong African link.<sup>35</sup> In Jamaica, enslaved Akan are identified with rebellion and marronage; they are considered responsible for setting the course of cultural development among the maroons.<sup>36</sup> Despite the identification of the ethnic factor, however, most studies of slave resistance fail to examine the historical context in Africa from which these rebellious slaves came. Whether or not there were direct links or informal influences that shaped specific acts of resistance simply has not been determined in most cases.

Because the African background has been poorly understood, perhaps, scholars have tended to concentrate on the European influences which shaped the agenda of slave resistance. Eugene Genovese, for example, has argued that there was a fundamental shift in the patterns of resistance by slaves at the end of the eighteenth century, which he correlated with the French Revolution and the destruction of slavery in St. Domingue.<sup>37</sup> Before the 1790s, according to Genovese, slave resistance tended to draw inspiration from the African past, but the content of that past remains obscure in Genovese's vision. With the spread of revolutionary doctrines in Europe and the Americas, slaves acquired elements of a new ideology that reinforced their resistance to slavery. The process of

creolization, which introduced slaves to European thought, brought the actions of slaves more into line with the revolutionary movement emanating from Europe.

Genovese's interpretation further highlights the problem of identifying the impact of African history on the development of the diaspora. Scholars who are not well versed in African history seem to have a cloudy image of the African contribution to resistance and the evolution of slave culture. Perhaps it is to be expected, therefore, that European influence is more easy to recognize than African influence. For Genovese, following the earlier lead of C.L.R. James,<sup>38</sup> the French Revolution had such an obvious impact on the St. Domingue uprising that the African dimension is not relevant. As Thornton has demonstrated, however, even the uprising in St. Domingue had its African antecedents, especially the legacy of the Kongo civil war.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, influences from Africa remained a strong force in the struggle against slavery well after the 1790s, especially in Brazil and Cuba, where there was a continuous infusion of new slaves from Africa, often from places where slaves had been coming for some time. The complex blending of African and European experiences undoubtedly changed over time, but until African history is studied in the diaspora, it will be difficult to weigh the relative importance of the European and African traditions.

Rebellion and marronage were fundamentally political acts, but except for a vague notion that the African backgrounds of slaves influenced the decisions of slaves to conspire, there has been very little attempt to correlate slave resistance in the Americas with events in Africa. None the less, there are clear examples of such overt links, as in the case of the Male uprising in Brazil in 1835.<sup>40</sup> Muslim slaves from the Central Sudan, many seized in the jihad associated with the foundation and expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate, were responsible for staging this revolt, which erupted almost thirty years after intensive and active discontent among the slave and former slave population of Bahia, particularly those identified as Nago and/or Muslim. As I have argued elsewhere, the uprising of Muslim slaves in Ilorin in 1817 and again in the early 1820s, which was an extension of the Sokoto jihad, was a much more likely source of inspiration for Muslims in Bahia than the slave revolt in St. Domingue.<sup>41</sup> Indeed many Muslims in Bahia appear to have been political prisoners who were deliberately deported to the Americas from the Sokoto Caliphate. This case highlights the role of agency to an extent that fleshes out earlier attempts to trace resistance to an African background. The wave of Muslim unrest began a decade after the uprising in St. Domingue, and while the French Revolution may have had an influence, the unrest in Bahia can be better understood within the tradition of jihad in West Africa than with revolutionary events in Europe.

Not all the unrest in Bahia in the first half of the nineteenth century is to be identified with the Muslim population, however. There was also a series of disturbances that are traced to the Yoruba-speaking population, which included both Muslim Yoruba and other Yoruba who worshipped Orisha and were associated with one of the Catholic Lay Brotherhoods. These differences, too, related back to Africa and the changes underway in the Nigerian hinterland in the first several decades of the nineteenth century. Moreover, many enslaved Yoruba converted to Islam in Bahia, particularly in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Despite the increasing number of Muslim Yoruba, leadership still rested in the hands of clerics from the Sokoto Caliphate, many of whom were identified as Hausa or Nupe, and some of whom came from Borno. Considering the level of literacy among this enslaved Muslim community and the political and religious origins of their

enslavement, it is perhaps not surprising that events in Bahia had a strong component of African history.

These conclusions which link events in Bahia with the foundation and consolidation of the Sokoto Caliphate and the resulting political disorders among the Yoruba are based on biographical information of individual slaves exported from the Central Sudan. In an initial survey, 108 biographies were collected. While additional data are being collected in different parts of the diaspora, these preliminary profiles of slaves include the names of individual slaves, their religion, the approximate date of enslavement, the approximate age at time of enslavement, the method of enslavement, the route to the coast for export, and ethnic/geographic designations of origin.<sup>42</sup> On the basis of my data, it appears that 95 per cent of Central Sudan slaves who were deported to the Americas in the first half of the nineteenth century were young, adult males, most of whom had military experience and indeed were prisoners of war. Most were Muslims. Such a concentration strongly suggests that the historical context in which these individuals were enslaved had an impact on their sense of identity in the Americas. From these accounts, the jihad of Usman dan Fodio emerges as a major factor in the export of slaves to the Americas. The transition in the patterns of resistance which eventually merged African and European historical experiences ultimately resulted in a movement to abolish slavery itself. The reasons for this fundamental development arose directly out of the condition of slaves in the Americas as well as the European Enlightenment. Whereas in Africa slavery, pawnship and other forms of social oppression had been common, there is no evidence of wide-spread opposition to these institutions. Opposition to slavery in Africa was largely confined to the individual actions of disgruntled slaves.<sup>43</sup> The fact that some slaves were exported to the Americas because masters found them difficult to control or manage indicates that resistance to slavery was to be found in Africa. Efforts to redeem family members and to ransom prisoners from bondage sometimes checked abuses, and flight from slavery was common in some parts of Africa. Islamic prohibitions against the enslavement of Muslims and a reluctance to sell Muslim slaves to non-Muslims placed some limits on slavery, but otherwise, there does not appear to have been a movement to abolish the slave trade or emancipate slaves in Africa before the nineteenth century. Despite acts of resistance that can be traced back to Africa, abolitionist ideas do not seem to have been formulated among slaves before they reached the Americas.

The further deracination accompanying the ocean voyage and the humiliation of racial stereotyping that followed in the Americas fundamentally altered the perception of slavery as an institution for many slaves. Individuals who had previously not been noted as opponents of slavery as such now had to struggle against their bonds in the Americas to the point that many became firm opponents of the institution. In the Americas, there were added dimensions to this resistance, especially reactions to the racial characteristics of chattel slavery. This fundamental difference from the condition of slaves in Africa emerged gradually, although the roots of racial categories were established early. Acts of resistance that combined indentured Irish workers, African slaves, and Amerindian prisoners did occur, although in the end these alliances disintegrated.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, slaves did not consolidate ethnic identifications on the basis of colour, but it was widely understood that most blacks were slaves and no slaves were white. Although there were black, mulatto and American-born slave owners in some colonies in the Americas, and

many whites did not own slaves, chattel slavery was fundamentally different in the Americas from other parts of the world because of the racial dimension.

The association between the abolition movement and African resistance to slavery is a controversial point. Abolitionism is usually attributed to European thought, especially as expressed by Enlightenment thinkers in Britain and in northern North America. David Brion Davis and other scholars have provided useful, even insightful, analysis of this phenomenon, but the premise of much of this analysis overlooks the slaves themselves.<sup>45</sup> It is worth remembering that in St. Domingue, slaves were responsible for their own liberation, and as noted above, the antecedents for their uprising can be traced to the Kingdom of Kongo as well as Revolutionary France.<sup>46</sup> How slaves transformed their African experiences into revolutionary action against the institution of slavery still has to be explored. Even specialists of Africa have inadvertently overlooked the importance of black abolitionist thought and action. Thus Martin Klein writes: "There is no evidence...that slavery was seriously attacked in any part of the world before the eighteenth century. The abolition movement had its origins in a change in European consciousness."<sup>47</sup> Klein attributes this change to the Enlightenment, thereby ignoring changes in thinking that were taking place among slaves and former slaves in the Americas.

However, as Hilary Beckles has argued, there was an "indigenous anti-slavery movement" among Africans in the Americas. That is, abolitionism was as much a BLACK response to slavery as a European phenomenon, and hence the concentration on the abolition movement in the standard literature as a WHITE, European movement is only part of the story.<sup>48</sup> It remains to be seen how Africans who were subjected to slavery in the Americas transformed their ideas about slavery. Institutions of servitude, including slavery, that were acceptable in Africa and to which many Africans had been exposed even before their own enslavement were no longer acceptable in the Americas. The conditions of slavery in the Americas were such that the ideological framework that countenanced slavery was transformed into abolitionism.

## **Implications for Studying Slavery in the Diaspora**

Once we consider issues of agency, identity, and community in the Americas, which in effect is a logical extension of this kind of research, it is clear that many slaves perceived of themselves in the historical context of their time, not only in the Americas but also in Africa itself. In emphasizing the central place of Africa in the slave experience, my intention is to highlight the importance of agency. While it is often claimed that slaves were active participants in shaping the societies of the Americas, and many studies of slave resistance often come close to demonstrating that active role, I am suggesting that enslaved Africans cannot be fully appreciated as agents of their own fate, no matter how much they were constrained by chattel slavery, until there is greater appreciation of the lived experiences of slaves in Africa itself. Rather than maintain a few cultural "survivals" that are quaint and symbolic, enslaved Africans brought with them political issues and live interpretations of their own predicament. It is worth stressing that there was a continuous stream of enslaved immigrants coming from Africa during periods of growth and prosperity. Hence individual colonies in the Americas often received slaves

from the same places in Africa, thereby updating information, rekindling memories and reinforcing the African component to the cultural adaptations under slavery. The extent to which linkages with Africa were maintained or declined into insignificance needs to be established. The ways in which enslaved Africans subsequently interpreted their conditions in the Americas and the Islamic world lies at the heart of the African contribution to the process of creolization, the forms of resistance, and the extent of accommodation with the slave experience.

There are in fact different paradigms for considering the communities of enslaved Africans in the diaspora than those currently being used: Besides being slaves, Africans in diaspora belonged to immigrant populations and they constituted what amounted to refugee communities, forced to migrate in different ways than modern refugees, who themselves are frequently forced to move. Like immigrant communities and refugees in other times and other places, enslaved Africans identified with communities which maintained links with their countries of origins in a variety of ingenious ways. Enslaved Muslims in Bahia, for example, considered themselves as belonging to the world of Islam; their educational system and common prayers were not "survivals" but active attempts to maintain and extend that world.

Based on my preliminary research, it is apparent that there is extensive documentation on the African-ness of the slave communities of the diaspora, but there is an additional problem facing historians attempting to examine such materials. First the material is widely scattered; in my case in at least thirty different countries; second an analysis of this material requires a thorough knowledge of African history for specific regions and specific periods, which is not easy to acquire by non-specialists; third, analysis also necessitates a full understanding of the different parts of the diaspora, which is just as difficult to acquire as the knowledge of African history; fourth, there is the problem of language; in my case Portuguese, French, English, Spanish, Arabic, Hausa, Nupe, Yoruba as a start; fifth; such study requires the full discipline of historical methodology -- the use of contemporary documentation to examine historical change, not twentieth-century anthropological data read back into history; sixth; a good understanding of the latest theories on ethnicity, particularly as advanced by historians studying ethnicity in colonial contexts, such as southern Africa and elsewhere. Is it possible for such research to be done? In my opinion, this type of work can only be done through extensive, international collaboration among scholars.

As a guideline for future research, I am suggesting that information that has often been passed over for want of significance to researchers needs to be re-examined. Specifically, biographical data needs to be gathered, collated, compared, and analyzed with the assistance of specialists who know the history of the time period and area from which individual slaves came in Africa. These biographical data are far too extensive for individual scholars to collect, although it is scattered and may not appear to be numerous enough to be significant in the context of other research. Only through a massive international collaborative effort will it be possible to harvest this abundant resource. Equally important, the details of cultural "survivals" -- names, attributes of culture, kinship relationships, religious observances, etc. -- must be collected in situ, that is, the exact wording of references with full supporting context has to be recorded so that specialists of African history can have the opportunity to debate the possible meanings of the data.



Oral source material is also essential. The extent of such data is not even known; much data have been collected scientifically by scholars, but other data has been preserved haphazardly by contemporary observers and the descendants of slaves. Because of the methodological difficulties in collecting and examining these materials, the effort at analysis must again be collaborative and involve Africanist specialists as well as the actual collectors and researchers who have uncovered or who are re-examining such materials. Undoubtedly there is also material among existing communities of the descendants of former slaves, both in the Americas and among those who returned to Africa.

Sites and monuments that require urgent inspection, together with the collection of available oral and written documentation that explain their significance, must also be a focus of research. Such sites include the locations of returned freed slaves in Africa and cemeteries and religious shrines in the Americas. The linkages to the historical record that may be revealed in such locations will vary considerably. Cultural activities, including carnivals and sanatoria festivals, offer possibilities for identifying and isolating the ongoing historical connections among Africans in the Americas and in Africa. This focus of research is intended to be suggestive, and nothing more. The purpose is clear -- to uncover the interactions between Africa and the Americas during the days of slavery and thereafter correct the historical balance. The bias that emphasizes the linkages between Europe and the Americas inevitably distorts the context of creolization and the development of the modern societies and cultures of the Americas. The revisionist approach being proposed here directly challenges the marginality of Africa to the development of the diaspora and thereby to the process of creolization.

The oppression of European masters and the pull of the international market for primary products may have set the conditions of slaves in the Americas, but in adjusting to these conditions, enslaved Africans nonetheless reinterpreted African issues and modified useful institutions in their quest to make sense out of their conditions and to establish a new identity in the diaspora. This identity began in the context of events and experiences in Africa but over time and after generations evolved into the pan-African identity of Peter Tosh's lyrics: "Anywhere you come from, as long as you're a black man, you're an African".<sup>49</sup>

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## Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented as the Bradford Morse Lecture at Boston University, April 1995. I wish to thank David Richardson, Robin Law, Philip Morgan and Brenda McComb for their comments.

2. Also commonly spelled Whydah in English.

3. Pierre Verger, *Flux et reflux de la traite des nègres entre le golfe du Bénin de Todos os Santos du XVIIe au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1968); Roger Bastide, *Les religions africaines au Brésil: vers une sociologie des interpénétrations de civilisations* (Paris, 1960); Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York, 1941). Also see, for example, Herbert H.S. Aimes, "African Institutions in America," *Journal of American Folk-lore*, 18 (1905), 15; Melville J. Herskovits, "On the Provenience of New World Negroes,"

*Social Forces*, 12 (1933), 247-62; Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran, "Tribal Origins of African Slaves in Mexico," *Journal of Negro History*, 31 (1946); Gabriel Debien, "Les origines des esclaves aux Antilles," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Afrique Noire*, sér. B, 23 (1961); Gabriel Debien, *Plantations et esclaves à Saint-Domingue* (Dakar, 1964).

4. Doudou Diène, "A New International Project: The Slave Route," *The UNESCO Courier* (October 1994), p. 29. A volume of papers presented at the UNESCO Symposium in Ouidah is to be published.

5. Bonny and Calabar in the Bight of Biafra and Cabinda, Benguela, and Luanda in West-Central Africa were also significant exporters of slaves and may well have been more important than Ouidah in certain decades, but there is no question that Ouidah was one of the major ports. According to a sample of 8,945 voyages carrying approximately 3,327,000 slaves between 1595-1867, Ouidah appears to have been second only to Cabinda in numbers of slaves exported to the Americas; see David Eltis and David Richardson, "The Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1595-1867," unpublished paper presented at the Social Science History Meeting, Chicago, 1995.

6. David Dalby, "Provisional Identification of Languages in the Polyglot ta Africana," *Sierra Leone Language Review*, 3 (1964), 83-90; P.E.H. Hair, "The Enslavement of Keels Informants," *Journal of African History*, 6 (1965), 195-203; Adam Jones, "Recaptive Nations: Evidence Concerning the Demographic Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Slavery and Abolition*, 11:1 (1990), 42-57.

7. Pierre Verger, *Trade Relations between the Bight of Bénina and Bahia 17th-19th Century* (Ibadan, 1968), pp. 532-66; Lisa A. Lindsay, "'To Return to the Bosom of their Fatherland': Brazilian Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Lagos," *Slavery and Abolition*, 15:1 (1994), 22-50; Jerry Michael Turner, "Les Bresiliens - The Impact of Former Brazilian Slaves upon Dahomey," Ph.D. thesis, unpublished, Boston University, 1975; an early attempt to study the return of former slaves to the Bight of Bénin; see also the forthcoming doctorat d'état of Bellajimin Codo on the history of the Afro-Brazilians in the République du Bénin.

8. See, for example, various studies in Joseph E. Harris, ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, 2nd ed. (Washington, 1993) including Akintola J.G. Wyse, "The Sierra Leone Krios: A Reappraisal," pp. 339-68; S.Y. Boaki-Siaw, "Brazilian Returnees of West Africa," pp. 421-40; St. Clair Drake, "Diaspora Studies and Pan-Africanism," pp. 451-514.

9. In addition to the early literature on the ethnic origins of enslaved Africans, cited above in fn. 2, the following studies represent the current state of research on the ethnic origins of slaves: David Pavy, "The Provenance of Colombian Negroes," *The Journal of Negro History*, 52 (1967), 35-58; Walter Rodney, "Upper Guinea and the Significance of the Origins of Africans Enslaved in the New World," *Journal of Negro History*, 54 (1969), 327-45; W. Robert Higgins, "The Geographical Origins of Negro Slaves in Colonial South Carolina," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 70 (1971), 34-47; Maureen Warner, "Africans in 19th Century Trinidad," *African Studies Association of the West Indies Bulletin*, 6 (1973), 13-37; Harold D. Wax, "Preferences for Slaves in Colonial America," *The Journal of Negro History*, 58:4, (1973), 371-401; Russell R. Menard, "The Maryland Slave Population 1658 to 1730: A Demographic Profile of Blacks in Four Counties," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 32 (1974), 29-54; Gabriel Debien, *Les esclaves aux antilles françaises (XVIIe - XVIIIe siècles)* (Basse-Terre et Fort-de-France, 1974);

B.W. Higman, "African and Creole Slave Family Patterns in Trinidad," *Journal of Family History*, 3 (1978), 163-80; Allan Kulikoff, "The Origins of Afro-American Society in Tidewater Maryland and Virginia, 1700 to 1790," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 35 (1978), 226-59; Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society in British Mainland North America," *American Historical Review*, 85 (1980), 44-78; Mary Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro 1808-1850* (Princeton, 1987), especially Appendix A, "African Sources for the Slave Trade to Rio de Janeiro, 1830-1852", pp. 371-83; David Geggus, "Sex Ratio, Age, and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade," *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989); David Geggus, "The Demographic Composition of the French Caribbean Slave Trade," in P. Boucher, ed., *Proceedings of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Meetings of the French Colonial Historical Society* (Lanham, Md, 1990); David Geggus, "Sugar and Coffee Cultivation in Saint Domingue and the Shaping of the Slave Labour Force," in Ira Berlin and Philip Morgan (eds.), *Cultivation and Culture: Work Process and the Shaping of Afro-American Culture in the Americas* (Charlottesville, 1993), pp. 73-98, 318-24; Mieko Nishida, "Manumission and Ethnicity in Urban Slavery: Salvador, Brazil, 1808-1888," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 73:3 (1993), 361-91.

10. For example, Herbert S. Klein in his *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York, 1986) implies an "African" nature to slavery in the Americas, but other than slaves being black, there is no clear attempt to identify the historical significance of this factor. Similarly, John W. Blassingame in his *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1979), pp. 3-48, identifies African "survivals" without connecting them to historical events and processes. Finally, in the interpretation of Leslie B. Rout, Jr. in his *The African Experience in Spanish America, 1502 to the Present Day* (Cambridge, 1976), it would appear that the African experience in Spanish America had little to do with anything that had happened in Africa, other than the act of enslavement itself.

11. See, for example, Michael Gomez, "Muslims in Early America," *The Journal of Southern History*, 60:4 (1994), 671-710; Allan D. Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York, 1984); Austin, "Islamic Identities in Africans in North America in the Days of Slavery (1731-1865)," *Islam et sociétés au sud du Sahara*, 7 (1993), 205-19.

12. Thus Michael D. Naragon scarcely mentions the ethnic backgrounds of slaves, despite the title of his study: "Communities in Motion: Drapetomania, Work and the Development of African-American Slave Cultures," *Slavery and Abolition*, 15:3 (1994), 63-87.

13. See Joseph E. Harris, ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, 2nd ed., (Washington, 1993), especially Elliot P. Skinner, "The Dialectic between Diasporas and Homelands," pp. 11-40; and George Shepperson, "African Diaspora: Concept and Context," pp. 41-50. Also see Earl Lewis, "To Turn as on a Pivot: Writing African Americans into a History of Overlapping Diasporas," *American Historical Review*, 100:3 (1995), 765-87.

14. Kamau [Edward] Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford, 1971); Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston, 1992), originally published as *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past* (Philadelphia, 1976). The concept

- of merging cultures was developed earlier by Philip Curtin, *Two Jamaicas, 1830-1865: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), among other scholars.
15. Earl Lewis has referred to this school of thought in American historiography as the "near total autonomists" and includes Sterling Stuckey, George Rawick, John W. Blassingame, Leslie Howard Owens, Herbert G. Gutman, and Lawrence W. Levine. See Earl Lewis, "To Turn as on a Pivot: Writing African Americans into a History of Overlapping Diasporas," *American Historical Review*, 100:3 (1995), 772.
  16. The search for "survivals" or "Africanisms" was initially associated with the anthropological research of Melville J. Herskovits; see *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston, 1941). Also see Roger Bastide, *African Civilizations in the New World* (New York, 1971). For a recent addition to this approach, see Joseph E. Holloway, ed., *Africanisms in American Culture* (Bloomington, 1990).
  17. Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom 1750-1925* (New York, 1976), pp. 327-60. For similar problems, also see Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana, 1984); Joyner, *Remember Me: Slave Life in Colonial Georgia* (Atlanta, 1989).
  18. cf. Toyin Falola and Paul E. Lovejoy (eds.), *Pawnship in Africa: Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* (Boulder, 1994).
  19. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, 1982).
  20. Orlando Patterson, "Slavery and Slave Revolts: A Socio-Historical Analysis of the First Maroon War, Jamaica, 1655-1740", *Social and Economic Studies*, 19, 3 (1970), 289-325.
  21. Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, 1969). Curtin's study is regularly revised, extended, and amplified. For a recent assessment, see Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A Review of the Literature," *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), 365-94. The current project to standardize the various statistical studies at the W.E.B. Dubois Center, Harvard University, is an outgrowth of a generation of scholarship; see, for example, Eltis and Richardson, "The Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1595-1867," unpublished paper presented at the Social Science History Meeting, Chicago, 1995.
  22. For preliminary attempts to correlate the export trade with developments within Africa, see Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge, 1983) and Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life* (Cambridge, 1990).
  23. Cf. Joseph E. Inikori, "Ideology Versus the Tyranny of Paradigm: Historians and the Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on African Societies," *African Economic History*, 22 (1994), 37-58.
  24. In his otherwise suggestive article, "Writing African Americans into a History of Overlapping Diasporas," Earl Lewis pays scarcely any attention to the historical background of enslaved Africans in Africa and therefore has little to say about the development of the African diaspora. For an example of how Africanists might interpret the influence of the diaspora on the white societies of the Americas, see John Edward Philips, "The African Heritage of White America," in Joseph E. Holloway, ed., *Africanisms in American Culture* (Bloomington, 1990), pp. 225-39.
  25. Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion. The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford, 1978), 325-26 fn.

26. In constructing "the world they made together", Mechal Sobel, for example, relies extensively on twentieth-century anthropological accounts to gain insight into eighteenth century events and developments; see *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton, 1987).
27. Even such classic studies as Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974) fall into this trap. Consequently, the juxtaposition of the African religious tradition and Christian conversion is an inadequate mechanism for examining the development of slave culture. At its worst, this approach fails to grasp the major developments in the historical reconstruction of the role of religion in Africa in the specific context of the slave trade.
28. Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture. Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (Oxford, 1987).
29. Raboteau observes that "religion, particularly religious myth and ritual might be among the most conservative elements of culture." See *Slave Religion in the Antebellum South*, 325-26 fn.
30. Until recently, this failure to examine contemporary religious expression and experience within Africa during the period of slave exports can partially be excused for want of historical study by African historians, but this is no longer the case. See, for example, the excellent research of Robin Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550-1759* (Oxford, 1991). For other studies, see George Brandon, *Santeria from Africa to the New World* (Bloomington, 1993); and Guéin Montilus, *Dieux en diaspora. Les Loa Haïtiens et les Vaudou du Royaume d'Allada (Bénin)* (Niamey, 1988).
31. cf. John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (Cambridge, 1992), although at times Thornton may have overstated his case with respect to the extent to which Africans from the interior of West-Central Africa were already Christian before reaching the Americas.
32. Many studies consider ethnicity, although rarely in detail and without an attempt to explore the meaning of different ethnic identities in Africa and the Americas at the time. See, for example, Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge, 1981); Peter M. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York, 1974). Demographic data including ethnic identification on slaves in the British Caribbean has been tabulated by Barry Higman; see *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807-1834* (Baltimore, 1984), but the meaning of the different ethnic labels in historical context has yet to be studied. Similarly, David Geggus has explored French shipping and plantation records to identify ethnic patterns but without analyzing the historical origins in Africa in detail; see "Sex Ratios, Age and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Data from French Shipping and Plantation Records," *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), 23-44. Karasch's study of ethnicity in Rio de Janeiro is largely static as well; see *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1850*.
33. Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831* (Urbana and Chicago, 1992), p. 14.
34. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: the Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, 1992).

35. See the excellent studies in Richard M. Price, ed., *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore, 1979); Patterson, "Slavery and Slave Revolts," 289-325.
36. cf. Monica Schuler, "Akan Slave Rebellions in the British Caribbean", *Savacou*, 1 (1970), 8-31. Also see Mavis C. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica, 1655-1796* (Trenton, N.J., 1990); and Barbara Klamon Kopytoff, "The Development of Jamaican Maroon Ethnicity," *Caribbean Quarterly*, 22 (1976), 33-50.
37. Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge, 1979).
38. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York, rev. ed., 1963).
39. John K. Thornton, "'I am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of World History*, 4:2 (1993), 181-214.
40. João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (Baltimore, 1993); also see Pierre Verger, "Yoruba Influence in Brazil," *ODU: Journal of Yoruba and Related Studies*, 1 (1955).
41. See my "Background to Rebellion: The Origins of Muslim Slaves in Bahia", in Paul E. Lovejoy and Nicholas Rogers (eds.), *Unfree Labour in the Development of the Atlantic World* (London, 1994), 151-180. It should be noted that my interpretation of the African component in the Male Revolt builds on the earlier interpretation of Raymundo Nina Rodrigues, *Os Africanos no Brasil* (Sao Paulo, 1932), 93-120; and Pierre Verger, *Flux et reflux de la traite des nègres entre le golfe du Bénin de Todos os Santos du XVIIe au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1968).
42. See Paul E. Lovejoy, "Origins of Muslim Slaves in Bahia," especially pp. 176-80; and Lovejoy, "The Central Sudan and the Atlantic Slave Trade," in Robert W. Harms, Joseph C. Miller, David S. Newbury, and Michele D. Wagner (eds.), *Paths toward the Past: African Historical Studies in Honor of Jan Vansina* (Atlanta, 1994), 345-70.
43. There has been little study of resistance to slavery in Africa before the late nineteenth century, but see my "Fugitive Slaves: Resistance to Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate," in Gary Y. Okihiro, ed., *In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American History* (Amherst, 1986), 71-95 and "Problems in Slave Control in the Sokoto Caliphate," in Lovejoy, ed., *Africans in Bondage: Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade* (Madison, 1986), 235-72.
44. Hilary McD. Beckles, "The Colours of Property: Brown, White and Black Chattels and their Responses to the Colonial Frontier", *Slavery and Abolition*, 15, 2 (1994), 36-51.
45. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, 1966).
46. Thornton, "African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," 181-214.
47. Martin A. Klein, "Slavery, the International Labour Market and the Emancipation of Slaves in the Nineteenth Century", in Paul E. Lovejoy and Nicholas Rogers, eds., *Unfree Labour in the Development of the Atlantic World* (London, 1994), 201.
48. Contrast Hilary McD. Beckles, "Caribbean Anti-Slavery: The Self-Liberation Ethos of Enslaved Blacks", *Journal of Caribbean History*, 22, 1/2 (1990), 1-19 with Davis, *Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* or Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery 1776-1848* (London, 1988). Similarly, Seymour Drescher frames his historical questions about abolition in terms that ignore the African contribution to the anti-slavery

movement; see *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford, 1987).

49. "African", from Peter Tosh, "Equal Rights", 1977.