

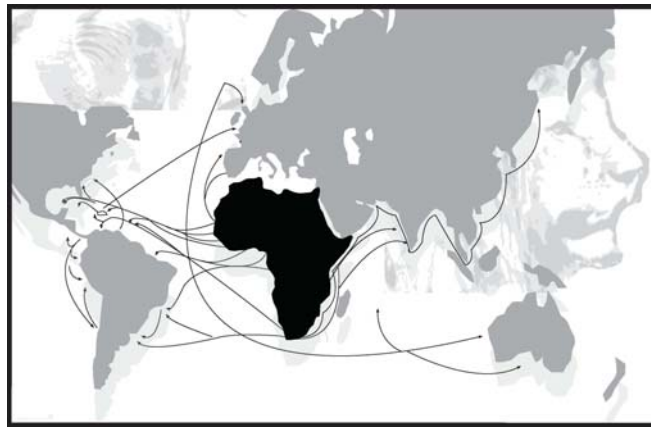
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Africa and Its Diasporas: Remembering South America

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Abstract

African interest in the Diaspora has never been greater than it is now. This is evident in the growing attention paid to the subject by African scholars and governments. The motivations are as varied as they are complex. The ascendancy of globalization, transnational, and postcolonial studies has helped fuel African scholarly interest in Diaspora studies as has the rising tide of African international academic migrations since the 1980s (Zezeza 2004). The academic migrants are part of Africa's new Diasporas, whose size is growing rapidly in parts of the global North, and which is coveted by African governments for their social capital—skills, knowledge, networks, civic awareness, cultural experience and cosmopolitanism—that can provide not only access to global markets and investment and stimulate technological innovation, but also invigorate democracy, strengthen civil society and encourage the growth of new philanthropic cultures. Already, the new Diaspora is Africa's biggest donor; not surprisingly governments increasingly regard it as a critical remittance pipeline, as an important economic asset.

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In Search of the Diaspora

African interest in the Diaspora has never been greater than it is now. This is evident in the growing attention paid to the subject by African scholars and governments. The motivations are as varied as they are complex. The ascendancy of globalization, transnational, and postcolonial studies has helped fuel African scholarly interest in Diaspora studies as has the rising tide of African international academic migrations since the 1980s (Zezeza 2004). The academic migrants are part of Africa's new Diasporas, whose size is growing rapidly in parts of the global North, and which is coveted by African governments for their social capital—skills, knowledge, networks, civic awareness, cultural experience and cosmopolitanism—that can provide not only access to global markets and investment and stimulate technological innovation, but also invigorate democracy, strengthen civil society and encourage the growth of new philanthropic cultures. Already, the new Diaspora is Africa's biggest donor; not surprisingly governments increasingly regard it as a critical remittance pipeline, as an important economic asset.

Discussion

The intellectual and instrumental imperatives are reinforced by ideological shifts in the imaginary of Pan-Africanism (Zezeza 2007). From the 1950s as African colonies gained their independence, transatlantic Pan-Africanism waned as African leaders concentrated on national development and regional integration and turned their attention inwards to the preoccupations of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Unlike the OAU, which represented the triumph of continental Pan-Africanism over trans-Atlantic Pan-Africanism, the African Union (AU), launched in 2002, gestures, tentatively so far, towards a global Pan-Africanism for the 21st century that could create a new compact between African and its Diasporas. The AU has designated the Diaspora as Africa's sixth region and allocated it representation in the Economic, Social and Cultural Council: 20 civil society organizations (CSOs) out of a total of 150 CSOs, although it is not yet clear how the Diaspora will be mainstreamed in the activities of the AU.

In 2004 and 2006, the AU organized two important meetings, the Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora (CIAD). CIAD I was held in Dakar, Senegal and CIAD II in Salvador, Brazil, and brought together hundreds of intellectuals and several heads of state. Since then there have been a series of high level bilateral and multilateral conferences between African and Caribbean governments and other Diaspora communities. In September 11-

12, 2007, the AU held the Regional Consultative Conference for the African Diaspora in Europe in Paris. In the meantime, the AU is planning the African Union-African Diaspora Summit in 2008 at the level of heads of state and government. The theme of the summit is, 'Towards the realization of a united and integrated Africa and its Diaspora: A shared vision for sustainable development to address common challenges.' The essential objective of the Summit is to produce a practical program of action for co-operation between the continent and its Diaspora.

Africa's re-awakened interest in its Diasporas remains partial. It is more focused on the contemporary than the historic Diasporas, on the Anglophone world than the Hispanic world, on North America than South America, on the developmental than the cultural dimensions of the relationship, and is propelled by state-led initiatives rather than civil society interests. These tendencies became evident to me in the summer of 2006 when I first visited South America. Two anecdotes will suffice. In Caracas I run into a Kenyan medical doctor who was attending a conference at the hotel where I was staying. He asked me what I was doing in Venezuela and when I told him I was researching on Afro-Venezuelans he was astonished to learn that Venezuela had people of African descent. I, too, was a little surprised when my contact, an Afro-Venezuelan professor, claimed that Afro-Venezuelans constituted at least half of the country's population, and when I visited towns that were predominantly Afro-Venezuelan I could have been anywhere in Africa.

An even more dramatic display of Africans' relative ignorance about the African Diaspora presence in South America was evident at the CIAD II meeting in Brazil. It was poignantly demonstrated during the last day of the conference. Up to then, the conference had gone as smoothly as the Brazilian organizers had hoped: we had been treated to three days of eloquent presidential speeches and spirited scholarly presentations on the "Diaspora and the African renaissance", the theme of the conference; on the unity of interests between Africa and South America, the enduring bonds that tie Africa and its Diasporas. The spirit of Pan-Africanism was powerful and palpable in the cavernous convention center, but the Afro-Brazilian face of Salvador was safely sequestered away for hardly any of the conference officials and guides were black. All that changed during the final plenary session when a march of local Afro-Brazilian activists burst into the auditorium. It was an electrifying moment. It presented a rude awakening to the African delegates, comprised of some of the continent's leading intellectuals, many of who had bought the myth of racial harmony in Brazil.

The activists took over the stage and read their manifesto. They noted the fact “that racial inequality in Brazil has deep historical roots and this reality will not be modified significantly without the application of specific public policies”; “that Brazil has the second biggest black population on the planet and must repair the asymmetries provoked by policies that the Brazilian government promoted” between blacks and whites since the First Republic; “that the Brazilian system of superior education is one of the most excluding in the world. The average percentage of black professors in the Brazilian public universities does not reach 1% when blacks represent 45.6% of the Brazilian population”; and “that Affirmative Actions, based on positive discrimination toward those injured by historical processes are the legal means for repairing the degrading effects of racism.” The conference was asked to support “the national Day of Mobilization in Defense of Quotas, and that the Brazilian Congress approve, with maximum urgency the Law of Quotas and the Statute of Racial Equality.”

The protesters broke into song—*Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*—the nationalist anthem of the African liberation movements in Southern Africa. The African delegates, who were initially stunned, soon joined in this highly charged performance of Diaspora activism and I saw many of them choke with emotion and several wiped tears from their eyes. It finally brought home to them, as nothing else could, the gravity of the racial situation in Brazil, the explosive tensions they had so far been shielded away from in the opulent surroundings of the convention center and their hotels, all located in the affluent and whiter districts of Salvador away from the black, relatively impoverished masses; of the deep racial inequalities that make a mockery of official and white Brazil's professions of “racial democracy” and Third World solidarity. I felt immensely proud of the demonstrators, grateful for their courage, for bringing the conference to reality, for opening the eyes of the African delegates, forcing us to offer support and endorse the struggles of our people in this country of vast potential, where the largest African Diaspora resides. The demonstrators left the hall chanting, singing, and clapping hands and many of us in the audience followed them. The plenary speeches resumed, but in effect the conference was over, the civil society of the Diaspora had spoken in a language that was bound to galvanize African intellectuals to recast their views of Brazil and South American more generally.

This paper explores Africa's engagements with the Diaspora in South America. I argue that the linkages have far deeper roots than is generally recognized by focusing on nineteenth century demographic and cultural flows. The paper begins by offering broad conceptual notes on

the complex connections between homelands and host lands in the Diaspora experience. This is followed by a brief survey of physical movements between South America and Africa in the nineteenth century. Finally, I look at the cultural dimensions of this relationship, specifically focusing on religious developments and exchanges.

Mapping Diaspora Engagements

One critical measure of the Diaspora condition as a self-conscious identity lies in remembering, imagining and engaging the original homeland, whose own identity is, in part, constituted by and, in turn, helps constitute the Diaspora. This dialectic in the inscriptions and representations of the homeland in the Diaspora and of the Diaspora in the homeland is the thread that weaves the histories of the Diaspora and the homeland together. Two critical questions can be raised. First, how do the different African Diasporas remember, imagine, and engage Africa, and which Africa—in temporal and spatial terms? Second, how does Africa, or rather the different Africas—in their temporal and spatial framings—remember, imagine, and engage their Diasporas? Given the complex ebbs and flows of history, for Africa itself and the various regional host lands of the African Diasporas, it stands to reason that the engagements between Africa and its Diasporas have been built with and shaped by continuities, changes, and ruptures. Charting and deciphering the content and contexts of the ties that bind Africa and its Diasporas are the analytical challenges of the larger project I am currently working on.¹

As I have argued at length elsewhere (Zeleva 2005), Diaspora is a state of being and a process of becoming, a condition and consciousness located in the shifting interstices of “here” and “there,” a voyage of negotiation between multiple spatial and social identities. Created out of movement—dispersal from a homeland—the Diaspora is sometimes affirmed through another movement—engagement with the homeland. Movement, it could be argued then, in its literal and metaphorical senses, is at the heart the diasporic condition, beginning with the dispersal itself and culminating with reunification. The spaces in between are marked by multiple forms of engagement between the Diaspora and the homeland, of movement, of travel between a “here” and a “there” both in terms of time and space; of substantive and symbolic, concrete and conceptual intersections and interpellations.

The fluidity of these engagements is best captured by the notion of flow, that flows of several kinds and levels of intensity characterize the linkages between the homeland and the

Diaspora. Flows can be heavy or light, they can be continuous, interrupted or change course, and may even be beneficial or baneful to their patrons or recipients at either end. All along they are subject to the unpredictable twists and turns of history. The Diaspora-homeland flows are, often simultaneously covert and overt, abstract and concrete, symbolic and real, and their effects may be sometimes disjunctive or conjunctive. The Diaspora or the homeland can also serve as a signifier for the other subject to strategic manipulation. The flows include people, cultural practices, productive resources, organizations and movements, ideologies and ideas, images and representations. In short, we can isolate six major flows: demographic flows, cultural flows, economic flows, political flows, ideological flows, and iconographic flows.

Clearly, engagements between Africa and its Diasporas have been produced by many flows that have been carried on by a variety of agents; but not all flows and agents are equal nor have they been treated equally. Much of the scholarly attention has gone towards the political flows, as manifested, for example in the role that the trans-Atlantic Pan-Africanist movement played in engendering territorial nationalisms across Africa and how continental nationalism and the civil rights movement in the United States reinforced each other, and how in postcolonial times the various Diasporas have engaged political processes and projects from conflict to democratization. In studies of the historic Diasporas there has been an analytical tendency to privilege the political connections represented by the Pan-Africanist movement, while in studies of the contemporary Diasporas focus concentrates on the economic impact—flows of remittances and investment. Economics is of course at the heart of the Diaspora condition for both the historic and contemporary Diasporas in so far as both were engendered by labor imperatives, one involving the demand for forced slave labor and the other the supply of free wage labor.

Ideological flows refer to the flows of ideas and ideologies that can be embodied in social and cultural movements and discursive paradigms, ranging from visionary philosophies and projects to transnational feminisms to literary movements in the African and black worlds. For example, there has been what Abiola Irele (199*) calls the “cycle of reciprocities” between the literary movements of Africa and the Diaspora most significantly the Harlem Renaissance and the Negritude movement whose echoes found resonances in the Black Arts and the Black Aesthetic movements in the U.S. and the cultural nationalist and the nativistic critical movement in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s.

Iconographic flows refer to images and visual representations of Africa, Africanness and blackness that are created, circulated, and consumed through art works and the media. As Nkiru Nzegwu has demonstrated transatlantic artistic dialogue has been continuous and intensified over the last half century, sustained and reproduced by the travels of artists, a shared visual language, and invocations of cultural memories and artistic motifs. “Because the socio-economic conditions under which these artists create activates psychic vortices,” she writes, “art-making becomes a ritual in which cultural genealogy is revitalized, new realities are constructed, and new identities are announced.”

The demographic flows are self-evident. Almost from the beginning to the present, the traffic of people from Africa to the Americas has never been one way; some have returned from the Diaspora to the continent, whether permanently or temporarily, and through them contacts and memories between the Diasporas and the continent have been kept alive, and vibrant cultural exchanges maintained. Thus, Africa and the Americas have been permanently connected since the sixteenth century by the continuous flows of people in both directions. It is well to remember that the slave trade was not a one-time event, but a continuous process that lasted four centuries from the mid-fifteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. We all know about the resettlement schemes in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, the quintessential sojourners of these transoceanic voyages were sailors, and to a lesser extent, soldiers, but there were also traders, students and scholars, political leaders and rebels, religious seers and proselytizers, and ordinary men and women seeking personal and collective salvation from the depredations of their times and circumstances.

Over the centuries cultures in both continental Africa and Diaspora Africa changed and influenced each other, to varying degrees across time and space. This was a dynamic and dialogic exchange, not simply a derivative one between a primordial, static Africa and a modern, vibrant Diaspora. This is to suggest the need for an analytical methodology that is historically grounded, one that recognizes the enduring connections between Africa and its Diasporas, that the cultures of Africa and the Diaspora have all been subject to change, innovation, borrowing, and reconstruction, that they are all “hybrid,” and that the cultural encounters between them have been and will continue to be multiple and multidimensional. We need to transcend the question of African cultural retentions and survivals in the Americas, to examine not only the traffic of cultural practices from the Atlantic Diasporas to various parts of Africa, but also the complex

patterns and processes of current cultural exchanges through the media of contemporary globalization from television and cinema to video and the Internet.

Demographic Flows between South America and Africa

Research done in the last couple of decades has made it clear that the Atlantic world in particular constituted an integrated African world, in which people moved back and forth, intermingling and exchanging ideas, values, practices, and material culture, all of which allowed African peoples to maintain intricate cultural, social, economic, and political ties. Of the many possible demographic networks in the trans-Atlantic world before the twentieth century, the best well-known are those from the United States, Canada, and Britain to Liberia and Sierra Leone. Recent research is beginning to fill in the broad contours of population movements from South America including the Caribbean to West Africa, specifically from Brazil to the Gulf or Bight of Benin (present-day Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria).

Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century and accelerating in the eighteenth and particularly in the nineteenth century Brazilians, consisting of Portuguese trading families, free blacks, and expatriated ex-slaves, flocked and resettled in the Bight of Benin region in response to economic, cultural and political motivations. Some estimates indicate that by 1878 the number of Brazilians repatriates in West Africa as a whole was around 6,000; Lagos alone had about 2,700 Brazilians by 1881 (Ralston 1969: 583). In his informative essay on the evolution of the Brazilian community in Ouidah, Robin Law (2001) has demonstrated that the Afro-Brazilian community expanded and became consolidated in the early nineteenth century thanks to the deportation of large numbers of ex-slaves following the great Bahia slave insurrection of 1835.² Voluntary immigration from Brazil continued throughout the century.

As it grew, the community incorporated returnees from other Portuguese territories, such as Madeira, Spanish-speaking elements including Cubans, and assimilated local people who became ‘Brazilianized’ by acquiring the signifiers of Brazilian identity—Portuguese, Roman Catholicism, Brazilian dress and cuisine—although they had never been to Brazil. Ironically, the abolition of the slave trade by Britain, Law and Mann (1999: 322-328) have argued, served to strengthen, at least for a while, the importance of links to Brazil in so far as it led to the disappearance of British and French slavers and the expansion of the slave trade to Brazil, so that the population of the Bight of Benin became less multinational, which in the end helped to

consolidate the influence of the Brazilian Diaspora. In due course this mixed community—in terms of ethnicity, class, origins and even religion—became more fragmented and dispersed, and it became increasingly embroiled in local politics and commerce, while at the same time it renegotiated its linkages to Brazil itself and to metropolitan Portugal.

Unlike the returnees to Sierra Leone and Liberia, there was no formal program run by their government or abolitionist associations that sponsored the Brazilians; their repatriation was largely voluntary and self-financed. Also, “many Brazilian ex-slaves upon reaching West Africa tended to be absorbed into African society in a way not often true of repatriates in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and in a way that makes the reconstruction of their activities difficult” (Ralston 1969: 578). Moreover, it appears the networks of communication between the Bight of Benin and Brazil were far more intense than has generally been recognized as people and families moved back and forth, sometimes for trade, education or for political reasons.³ Some of the Brazilians returned to their original communities, but the majority settled in the port cities, especially in Lagos and Abéokuta in Nigeria and Ouidah and Porto Novo in Benin. Ouidah was the dominant port in the slave trade until the 1830s and 1840s when it was replaced by Lagos.⁴ Relations among the Brazilians and between them and other settlers from the African Diaspora, especially the Sierra Leoneans, and with the indigenous people, centering on land and the recognition of the authority of the local rulers, were exceedingly complicated. In Nigeria, the Brazilians were apparently better received in Abéokuta than in Lagos. In the meantime, colonial frontiers were expanding, and the interactions between the Brazilians and the European colonizers were volatile thanks to competition over trade, jobs in the fledgling colonial administration, and the question of citizenship.

The existence of the Afro-Brazilian community, Edna Bay (2001: 56) suggests, provided “living evidence that it was possible to return after being sold overseas,” which served to assuage the horrific memories of the slave trade for the ruling elites. These elites “recognized the hardships, deprivations and degradations endured by victims of the trade,” so that the returnees, some of whom were political rivals, afforded them an opportunity to use and see the slave trade “as a form of exile for political enemies,” and made it possible to honor them with “high status won in part by their survival of this period of exile” (Bay 2001: 58).⁵ In short, the returnees confronted African communities with the painful memories and problematic meanings of the slave trade.

They also contributed to lasting cultural and social changes in several parts of West Africa. As Elisée Soumonni (2001: 61) reminds us, the Afro-Brazilian “heritage, despite the vicissitudes of history, still remains today a living reality, as if Dahomey had been a Brazilian colony! From Porto-Novo to Agoué, the vestiges of the heritage are attested in family names, cultural traditions, architecture, and more.” He even suggests that the Afro-Brazilians were responsible for the construction of larger ethnic and religious identities in Bahia that later spread in Benin, most crucially a Pan-Yoruba identity.⁶ Furthermore, the Afro-Brazilians, or Aguda as Olabiyi Yai (2001: 80) calls them, being themselves multicultural and multilingual, promoted lingua francas, principally “Yoruba in Nigeria and Dahomey, Fon in Dahomey, and Gen or ‘Mina’ in Dahomey and Togo. They even encouraged the written practice of African languages, which is unusual enough in a French colony to be underlined... As the elite, in other words, the suppliers of the paradigms of cultural behavior, the Aguda promoted these regional lingua francas to the status of prestige languages, a fact that constituted a major anti-colonial cultural gesture, particularly in the French colonies.”

It merits pointing out that the returnees consisted of both men and women, so that the gender dynamics need to be analyzed. One of the most renowned Dahomean survivors and returnees, for example, was a royal woman named Agotime, who was sold with 600 others following a succession struggle after the assassination of King Agonglo in 1797 and accession to the throne by Adandozan. Upon his successful coup-d’état in 1818 King Gezo apparently sent two delegations in search of Agotime, his mother. Some traditions claim she returned with the second delegation, although others maintain she was never found. Whatever the case, more than two decades after her disappearance a woman named Agotime “became the kpojito or female reign-mate for King Gezo, occupying the highest female office in the kingdom” (Bay 2001: 56). Another intriguing case is that of priestesses born in Ketu who revolutionized Bahian Condomblé but subsequently returned to West Africa. Butler (2001: 150) asks a series of poignant questions: “Did these women leave on their own accord or were they captives? What contemporary knowledge of Ketu did they bring to Bahia? By what means did they attain freedom and financial resources to acquire a terreiro? What informed their decision to return to Africa? What were conditions in Ketu at the time of the return, estimated to be within decades of its demise? Does the story of these women fit within the framework of other Brazilian

‘returnees’ in West African port cities, or did they experience a different type of re-adaptation to African life in the era of colonization?”

Movements between the Caribbean and Africa were also far more common than is often assumed. The African Diaspora from the Caribbean crisscrossed the Atlantic and established a presence in virtually all the major port regions of the Americas, Africa, and Europe. In fact, not all Caribbean migrants to Africa came directly from the Caribbean itself; some were from the rapidly growing and relatively large Caribbean Diaspora in North America and western Europe, historically the main destinations of Caribbean migrations. In Africa, Caribbean settlement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was particularly pronounced in Sierra Leone and South Africa. Founded in the late eighteenth century out of the antislavery movement to settle free blacks, Sierra Leone attracted waves of migrants from the Diaspora beginning with the black poor from England in 1787, followed by the loyalist blacks from Nova Scotia, Canada, in 1792, the maroons from Jamaica in 1800 and other West Indians from 1808, and the liberated slaves or recaptives brought after the abolition of the slave trade by Britain in 1807. The colony was first ruled by the Sierra Leone Company until 1808 when the British government took over. By 1833, between 40,000 and 50,000 people had been resettled in the colony, the majority of who were recaptives.

The Caribbean Diaspora became an integral and critical part of this diverse colonial settler community. As is evident from Nemata Blyden’s (2000) authoritative study, the Caribbean migrants can be divided into six groups: first, the 500 fiercely-independent maroons who arrived in 1800; second, the demobilized soldiers from the West Indian Regiments brought following the end of hostilities between Britain and France in 1815; third, the slaves who were resettled after rebellions on the Caribbean islands, such as the eighty Barbadians from the 1816 rebellion who came in 1819 after a brief sojourn in Belize; fourth, the missionaries who came as part of the effort to “regenerate” the continent through Christian evangelization; fifth, the merchants and adventures seeking commercial fortunes and personal uplift; and finally, administrators employed in the colonial administration who later decided to stay.⁷ The numbers of these were never large. Excluding the maroons, they numbered only 123 by 1849, rising to 164 in 1869 (Blyden 2000: 30, 90). But their political and cultural impact was quite considerable. Between 1840 and 1860 West Indians were hired in relatively large numbers to serve in the

colonial administration after decades of vacillation and opposition. Some of them even rose to the high positions of governor and chief justice.

As highly educated professionals, many of the Caribbean migrants came to Sierra Leone from the Caribbean itself or from Britain for career advancement. They saw themselves, and were seen by the colonial government as purveyors of progress for their benighted and less “civilized” African brethren. Relations between the West Indians and the other settlers, and with the indigenous people, were complex and contradictory, characterized by both cooperation and conflicts, filtered as they were through the divisive differentiations and identity politics of class, race, ethnicity, and gender. The status of the West Indians, and the settlers in general, began to decline from the late nineteenth century, as colonial anti-West Indian sentiments crystallized and racism intensified thanks to the winds of imperialism blowing across the continent. The policy of hiring West Indians and other blacks to high office had ceased by the 1890s. In the meantime, however, the various Diaspora groups, which had been intermingling and intermarrying for decades were developing a new collective identity, one that distinguished them from both the colonizers and the natives with whom they shared the affectations of culture and the affinities of race, respectively. They were becoming Krio, a proud but beleaguered community that found itself during the first half of the twentieth century increasingly buffeted between the forces of European colonialism and African nationalism both of which sought to marginalize them (Wyse 1989).

Caribbean migrations to South Africa may have been on a smaller scale than Sierra Leone but they were important in their own right and for the people involved. As in Sierra Leone some of the migrations were a product of British imperial linkages in that in the late nineteenth century it was quite common for colonial officials in the course of their careers to work in both the Caribbean and Southern Africa. But unlike Sierra Leone, Caribbean migrants to South Africa were unusually dominated by seafarers, a closely-knit and highly conscious fraternity that crisscrossed the Atlantic and on whose transnational sails the ideologies and movements of Pan-Africanism were transmitted across the Atlantic world. “South African ports,” Alan Copley 1992: 350) notes, “became an integral part of the Atlantic trade, and thus a regular port of call for Afro-Caribbean seamen, with the discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1868 and massive deposits of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886. It may have been the prospect of sharing in these riches that first encouraged West Indians to settle in South Africa.” The demand for experienced

Caribbean seamen increased during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, and some of them remained behind in South Africa after the war. By the end of the 1900s Caribbean settlers could be found at all the major ports in Southern Africa from Windhoek to Durban, and in the interior from Kimberley to Johannesburg, Bloemfontein to Basutoland, but the majority lived in Cape Colony whose numbers reached 487 by April 1904, of whom 47 were women.

Besides those who came as sailors, there was a small group of Caribbean immigrants who were professionals, traders, and missionaries, the most famous being Henry Sylvester Williams, the Trinidadian lawyer who organized the first Pan-African Congress in London in 1900, and who briefly relocated to South Africa where he lived from 1903 to 1905. Williams became the first black lawyer to be admitted to the bar in South Africa and was in great demand as a speaker and became closely associated with the emerging African nationalist elite and movement in Cape Town. In the 1910s and 1920s some members of the Caribbean Diaspora in South Africa became actively involved in political and trade union activism, and took a leading part in the formation of branches of the Garveyite movement, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, as well as the Industrial Commercial Workers Union, “South Africa’s first mass black trade union organization and arguably the first genuinely national black political organization. The union had its origins among Afro-Caribbean and other ‘Colored’ dock workers in the Cape Town docks in 1919, which was the location of the first successful dock strike by black workers in South Africa’s history” (Cobley 1992: 168).

The Cultural Flows between South America and Africa

Cultural flows between Africa and many of its Diasporas in the Americas have been continuous and complex. This was partly facilitated by the demographic flows examined briefly above—African migrations to the Americas and Diasporan Africans to Africa which existed during the centuries of the slave trade and slavery and persisted after the abolition of both. Thus the Atlantic did not represent an eternal rupture between Africans on both sides of its shores, although it spawned separate paths of cultural development because of different configurations of economic, social, political, and psychological dynamics in Africa and African America.

This is not always acknowledged in studies that examine the development of expressive cultures among the Diaspora communities and the cultural traffic between the Diasporas and Africa. Gerhard Kubik (1998) provides a useful typology that divides the interpretive schemes of

Diaspora cultures into six categories, what he calls, first, biological reductionism, second, socio-psychological determinism, third, pseudo-historical reductionism, fourth, historical particularism, fifth, cultural materialism, and sixth cultural diffusionism. It stands to reason that all these elements—the imagined ontologies of blackness, constructions of racial hierarchies, selective appropriations of African memories and alterity, material imperatives of cultural change, and the diffusionist trails of cultural transfer—have played a role in the development of Diaspora cultures as distinctive cultures marked by similarities, differences, parallels, connections and exchanges with the numerous cultures of continental Africa. The communication and circulation of cultural practices and paradigms between Africa and its Diasporas have encompassed religion, education, literature, art, and music, to mention a few. These flows have constituted, I would argue, an essential part of Africa’s modernities, globalization, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism.

Religion has always played an important role in the lives of Africans both on the continent and in the Diaspora as they grapple with spiritual issues concerning ethics and morality, the sacred and profane, and the ultimate meanings of life and death that are tied, in complex and diverse ways, to the social challenges and discourses of daily existence. The traffic in religious ideas, institutions, and iconography has been particularly intense and an important aspect of the African diasporic experience, identity, and linkages with Africa. In the histories of Diasporas religion has often functioned both “as a factor in forming diasporic social organization, as well as in shaping and maintaining diasporic identities” (Kokot et al. 2004: 7).

Africans dispersed from the continent brought religious beliefs, rituals, and values into their new lands of settlement and resettlement, just as Diasporan Africans who subsequently returned or established connections with the continent came with reinvented religious practices or were sometimes proselytizers of the world religions especially Christianity. Also, religious institutions and fervor mediated relations between Africans within and outside the continent in settings that sometimes had little to do with religion per se. For example, religious currents can be detected in the development of various nationalist ideologies and movements and even in the organization of economic relations and networks. Like all markers of identity, the nature and role of religion ebbed and flowed, changing over time, depending on local and international contexts as well as the shifting configuration of the religious ideas, institutions and interlocutors themselves.

The historic Diasporas brought with them two major religious traditions: first, those often referred to as “traditional,” “indigenous,” or “local” African religions that developed into what have come to be called “African derived religions” (ADRs), and second, Islam. The latter was as African as the former. The tendency to treat Islam as non-African is based on essentialist notions of African cultural and religious authenticity or purity that are unsustainable on historical or experiential grounds: for African Muslims their identity as Muslims and Africans is indivisible, one does not invalidate the other. The misguided denial of Islam as an African religion has led to simplified understanding of the religious heritage of Diasporan Africans, in which emphasis is placed on either the survivals of “traditional” religions or the spread of Christianity. Missing here is Islam. As Sylviane Diouf (1998: 204-5) has reminded us, “a careful reading of the slave narratives and testimonies, as well as of the writings of missionaries, shows that Christianity was not as widely diffused among the slaves, who counted numerous followers of African religions, including Islam. Christianity became a relevant and important feature in the existence of Americans of African descent only in the nineteenth century, and significantly so after Emancipation. To overstate its role and magnitude is to minimize or plainly to ignore the diverse components of the slaves’ religious life.” The African religious impact in the Diaspora was felt not only in the retention, reinterpretation and reinvention of the “indigenous” African religions, but also in the Africanization of Christianity—the emergence of what some have called “Black Christianity” (Stewart 1999: 23-25).

The ADRs are widely distributed throughout the Americas and have survived, even thrived, and played an important historical role despite a long history of repression, ridicule, vilification and violence against them. In a sense, then, historically they have functioned as “religions of the oppressed” and “religions of protest.” Of course, they were more than this: they were part of the cultural self-refashioning by Diasporan Africans, of struggles to retain and recreate their identities in new and often hostile contexts, in the perennial fixation with ultimate concerns, values and meanings that is religion.

Various classifications have been proposed for the ADRs based either on their relations with other religious traditions or their geographical location and concentration. Using the first typology, George Simpson (1978) divided them into five: those that were influenced by Catholicism, Protestant missionary activity, or Pentecostal groups, and those that emphasize divination, healing and spirit mediumship, or articulate a sociopolitical agenda.⁸ Elias Bongmba

divides them into two main groups, what he calls the Afro-Caribbean religions and the Afro-Brazilian religions.⁹ He argues that the ADRs originally “focused on a rich memory of African deities, rituals, morality, and practices that practitioners passed on to younger generations.... African-derived religions are symbioses of African religions and global culture. Their ceremonies provided social revolutionary inspiration in Jamaica and Haiti and inspired the mythologies behind the patron saints of Cuba, Virgen de la Cadridad del Cobre (the Virgin of Charity of Cobre). ADRs maintain an orientation to Africa but their ceremonies celebrate the rich diversity of the African community that has grown up in the Americas” (Bongmba’s 2005: 2056).¹⁰

The development of these religions has been the subject of considerable debate. Some see them as products of what Melville Herskovits in the United States called “syncretism” and Fernando Ortiz in Latin America called “transculturation”—the fusion of African religious practices with Christianity, especially Catholicism. Some scholars have attacked the idea of syncretism as Eurocentric for mistaking the superficial iconographic adornments adopted by the enslaved Africans to deliberately conceal their true beliefs for those beliefs. “When it comes to Afro-Latin religions,” cautions Andre Perez y Mena (1998: 17), “it is best not to take for granted the information one is provided by informants, especially since the colonial experience led to an obfuscation of African religiosity.” In so far as syncretism tends to be applied to Africans not the Europeans—the diffusion of European culture and the Africans’ assimilation into it—it is a paradigm that “remains a means for Eurocentrics to discuss Afro-Latin religions disparagingly. Syncretism, defined as fused imagery or items is not readily found among initiated practitioners of Afro-Latin religions such as Ocha, Lucumi and Vodou.”¹¹ When it comes to these religions, there is no doubt that African signs, emblems, and cosmologies prevail. “It is in the popular culture where these items get confused, not among most believers” (Mena 1998: 24, emphasis original).

Does this mean the ADR remained static and did not borrow and incorporate practices and beliefs from other religions? Of course they changed in response to changing historical conditions and part of that change could be accounted for by conscious and purposeful religious borrowings and adaptations. But these religious accretions rested on an African theological substratum. While it is the interactions with European Christianity that are often stressed, it should not be forgotten that the ADRs represented complex mixtures of African religious

traditions since the enslaved Africans not only came from different ethnicities or parts of Africa but they came over several centuries. The spatial-cultural diversity in the origins of the Africans and the temporal duration of their forced migration to the Americas were powerful sources of religious creativity and transformation. “It must be emphasized,” Stephen Glazier (1996: 423) insists, “that the degree of African religious knowledge in the New World varied considerably from time to time and place to place and that higher concentrations of slaves from one area of Africa greatly increased fidelity to traditional forms.” It is important to note that some of these religions were established or consolidated after the abolition of slavery and sometimes even founded by new African immigrants who maintained links with their homelands, as is the case with Shango in Trinidad founded in 1849 by Yoruba indentured laborers from Ijesha (Bogmba 2005: 2056).

A comparison between Condomblé in Bahia and Vodou in Haiti clearly demonstrates the varied patterns in the growth of the ADRs. Unlike Haiti where slavery ended at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in Brazil it continued for much of the rest of the century. The result is that Condomblé “benefited from a continual renewal of ideas and practices brought by African emigrants and visitors, and for this reason many Brazilian rites evidence considerable fidelity to ‘old African’ sources” (Glazier 1996: 424).¹² Vodou did not enjoy such continuous infusions of African influences after the successful Haitian Revolution of 1804 so that “it has become the least ‘pure’ of the new religions, neither Nago or Kongo, yet African in its essence” (Bellegarde-Smith 2005: 62). Vodou’s formative period was between 1730 and 1790 when large numbers of enslaved people were brought from West and Central Africa. It grew out of the combined religious traditions of the various African groups and selected Catholic ideas and iconography. At the time of the revolution started in 1791, two-thirds or four-fifths of the Haitian slaves were African born, and Vodun played a decisive role during the revolution, providing the combatants with the necessary spiritual fortitude and martial forte.¹³ In the aftermath of the revolution Vodou found itself vilified by the terrified leaders of the slave owning societies of the Americas—a tradition that has continued to this day¹⁴—and even proscribed in Haiti itself by a leadership afraid of its powers and anxious to placate international European opinion. But Vodou survived and became the dominant religious and cultural voice of Haiti and the Haitian Diaspora in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries¹⁵

It is quite evident, then, that Afro-American religions were prone to renovation because of the historical geography of African migrations combined with the changing dominant cultures and regimes of power and exploitation in the settler colonial societies of the Americas, which demanded resistance and accommodation. It has also been argued by students of “folk” or “traditional” religions that “compared to the so-called world religions, belief systems of the traditional type tend to be nonliteral, decentralized, and governed or led by public (member) consensus. They are thus particularly susceptible to change” (Houk 1996: 442). But the changes have not only entailed the adaptation of non-African religious practices, as is so often assumed, but have also included the “Africanization” of the ADRs, stripping them of “spurious” accretions. The processes of “Africanization” were accelerated during the twentieth century by increased migration of Diasporan Africans and circulation of religious signs.

In a fascinating study comparing the growth of Brazilian Candomblé and Central American Garifuna, Paul Christopher Johnson (2002) shows the complex processes and patterns through which the two religions have simultaneously extended and indigenized themselves, that is become “transregional” and “Africanized”. “In Candomblé, the circulation of meanings about the once-secret religion in mass media and popular culture has led to the participation of new practicing bodies; it has brought a new ethnic constituency. In Garifuna religion, by contrast, the circulation is not of information but of bodies—of people emigrating to the United States—who bring new meanings back to the rituals performed in the homeland. In one, circulating symbols and meanings bring new bodies; in the other, circulating bodies bring new meanings to symbols at home” (Johnson 2002: 303-4).

In both cases, as the two religions gradually became decoupled from exclusive territorial ontologies, they adopted indigenizing discursive moves intended to stress their Africanness. The protective walls of Candomblé—as a religion of a particular people, place and practice—eroded as the religion spread beyond Bahia to other parts of Brazil and began to attract a growing number of white adherents, and its beliefs and rituals were exposed in the media. Rather than reflect these social changes, in the discourse of Candomblé “the indigenizing terms of ‘foundational secrets,’ ‘authenticity,’ and ‘the purely Africa’ have, if anything, gained in force and the stridency of their assertion as competitive measures of relative legitimacy, status, and success in attracting a clientele and an initiatic family” (Johnson 2002: 315).

The spread of ADRs beyond their original Diasporan homelands became more marked as international travel, resettlement, and communication have expanded. This has led to new forms of syncretism or creolization, or even “postcolonial creolization” (Pulis 1999: 5). Particularly remarkable has been the spread of Afro-Caribbean religions ranging from the relatively obscure Surinamese Winti and the Converted of St. Vincent to the world-renowned Cuban Regla de Ocha (also known as Lukumí and Santería) and Jamaican Rastafarianism. The invocation of Africa as a marker of authenticity and authority in Afro-American religions is by no means a new development. It is clear from research conducted in recent years that there were regular contacts between Brazil and West Africa.

In the nineteenth century, Law and Mann (1999: 314) note for instance, “the growth of Yoruba cults among the slaves and ex-slaves in Brazil further created a demand for religious and ritual objects made in West Africa.” The Afro-Brazilian religious adherents and elsewhere in the Americas sought more than ritual objects from the continent; they also looked to Africa for religious ideas and leaders. Conversely, returning ADR Diasporans may have affected traditional religions besides the other effects that their presence may have had in their new communities of resettlement. This is to suggest it is more than likely that contacts in the realm of traditional religions influenced religious discourse and practice on both sides of the Atlantic. It certainly appears to be the case that in recent times “African religious leaders have themselves begun traveling to the Caribbean in order to attempt to ‘purify’ their own ritual forms and/or to make African religions ‘more genuinely African’” (Glazier 1996: 421).

There is clearly a need to go beyond the tendency to examine African religions in isolation, to wrap them in impenetrable ethnic labels, and to freeze the African provenance of the Afro-American religions in the history of the slave trade and slavery. In other words, the connections that are usually drawn between the ADR and their equivalents on the continent tend to be anthropologized, to make static and schematic comparisons between these religions in terms of their rituals, practices, beliefs, and ideas. It cannot be overemphasized that “indigenous” or “traditional” religions in Africa have changed as have the ADR in the Diaspora. These changes are products of historical transformations occurring at local, regional and global levels, as well as of conscious choices and adaptations, including the mediations of direct contacts between leaders and practitioners of these religions in Africa and the Diaspora.

While the legacies of African “traditional” or “indigenous” religions in the Diaspora are recognized, the Islamic dimension of the Diasporan experience is not always appreciated. Many of the Africans who went to the Americas were Muslims who introduced the religion in many parts of the region.¹⁶ Estimates of Muslims sold into slavery vary, ranging from 10-15 percent (Austin 1984: 32-36) to at least a third (Shelton 2002). In her tantalizing study, Sylviane Diouf (1998: 48) suggests a figure of between 2.25 and 3 million Muslims sold of whom 15 to 20 percent were women. She notes that although a minority compared to the followers of the traditional religions as a whole, if counted “on a religious basis rather than on an ethnic one the Muslims were probably more numerous in the Americas than any other group among the arriving Africans.”

Many of the Muslims shipped to the Americas were victims of armed conflicts including the marabouts wars in the Senegambian region in the late seventeenth century, the jihads in the early nineteenth century in Hausaland, Kanem and Bornu, and the Oyo civil war of 1817 that resulted in large numbers of Yorubas including Muslims being sent into slavery. Others fell prey to abductions that hit Muslim clerics, students, teachers, traders and nobility particularly hard due to their high levels of mobility, so that while large numbers of uneducated Muslims were shipped to the Americas, Diouf (1998: 39) suggests, “a large proportion of the deported Africans came from the intellectual elite.”

Once in the Americas the Muslims faced enormous challenges to maintain their religious faith and cultural practices. But Diouf insists that the experience of enslavement seems to have deepened the religious fervor of the Muslims, who went to great lengths to preserve their belief systems and ritual practices, maintaining the Muslim dress code whenever possible (by retaining traditional dress, wearing white turbans, veils, head coverings, beards and protective rings), using or adapting Muslim names to retain as much of their identity as possible (which sometimes entailed answering to two names), observing Islamic marriage prescriptions (including practicing polygamy) and dietary proscriptions (for example against alcohol and eating pork), and preserving their literacy by speaking and writing in Arabic (through sand writing, making their own writing implements, copying books and pamphlets, writing letter and autobiographies in Arabic, clandestine trade in Islamic publications including the Koran from Europe and Africa often sold by black sailors plying the Atlantic and freed slaves, and establishing Koranic schools as in Bahia, Brazil and Lima, Peru.¹⁷

The Muslims fought valiantly to uphold the five pillars of Islam. Profession of faith, the First Pillar, was threatened by forced conversions to Christianity, which was often met by outright resistance or pseudoconversions. Whenever the opportunity arose, including any fortuitous return to Africa, those who had converted would reconvert to Islam. Many Muslims tried to hold on to prayer, the Second Pillar, not only by praying secretly individually or in groups but also by adapting the number of prayers to less than the prescribed five. Prayer mats, beads and talismans were widely used. Almsgiving (zakat) the Third Pillar also took place between slaves “as has been recorded in Brazil, the West Indies and the United States” (Diouf 1998: 64). Similarly, many Muslim slaves tried to maintain fasting, the Fourth Pillar, despite the fact that they were generally underfed and overworked and were not obliged to do so. Pilgrimage to Mecca (the hajj), the Fifth Pillar, was virtually impossible to observe in practice although some had made the pilgrimage before their capture but it remained a religious ideal in the imagination of many.

It has been suggested that the influence of the Muslims was probably much greater than their numbers. First, in West Africa many non-Muslims who were subsequently enslaved had acquired some of the tenets of Islam through engagement with Muslim traders and clerics, and vice-versa. Second, in the Americas many of the Muslims took leadership positions in slave society because they were literate, well-organized and enjoyed a sense of their own superiority vis-à-vis other slaves, an attitude buttressed by the fact that they were more favorably viewed than other slaves by the slave owners, which sometimes became a source of tension between them and non-Muslim slaves. Thanks to the spiritual, intellectual, and martial fortitude of the Muslims some of whom came from elite families in West Africa, Islam became a critical resource for cultural and political resistance. Muslims were behind many of the slave revolts in the Americas.

The first slave revolt in the history of the Americas occurred in 1522 in Hispaniola and was led by Wolof Muslims, who also rebelled in Puerto Rico, Panama, and Colombia. This prompted Spain to issue a royal decree in 1526, the first in a series of anti-Muslim legislation, forbidding the introduction of Wolofs “from Senegal, negros from the Levant, blacks who had been raised with the Moors, and people from Guinea” (Diouf 1998: 145). In the first fifty years of the establishment of its empire in the Americas, Spain issued more than five anti-Muslim decrees engendered by both anti-Muslim hysteria imported from Spain and fears about the

expansion of Islam in America. The Spanish authorities were scared of rebellions led by Muslim slaves and maroons, Muslim proselytizing among the native people, and alliances between Africans and the native people that facilitated rebellions “in Hispaniola (1522-1532), Mexico (1523), Cuba (1529), Panama (1550-1582), Venezuela (1550), Peru (1560), Ecuador (1599), Guatemala (1627), Chile (1647), Martinique (1650), and much later Florida (1830-1840)” (Diouf 1998: 147).

Muslims were also intimately involved in the great slave rebellions of the nineteenth century, providing critical leadership in the Haitian Revolution and the numerous uprisings in Bahia, including the Malês Rebellion of 1835. In Haiti, many of the Muslims who were forcibly converted to Catholicism retained their Islamic identities, while others lived in maroon communities where they often served as leaders. It has been suggested that two leading maroon figures of the revolution, Francois Macandal and Boukman (originally from Jamaica), were most likely not only Muslims but also marabouts. “Other marabouts, and Muslims in general, played a crucial role in the Haitian revolts, and ultimately in the Haitian Revolution through their occult skills, literacy, and military traditions.... Though their role has not been acknowledged, the Muslims were essential in the success of the Haitian Revolution” (Diouf 1998: 153).

Brazil had an even larger Muslim presence and Muslims were identified as leaders in at least five of the seventeen rebellions that erupted between 1816 and 1830. And thanks to the organizational capacities, social cohesion and powerful convictions of the Muslim community Islam was a galvanizing force behind Brazil’s greatest uprising, the Malês Rebellion of 1835. Although the scale of the rebellion was curtailed because its plans were prematurely leaked to the authorities, it still involved 5 to 7 percent of the African population in Bahia—about two thousand people—striking for freedom. Many of the leaders were arrested and some hanged, and numerous other perpetrators and participants in the rebellion were deported to other provinces in Brazil or to West Africa.¹⁸

The Muslim deportees from Brazil who inspired other Muslims to repatriate in the course of the nineteenth century until the abolition of slavery constituted a distinctive group among the Diasporan Africans that we examined earlier who were able to return to their homelands. There were other Muslim returnees including many remarkable individuals from the United States, whose records—some in Arabic—have survived, such as Job ben Solomon Jallo, Lamine Ndiaye, Ibrahima abd al Rahman, and Lamine Kebe who returned to West Africa in 1734, 1738,

1829, and 1835, respectively (Austin 1984, 1997).¹⁹ From Jamaica we know of the remarkable story of Abu Bakr al Siddiq who returned to West Africa in 1836 after spending a year enroute in Morocco. There were probably many more Muslims who returned as individuals. Others returned in groups. For example, it is reported that in 1819 and 1822 two groups of Senegalese Muslims “formerly from Cuba, went back to their native land. The second contingent was made up of thirty-two individuals who had sailed from Havana to Tenerife, where they had boarded a French vessel that transported them to Senegal” (Diouf 1998: 172). And we know of the protracted collective efforts at repatriation by Muslims in Trinidad, which however were not successful, although some may have returned as individuals.

We need to know more of the impact of the movements and interactions, some of which were back and forth, between African and Diasporan Muslims both in the Diaspora and in Africa, especially before the twentieth century. It is more than likely that the connections were complex and transformational for the people and groups involved. It has been suggested, for example, that the insurrection of Muslim slaves in Bahia in 1835 was linked “to the jihad (holy war) movement earlier in the nineteenth century in the hinterland of the Slave Coast from which these slaves had come” (Law and Mann 1999: 311). The Afro-Brazilian returnees were instrumental in the expansion of both Islam and Christianity in West Africa, as Yai (2001) has shown.²⁰ With reference to the Muslims, he argues that in contrast “to the Islam colored with jihadism from the north of the region after the conquests of Uthman dan Fodio, Islam from Brazil was by nature secular and pragmatic” that sought to maintain good relations with both the traditional religions and Brazilian Catholicism (Yai 2001: 77-8). Thus, the Afro-Brazilians or Aguda, were responsible for instituting diacritical Islam in the region, which promoted religious tolerance and syncretism.

Conclusion

It is becoming clearer that over the centuries cultures both on the continent and in the Diaspora changed and influenced each other, to varying degrees across time and space, so that the Atlantic should be seen less as an unbridgeable gulf than a connecting channel through which African expressive cultures spread to the Americas and African American expressive cultures spread to Africa. Facilitating these cultural exchanges were demographic movements whose volume and magnitude while predominantly from Africa to the Americas also involved reverse sail. And

these diasporic flows were not confined to the Anglophone world of North America, especially the United States, but also encompassed South America including Brazil with its much larger African Diaspora. African scholars and students ought to become more aware of the South American dimensions of Africa's Diaspora histories and engagements.

ENDNOTE

¹ I am currently conducting a global research project on *African and Its Diasporas: Dispersals and Linkages*, funded by the Ford Foundation, which has taken me or will take me to visit major locations of African Diaspora presence in South America, the Caribbean, North America, Europe, and Asia.

² The impact of this insurrection, known as the Revolt of the Malês (Muslims) was profound in that besides the deportation of many of the insurgents to West Africa, it shook the confidence of the master class and the government and emboldened the slaves, all of which contributed eventually to the abolition of the slave trade and later slavery itself, see Reis (1993), Graden (1996), Andrews (1992).

³ Law and Mann (1999: 329-332) list some of the more prominent individuals and families that traveled and maintained constant contacts between West Africa and Brazil such as João de Oliveira in the eighteenth century, and in the nineteenth century the de Souza family of Ouidah, Domingo Martinez, Joaquim d'Almeida and José Francisco dos Santos. The states from the Bight of Benin sent no less than seven official diplomatic missions to Brazil between 1750 and 1812 to discuss matters relating to commerce. In fact, "the first recorded recognition of Brazilian independence by any foreign power, in 1824, was transmitted by a Portuguese claiming to serve as ambassador for the oba of Lagos, the 'Emperor of Benin,' and 'other Kings of Africa'" (Law and Mann 1999: 321).

⁴ The scale of the slave trade to Brazil was larger and lasted longer than to North America. An estimated 3.6 to 5 million slaves landed in Brazil between 1525 and 1851; the number of ships plying between the West African "Slave Coast" and Bahia averaged eighteen each year in the eighteenth century and increased to twenty-two in the first half of the nineteenth century. The slave trade was finally abolished in 1850 and slavery in 1888, thanks largely to, in both instances internal protests by the slaves themselves as several scholars have argued. On the Brazilian slave trade, slavery and abolition as a whole, see Schwartz (1985; 1992), Conrad (1986), Klein (1978), and Eltis and Walvin (1981).

⁵ One famous case noted by Bay (2001: 56) is that of a prince "who had been sold to Brazil during the reign of Tegbesu and who was one of four men to contest the royal stool at the time of the death of King Kpengla in 1789. That prince was Fruku, or Don Jeronimo as he became known in Brazil. Don Jeronimo spent some 24 years in Brazil prior to being redeemed by Kpengla. Back in Dahomey at the time of Kpengla's death, he assembled a coalition that struggled for power against similar alliances led respectively by Agonglo, who ultimately won the stool, and by two of Agonglo's brothers." Law and Mann (1999: 319) comment: "That an individual could be traced and identified in America is remarkable testimony to the effectiveness of transatlantic communication and cooperation."

⁶ For a more detailed discussion on the development of the Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic world, see Falola and Childs (2005)

⁷ Between 1837 and 1841 some Maroons returned to Jamaica but the majority remained and intermarried with the Nova Scotians and the recaptives and became part of the Krio community. Similarly, while some of the Barbadians asked to be returned home after the abolition of slavery most stayed, Blyden (2000: Chapter 2).

⁸ The first include Santería or Lukumí in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico, Vodum in Haiti, Shango in Trinidad and Grenade and Condomblé in Brazil; the second Cumina and Convince in Jamaica, the Big Drum Dance of Carriarou, Grenada, and Kele in St. Lucia; the fourth, Umbanda in Brazil, Maria Lionza in Venezuela, and Espiritismo in Puerto Rico; and the fifth, Rastafarianism.

⁹ The afro-Caribbean religions include Santería/Lukumí, Regla de Palo (also called Palo Monte or Mayombe—derived from the Central African regions of Gabon, Congo and Angola), Regla de Arara (also called GaCa—derived from the Dogon of Mali), Nanigo (also called Abakuba), Vodou (also called Vodum – practiced in Haiti and the United States), Kunina (practiced in Jamaica), Winti (practiced in Suriname), Shango (practiced in Trinidad and Grenada), Kele (practiced in St Lucia), Drum Dance (practiced in the Grenadines), Maria Lionza (practiced in

Venezuela), Confa Obeah (practiced in Guyana), and Rastfarianism. The Afro-Brazilian religions include Candomblé, Umbanda, Macumba, Shango, Tambor de Mina (also called Nago), Xango in Recife, and Butuque.

¹⁰ Bongmba (2005: 2056-2059) provides a succinct outline of the core features of the ADRs in terms of their religious symbioses, conceptions of divinity and spiritual power, role of ancestors, forms of leadership, types of divination and spirit possession, the nature of rituals and sacrifices, and the relationships between religion and healing, religion and gender, and religion and the arts.

¹¹ Making the same point, Patrick Bellegarde-Smith (2005: 61-62), “At one level, all religions are syncretic, though this is seldom argued in reference to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. One finds it disturbingly easy to do so with African-derived religions and languages, rendering the thoughts of nations somewhat unoriginal. I prefer terms such as ‘creolization,’ which infers a struggle between uneven forces, or Roger Bastide’s term, ‘the interpenetration of civilizations,’ to syncretism.”

¹² For detailed studies of Candomblé, see Bastide (1978), Voeks (1997), Harding (2000), and Johnson (2002). As noted earlier, there are of course other Afro-Brazilian religions including Umbanda, which developed in the 1920s in response to industrialization and was fraternized by those seeking upward social mobility, and has been characterized by its intellectuals and many scholars as a “de-Africanized” Afro-Brazilian religion, a characterization whose ideological underpinnings Denise Ferreira da Silva (2005) vigorously critiques. She contends that “Umbanda’s cosmology and rituals express neither a ‘de-Africanized’ Afro-Brazilian religion produced by an ‘inferior’ African mentality (unable to absorb European values) nor a form of consciousness, which retains the patriarchal values of slavery. Instead, Umbanda’s official cosmology and practice embodies a version of the historical process that supports the authorized construction of Brazilian nationality” (da Silva 2005: 48).

¹³ This is how T.T. Desch-Obi (2005:76) puts it: “Enslaved African martial artists and their descendants in the Americas held onto [a] spiritual understanding for combat. Group combat preparation rituals were an important part of many slave revolts such as the Haitian Revolution. This revolution was heavily influenced by Kongo-Angolan martial technologies and began with spiritual preparation, referred to as wanga charms, and ritual specialists accompanied the troops.” He argues that the spiritual dimensions of Kongo-Angolan martial art tradition of engolo, for example, can be seen in Afro-Brazilian capoeira, Afro-Martinican ladya, the black American ring shout and the religious practice of ‘getting happy,’ which “was similar in form to African possession dancing, but the possession was attributed to the Holy Spirit. It was manifest by jumps, kicks, and any number of bodily contortions” (Desch-Obi 2005: 80).

¹⁴ As John Bartowski (1998: 559) states, Vodou is typically portrayed as “(1) a religion based on black magic and witchcraft; (2) a mélange of superstitious beliefs used for deceptive purposes, and (3) a cult religion which sanctions human torture and sacrifice.”

¹⁵ For detailed studies of the changes Vodou has undergone in Haiti in the past century see Métrax (1978), Desmangles (1992), Galembo (1998), McAlister (2002).

¹⁶ As might be expected in the contentious terrain of New World histories, the Afrocentric paradigm has been trumpeted in the history of Islam in the Americas with the claim that long before Columbus and the slave trade Muslim explorers from West Africa visited the Americas and were the first to bring Islam to the region and that traces of Islamic material culture and Arabic have been found among several native communities. See, for example “Islam in Latin America: Muslims Were in America Before Columbus,” at <http://www.latinmuslims.com/history/before.html> retrieved on 3/29/2004; “Muslim in America and the Caribbean – years before Columbus” at <http://www.shuf.ac.uk/~ics/whatis/articles/carib.htm> retrieved on 3/29/2004; the chronology provided by Numan (1992) tracing the history of Muslims in American history from 1178 to 1992. Also see the books by Leo Wiener (1922), Ivan van Sertima (1976, 1995) and Quick (1996). A typical dismissal of this thesis is provided by Sulayman S. Nyang (1999: 57) who writes, “one can conclude that the evidence provided is not of substantial strength or depth to prove that Muslim institutions were established or that natives of contemporary Mexico have residues of Islam and Muslims in their cultures.”

¹⁷ Diouf gives ample examples for each of these practices in chapters 3 and 4.

¹⁸ On the role and growth of Islam among Afro-Brazilians in nineteenth century Rio de Janeiro see Alberto Silva (2001). Turning to North America, according to Shelton (2002) Denmark Vesey, the man who “planned the most sweeping and organized slave insurrection ever in the United States of Africa” in South Carolina in 1822 was most likely “a follower of the Islamic faith.”

¹⁹ Austin offers the most authoritative account of Africans in antebellum America. His 1984 text runs to more than 750 pages and contains original documents by, and commentaries on, numerous African Muslims. The 1997 text offers a condensation and focuses on the lives of seven remarkable men: Job ben Solomon, whom he calls the father of African American literature; Ibrahima abd al Rahman, who was the most famous African in America in the 1820s

through his unusual and well-publicized manumission; Bilali Mohammed and Salih Bilali on Georgia's Sapelo and St. Simon Islands whose descendants were interviewed in the 1930s under the Savannah Unit of the Georgia Writers Project of the Works Project Administration; Lamine Kebe, an educator; Umar ibn Said, who wrote his autobiography in Arabic; North Carolina, and Mohommah Gardo Baquaqua whose transatlantic sojourns took him to Brazil, Haiti, the U.S., England, and back to West Africa.

²⁰ With reference to Christianity, some Afro-Brazilians adopted a 'Christian' identity, even if they had not been Christian in Brazil, as a means of affirming oneself "as a free, colonial individual, practically a French or British citizen, in former times 'civilized' or 'advanced', and today a member of the elite," and "were used as middlemen in 'converting' other elements of the population. Thus they made Catholicism more acceptable to the populations in the region through their syncretistic, personal practices, which actually favored deeds more than faith" (Yai 2001: 77).