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THE SLAVERY DEBATE CONTINUES

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Surveying Through the Narratives of African Identity

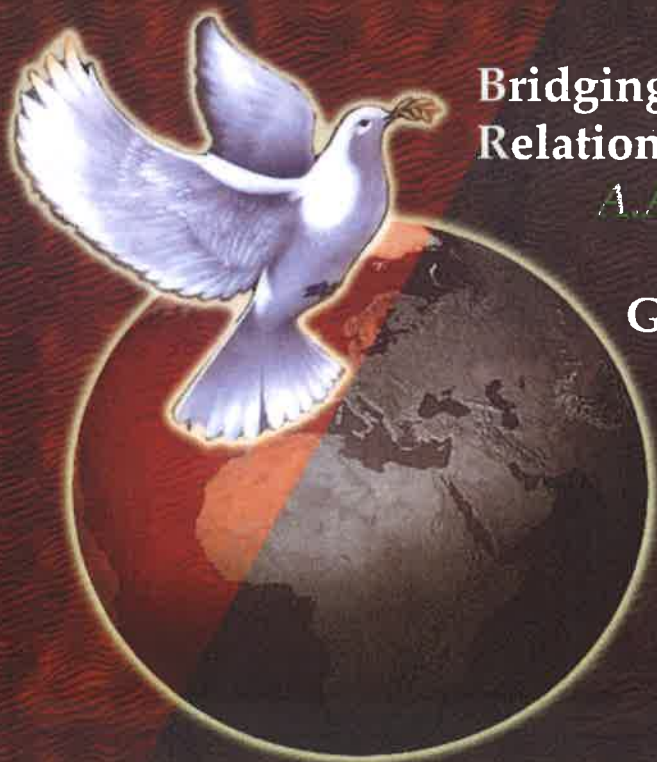
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A.A. Karim & A. Y. Muhammed

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The slavery debate continues

Contents

Editorial

Jidefor Adibe (Editor/Publisher)

.....7

Slavery, Identity, and Ethnicity: An Examination of the Social Contour of the Yoruba in Africa and in the Diaspora

Omar A. Eno & Mohamed A. Eno

.....11

Child Trafficking In Sub-Saharan Africa: Continuation of Slavery By Other Means

Ezeibe Christian Chukwuebuka

.....29

Michelle Obama and the Black Female Diaspora: The Most Influential Black Woman in History?¹

Amadu Jacky Kaba

.....41

Who Is An African? Surveying Through The Narratives Of African Identity

Mohamed A. Eno & Omar A. Eno

.....61.

Bridging the Divide in Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria: A Study of Inter-Religious Dialogue

A.A. Karim & . A. Y. Muhammed

.....79

Gender Equity and Food Security: Lessons From Ozalla Community, Edo State, Nigeria

Tunde Charles Iruonagbe

.....89

**Slavery, Identity, and Ethnicity: An Examination of the Social Contour
of the Yoruba in Africa and in the Diaspora**

Omar A. Eno & Mohamed A. Eno

Introduction

This essay examines the social construction of the Yoruba people in Nigeria, with a special focus on their ethnic identity and cultural distinction as well as whether they maintained this culture in the Diaspora. The study will also attempt to demonstrate how ethnic diversity played a significant role in determining the nature of slaves exported overseas. In order to affirm the aforementioned ethos, we will attempt to trace any surviving vestige of Yoruba culture and heritage in the Diaspora, including language, religion, and any other identifiable trail of Yoruba tradition exported with them as slaves.

However, we keep in mind that the definition of ethnicity and the criteria used for identifying an ethnic group is a subject of contention among scholars of different disciplines. Citing Franc Bessac, Biouun Adediran contends that if "...a collection of people share a common, self applied appellation, have a sense and share a belief in a common heritage then for all intents and purposes they should be regarded as an ethnic group."² Making a commentary on ethnicity from a different perspective, Robin Law asserts that ethnic identification was essential:

...for operation of the Atlantic slave trade, on both the African and the European side... For Africans ...ethnic identities served to define a category of 'others' who were legitimately enslavable. Europeans, for

² Bioudun Adediran., "Yoruba Ethnic Groups or a Yoruba Ethnic Group? A Review of the Problem of Ethnic Identification," in *The African Diaspora-(Course Reading Kit)*. (Ed) Paul Lovejoy. 1999-2000. Pp42-49.

their part, regularly distinguished different ethnicities among the slaves they purchased, and American markets developed preferences for slaves of particular ethnic origins.³

Accordingly, such preferences had some impact on the selection of slaves for overseas markets.

From this perspective, both Law's and Adediran's definitions are relevant, with respect to the Yoruba in Africa and in the Diaspora, on whom this study focuses. Indeed, the essay supports the notion that, like in other societies where slavery had an impact, the Yoruba people in West Africa played a significant role in selling their fellow compatriots as slaves to European merchants for export to the Americas, to such destinations as Brazil, the Caribbean, Cuba, and elsewhere in the world, partly due to the ethnic diversity and ethnic-based conquests.

The Social Structure of the Yoruba and the Origin of their ethnic-identity in Africa and in the Diaspora

From the River Volta to the Eastern end of Lagos, including the Yoruba country, which became known to Europeans as "the Slave Coast", is one of the largest concentrations of segmentary states in present Southwestern Nigeria. Eastern Yoruba alone consists of several polities, particularly in the area to the East of Ile-Ife. Historically, the Ijesa and Igbomina have always inhabited the area that is currently Oyo State. The Ekiti, Akoko, Owo, Ondo, Ikale, and Ilaje inhabited Ondo State, and the Igbomina, Iyagba, Owe, Ijumu, Abunu, Oworo, and Gbede lived in what is now Kwara State.⁴ In the nineteenth century, the Yoruba war, mainly instigated by ethnic diversity, generated a large number of slave-booties for export, such that even after the declaration of abolition of the slave trade by Britain, there still seemed to have been a substantial stock of

³ Robin Law., "Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: "Lucumi and Nago" as Ethnonyms in West Africa," in *The African Diaspora-(Course Reading Kit)*. (Ed) Paul Lovejoy. 1999-2000. Pp50-58.

⁴ Funso Afolayan., "Towards a History of Eastern Yurubaland", in *Yuruba Historiography.*, (Ed) Toyin Falola. University of Wisconsin-Madison.1991. pp75-87.

slaves available for purchase by Europeans⁵. Subsequently, as noted by Pierre Verger, the majority of these slaves were Yoruba who later ended up in Cuba and Brazil (Bahia). It was, thus, inevitable that these slaves would carry with them some of their native cultures such as religion, religious-cults, languages, and patterns of their social kinship to the host societies.

As noted by Colin Palmer, "the old claim that African slaves arrived in the Americas culturally *tabula rasa* reflected scholarly ignorance of African society as well as... [the cultures] that the slaves created in the Americas." Palmer further asserted that:

"western scholars who wrote about Africa and Africans...were... intellectual[ly]...permeated by a virulent racism as well as an acute ethnocentrism. Not surprisingly, most early scholars showed little appreciation for or understanding of African cosmologies, cultural institutions, and arrangements".⁶

Unlike Palmer, in their book, *The Birth of African-American Culture*, Sidney Mintz and Richard Price express a different view about Africans in the Diaspora. These co-authors argue that "no group, no matter how well-equipped or how free to choose, can transfer its way of life and the accompanying beliefs and values intact from one locale to another". According to them, "the conditions of transfer, as well as the characteristics of the host setting, both human and material, will inevitably limit the variety and strength of effective transfer".⁷

Despite their argument, there is ample evidence that, indeed, African slaves took with them to the Americas not only their unpleasant experiences during the middle passage, but also, significantly, most of their important cultural heritage from their ethnic aesthetics. We also invoke the fact that the pre-colonial history of Yoruba-land and, particularly, of the most powerful Yoruba Kingdom of Oyo, is still

⁵ Babatunde Agiri., "Slavery in Yuruba Society in the 19th Century", in *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa*, (Ed) Paul Lovejoy. London. 1981. p125, Pp. 123-148.

⁶ Colin A. Palmer., "Form Africa to the Americas: Ethnicity in the Early Black Communities", in *Yuruba Historiography.*, (Ed) Toyin Falola. University of Wisconsin-Madison.1991. p71.

⁷ Sidney Mintz and Richard Price., *The Birth of African-American Culture.*, Beacon Press. 1976. P.1.

dominated by the influence of Reverend Samuel Johnson, a literate Yoruba clergyman from Sierra Leone, whose volume, *History of the Yorubas*, was published in 1921. Most of Johnson's information about the Yoruba traditions was obtained through the *Arokin*, informers. For its earlier history, therefore, apart from a limited contribution of archaeology⁸, Oyo's history is entirely dependent upon the evidence of oral traditions.⁹

Although now regarded as a single "tribe" or ethnic-group, the Yoruba in pre-colonial times did not form a political unit, but consisted of many separate polities and communities in what is now South Western Nigeria. The characteristic features of cultural identity among the Yoruba lay, partly, in the closely related languages, shared myths of origins, basic religious beliefs and rituals, and social organization.¹⁰ Within the Yoruba society, therefore, kinship was very important, and patrilineal in nature. Kinsmen were bound together by a common paternal descent from an ancestor tracing back several generations.¹¹ Kinship is also regarded as a connecting factor within the society as an economic unit.

According to Thornton, "By the 1630s, for example, Yoruba [language] had emerged as a lingua franca along the coast, from the Volta to Benin, though other lingua francas functioned both east and west of this [area]".¹² Thornton further contends that "Yoruba traditions and even deities were worshipped on the coast, even in the absence of Yoruba political domination".¹³ Because Benin and Yoruba traditions had merged, many Yoruba people served in the Benin court, while art styles were freely exchanged in the entire zone. These exchanges basically establish the likelihood that they might have been carried to the Diaspora too. Thornton's statement above might, in this case, be a testimony to the interchangeability, intermingling and interconnectedness of African

⁸ For more information on the archeological aspect of the Yurubas, see B. Agbaje Williams., "Archeology and Yuruba Studies," in Yuruba Historiography., (Ed) Toyin Falola. University of Wisconsin-Madison.1991. pp75-87.

⁹ Robin Law., The Oyo Empire., Oxford. 1977. p20 & 21.

¹⁰ Jean Herskovits Kopytoff., A Preface to Modern Nigeria: The "Sierra Leonians" in Yoruba, 1830-1890., University of Wisconsin Press. 1965. p8.

¹¹ Ibid. p9.

¹² John Thornton., Africa and the Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800., Cambridge University Press. 1998. p190.

¹³ Ibid.

cultures and traditions of various ethnic groups existing in geographical vicinities.

Therefore, Mintz's and Price's assertion that African slaves in the Americas did not transport their cultural and religious practices in large part because the Africans "...were drawn from diverse cultures and societies and spoke different and often mutually unintelligible languages"¹⁴ is not easily defensible. For, we can be deduced from Thornton's above analysis that even within the region there was a continuous cultural interchange through borrowing and adaptation among the diverse cultural groups, a clear indication that socio-cultural harmonization among African communities was in effect present. Such interchange and communal interaction did not necessarily imply the absence of cultural identity of a sector within the groups but, instead, an appreciation of the necessary interplay between the aesthetic enterprises. In addition, as Thornton shows, a group of Yoruba sub-groups in Brazil did, indeed, transport their African culture with them. Appositely elaborating, Thornton writes:

"Not only could they communicate with each other in the same language and share the same religious and aesthetic concepts, thus continuing their African culture in America, but they could even develop a national culture in the next generation."¹⁵

Another perspective of ethnic communality draws our attention to the fact that, in its original use as an identity, the nomenclature "Yoruba" was an alternate name for only one of the polities, namely Oyo, in the north. Its extension to the entire linguistic group was an innovation of the nineteenth century whose origination is attributed to the Europeans, rather than the Yoruba indigenes themselves.¹⁶ It has been argued that until the second half of the 19th century, when the Christian missionaries began to encode the Yoruba language into inscription, there existed no

¹⁴ Sidney Mintz and Richard Price., The Birth of African-American Culture., Beacon Press. 1976. p8.

¹⁵ John Thornton., Africa and the Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800., Cambridge University Press. 1998. p201.

¹⁶ Robin Law., The Slave Coast of West Africa 1550-1750., Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1991. p23.

collective name for all the sub-groups, and that the term Yoruba itself originally applied only to the Oyo sub-group.¹⁷

Relevant historical data suggest that the first evidence of a collective name comes from Reverend Koelle's work.¹⁸ At times, Koelle used the term 'Nagun' in place of Aku for the Yoruba in Sierra Leone, while another appellation for such a name is 'Anago', which is linguistically older than Nago. Earlier, the Yoruba speaking peoples had no intention to apply any collective name to themselves although they did have a looser sense of common identity, expressed in traditions of a common origin in the town of Ife (or Ile-Ife). Ife is believed in the mythology to be the site of the creation of the world, where the earth, having been covered with water, was transformed into dry land when the founding ancestor Odudwa descended from heaven. The founders of the other principal Yoruba polities were believed to be sons or grandsons of Odudwa who dispersed from Ife. The historical basis of this story is probably dated between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries,¹⁹ though possibly the mythical belief itself is older. Subsequently, although the *oni* (King) of Ife continued to claim seniority of status among the Yoruba Kings, he exercised no effective authority over them.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, some of the Yoruba Kingdoms were brought under the control of the Kingdom of Benin, to the southeast, which, although not a Yoruba-speaking community, also traced the origins of its royal dynasty to Ife.²⁰ Initially, Oyo was simply one of a number of small Kingdoms based on the walled cities of Yoruba settlement in the boundary land between forest and savanna, in what is now the South-West of Nigeria and Southeast of Dahomey.²¹ In the last half of the 17th century though, Oyo emerged as the predominant state in

¹⁷ Biudun Adediran., "Yoruba Ethnic Groups or a Yoruba Ethnic Group? A Review of the Problem of Ethnic Identification," in *The African Diaspora-(Course Reading Kit)*. (Ed) Paul Lovejoy. 1999-2000. Pp42-49.

¹⁸ Robin Law., *The Oyo Empire.*, Oxford. 1977. p12 & 13.

-For more information see, Biudun Adediran., "Yoruba Ethnic Groups or a Yoruba Ethnic Group? A Review of the Problem of Ethnic Identification," in *The African Diaspora-(Course Reading Kit)*. (Ed) Paul Lovejoy. 1999-2000. Pp42-49.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p26 & 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p5.

²¹ J. D. Fage, *A History of West Africa: An Introductory Survey.*, Printed by, Gregg Revivals. 1992. p100.

the interior of the Bight of Benin, becoming firmly involved with the expansion of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade with Europeans.²² Although Benin's forces overrun much of South Eastern Yoruba-land and maintained at least nominal control there, until the early nineteenth century, the ultimate overall-ruler to all the polities in that region was the Oyo Empire.

According to Robin Law, Dahomey had conquered both the coastal ports in the Kingdoms of Allada (1724) and Whydah (1727). These conquests took place under the auspices of Agaja's order, King of Dahomey, who aimed at getting total control of the slave trade and slave-roots of the region.²³ Prior to the 17th century, Oyo was already the most powerful entity of the Yoruba polities, whose military power was based on cavalry,²⁴ mounted on horses imported from their northern neighbors, the Nupe and Bariba in the 16th century.²⁵ Robin Law, citing Ellis, indicates how "...before the general adoption of European firearms...a Yoruba army normally consisted of three divisions: the cavalry (*elesin*), the archers (*olofa*), and the 'foot-soldiers' (*elese*)..."²⁶ Such an advanced military organization of the Yoruba army at the time demonstrates their preparedness to face any ferocious enemy militarily.

The Oyo Empire, geographically located in the interior, and its traders, needed to use the coastal ports for their commercial transactions, including the slave trade. In addition to that, the Yoruba-land (Oyo) traders needed to open up direct commercial relations and contact with European merchants, whose goods were sold along the coasts such as

²² Ibid. pp127-132.

--Also see, Babatunde Agiri., "Slavery in Yoruba Society in the 19th Century", in The Ideology of Slavery in Africa, (Ed) Paul Lovejoy. London. 1981. p123, Pp. 123-148., see for example, Morton Williams., "The Oyo Yoruba and the Atlantic Trade, 1670-1830." Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria 3: 25-45.

²³ Robin Law., The Oyo Empire., Oxford. 1977. pp158 & 159.

²⁴ For more detailed information about cavalry and Horses, see Robin Law., The Horse in the West African History, Oxford University Press, 1980.

²⁵ Hugh Thomas., The Slave Trade., London. 1997. p352.

-For more information, see Robin Law., The Oyo Empire., Oxford. 1977. Pp183-200.

²⁶ Robin Law., The Oyo Empire., Oxford. 1977. p183.

Badagri, Allada, Whydah, and Porto Novo.²⁷ As a result of these potential economic interests, the Oyo Kingdom could not afford to allow King-Agaja of Dahomey to disrupt and dictate the safety of their convoy-traders by controlling the trade-ports, Whydah and Allada, and the trade-roots.²⁸ To protect these commercial interests, Oyo conquered all its surrounding kingdoms, including Dahomey, which became tributary to it in the 1730s. Oyo attained the height of its power under Alafin (King) who constituted the power of Oyo after its collapse before Ilorin, Abiodun (1774-1789).²⁹

From the 16th century, the region was enormously drawn into the transatlantic slave trade. For example, Ijebu (Kingdom), in Southern Yoruba-land sold slaves to the Europeans from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, but initially in small numbers. In the 17th century, Oyo became a major supplier of slaves for the Atlantic trade. At first, it sold its slaves through non-Yoruba polities, such as Dahomey, to the southwest, but in the late eighteenth century, it began selling slaves through Lagos, which henceforth emerged as a major port for the slave trade.³⁰

Apart from those slaves sold abroad, there were contingents of Yoruba groups enslaved during the internal wars, encouraged by the desire and sheer lust of the local chiefs to make profit. According to Agiri, the incidence of slavery actually expanded because of the warfare. Additionally, the slave enterprise was locally used as a means of enhancing the production and transportation of palm oil, which replaced slaves as the staple export,³¹ and as an economic potential to generate revenue.

It is noteworthy that some of the slaves were liberated by the British navy and settled in Sierra Leone after 1808, where many adopted Christianity as their faith and acquired an English education. In the course of time, sections of these liberated slaves returned to Yoruba-land. According to Robin Law,

²⁷ J. D. Fage, A History of West Africa: An Introductory Survey., Printed by, Gregg Revivals. 1992. Pp.99-102.

²⁸ Ibid. pp158 & 159.

²⁹ Ibid. p239.

³⁰ Robin Law., "Trade and Politics Behind the Slave Coast: the Lagoon Traffic and the Rise of Lagos, 1500-1800," IAH 24 (1983): 321-48.

³¹ Babatunde Agiri., "Slavery in Yoruba Society in the 19th Century", in The Ideology of Slavery in Africa, (Ed) Paul Lovejoy. London. 1981. p125.

“In the British colony of Freetown in Sierra Leone, where the slaves liberated from illegal slave ships intercepted by the British navy were resettled, the census of 1848 shows that as many as 53% of these “recaptives” were Yoruba”.³²

In the nineteenth century, Yoruba-land suffered a prolonged period of deadly warfare, inflicting widespread devastation. However, the question of how much Yoruba-land's internal disorder and the increased incidence of warfare was affected by its participation in the Atlantic Slave Trade remains a subject of disagreement among scholars. But the fact remains that, besides the slave trade, the Oyo Kingdom was also involved economically in long distance trade, and in agriculture which produced foodstuff. Although animal husbandry was less important, technology was active in that iron tools and weapons were manufactured locally while indigo for dyeing and cotton were grown locally.³³ An analysis of the available data makes it evident that the Yoruba Kingdoms of the interior were quite capable of continuously supplying the coastlands with regular replenishment of commodities which interested the European merchants, who, in turn, saw them as an assured market for their own European merchandise.³⁴ Above all, the Yoruba people depended mostly on agriculture and the slave trade for their economy, which generally created violence and disorder.³⁵ This led to the breakdown of their Empire. The history of Yoruba-land after the 1830s serves only to confirm the conclusiveness of the disintegration of the Oyo Empire. From 1823 to 1836, the Oyo Empire struggled to conquer Ilorin and failed.³⁶

Several factors led to the collapse of the Oyo Empire. These include rivalry and power struggle with Ilorin; a severe commercial depression in the 1820s; and the failure of the Oyo armies as there were no more war captives flowing into the system for sale to Europeans.³⁷ Moreover, pressure from Dahomey which had disturbed the trade routes and

³² Robin Law., “The Atlantic Slave Trade in Yoruba Historiography,” in *Yoruba Historiography*, (Ed) Toyin Falola. University of Wisconsin-Madison.1991. p124.

³³ Robin Law., *The Oyo Empire*, Oxford. 1977. Pp202-236.

³⁴ J. D. Fage, *A History of West Africa: An Introductory Survey*, Printed by, Gregg Revivals. 1992. p96.

³⁵ Ibid. p130.

³⁶ Robin Law., *The Oyo Empire*, Oxford. 1977. Pp278-299.

³⁷ Ibid.

dissension between the *Alafin* and his chiefs are attributed as factors contributing to the failure. In addition, their cavalry declined due to lack of good horses. Ilorin had joined as an emirate into the Sokoto Caliphate, compounded by a rebellion³⁸ of Muslim elements (including Oyo Muslim converts, northern slaves, as well as locally settled Fulani pastoralists), in 1817.³⁹

As far as theological beliefs and proselytization is concerned, Islam was not the only religion embraced in Yoruba-land. There were crusades of Church Missionaries trying to spread Christianity and convert the local people. For example, one of those spreading Christianity in Yoruba-land was the renowned Reverend Samuel Adjai Crowther, a Yoruba clergyman, who had been liberated from a slave-ship and educated in both Sierra Leone and England.⁴⁰ In fact, by the 1840s hundreds of Yoruba, who had been liberated from slave-ships and resettled in Sierra Leone, actually returned to their original home country at Abeokuta,⁴¹ where they actively engaged in Missionary activities.⁴² An analysis of these events and their outcomes elucidate the fact that not only did enslaved Africans in the Diaspora transported their culture to the Americas, but that they also exported it to the Diaspora within Africa itself, most importantly to Sierra Leone, where a large resettlement of slaves occurred.⁴³

The disastrous warfare in the Yoruba-land was complicated by the intervention of Britain, which sought to suppress the slave trade. Britain deposed the King of Lagos, who refused to sign a treaty against the slave

³⁸ Ibid. pp255-260.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ J. D. Fage, A History of West Africa: An Introductory Survey., Printed by, Gregg Revivals. 1992. p129.

⁴¹ For more elaborate information about the Yoruba from Sierra Leone who returned to their country of origin, Nigeria; see, Jean Herskovits Kopytoff., A Preface to Modern Nigeria: The "Sierra Leonians" in Yoruba, 1830-1890., University of Wisconsin Press. 1965.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ See for example, Christopher Fyfe., A History of Sierra Leone. Oxford University press. 1962.

-Also, for more elaborate information, see, Jean Herskovits Kopytoff., A Preface to Modern Nigeria: The "Sierra Leonians" in Yoruba, 1830-1890., University of Wisconsin Press. 1965.

trade in 1851, and formally annexed Lagos in 1861. The British regarded the endemic warfare in Yoruba-land as injurious to commerce, and tried to mediate among the warring parties. A peace between Ibadan and its enemies was negotiated in 1886, though it proved only partially effective. The Yoruba polities suffered by losing their independence, despite that those included within Nigeria survived as units of local government under British colonial rule.

The Yoruba exported as slaves to the Americas, to such destinations as Cuba, Brazil, the Caribbean and other parts of the world, carried with them and maintained in the Diaspora at least a considerable portion, if not most, of their African culture and tradition, notwithstanding the argument by Mintz and Price surfacing:

“...there was no single culture that enslaved Africans transported intact to the Americas. ...Africans from many societies [did rather] began to forge out of common understandings and shared crises a new culture with distinct institutions, religious beliefs, and kinship roles even during the nightmare of the middle passage”.⁴⁴

Unlike Mintz and Price, Sylviane Diouf contends that, even though Muslims in the Diaspora experienced difficulties in maintaining their religion and lifestyle in a hostile Christian environment, they nevertheless went as Muslims and they lived as Muslims, thus maintaining firmly their faith, which facilitated the creation of an ethnic-identity.⁴⁵ Diouf further asserts that systematic research throughout the Americas shows that, indeed, the Muslims were not completely absorbed into the cultural-religious Christian world. She stresses that the Muslims chose to remain Muslims, despite their enslavement and their being outnumbered by Christians, Polytheists, and animists. According to Diouf, the Muslims preserved a unique lifestyle, which was based on religion, cultural self-confidence, and discipline.⁴⁶ For instance, regardless of their subordinate

⁴⁴ Sylviane Diouf., Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the America., New York University Press. 1998. Lawrence Levine’s comment on the back-cover of the book.

⁴⁵ Sylviane Diouf., Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the America., New York University Press. 1998. p1.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p2.

status as right-less slaves, Muslims in the Americas managed to uphold the five fundamental pillars of Islam in their New World,⁴⁷ another strong evidence that enslaved Africans transported with them significant cultural components.

According to Diouf, most of the slaves exported to Brazil, Cuba, and some to America were Yoruba or Nago. The Yoruba acquired their slaves by raids in the north and west and by purchase from the Nupe and Bariba. However, a large proportion of their domestic slaves were Hausa. And, as the Europeans demanded more, they sold increasingly to markets overseas.⁴⁸

Another aspect of enslaved Africans who maintained their heritage in the Diaspora was studied by Michael Gomez, who suggests that, in American markets, slave buyers had developed preference for slaves of particular ethnic groups. In this respect, both Africans and Europeans commonly employed the facial, if not most bodily, scarifications ("tribal marks") that were characteristic of the different communities, as a means of distinguishing between African ethnicities.⁴⁹

When African agricultural products were exported to Brazil they were bought generally by people of slave-origin. Such goods included African soap, Kola nuts, shea butter, palm oil, cowries, and fabrics. However, the Yoruba (Nago) Muslims, in Brazil, and, particularly, in Bahia, were the only ones who bought the Islamic chaplets, the ink made in Africa, and the *aliwa*, wooden tablets to write on, used in the Brazilian Koranic schools.⁵⁰ Also, there is ample evidence that some of the imported slaves to the Americas were literate in Arabic, as indicated by Diouf. For example, in the library of South Carolina University, Peter Wood, a historian, discovered an old document relating to the return of a woman slave, signed in Arabic.⁵¹ Islamic religious practices in the Caribbean have either been ignored or linked to Voodoo cults or Obeah, which undermined the genuineness of people like the leaders Macandal

⁴⁷ Ibid. pp49-70.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p33.

⁴⁹ Michael Gomez., Exchanging Our Country Marks., The University of North Carolina Press. 1998. Pp39-42.

⁵⁰ Sylviane Diouf., Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the America., New York University Press. 1998. p115.

⁵¹ Ibid.

and Boukman, in Haitian history, whose beliefs were not limited to merely being Muslim, but were also *marabouts*.⁵²

Enslaved Africans in the Diaspora did not only transport their non-violent culture, but also carried along their revolutionarily mutinous attitudes. According to Diouf, in the 1830s, a group of Muslims comprised mostly of Hausa and Nago in Bahia (Brazil) attempted several revolts against their slave masters. The same phenomenon of African revolts in the Diaspora was noted in other parts of the Americas, such as Haiti, America and so on.⁵³ Although these rebellious Muslims may not have intended to carry out a real Jihad, and, since the conditions for a Jihad were not met in Brazil, they were simply and mistakenly dubbed as Jihadists, as pointed out by Diouf.⁵⁴

Referring to African culture that was transported to the old plantations of Low country, America in 1800, Philip Morgan, in his book, *Slave Counterpoint*, shows a portrait in which both male and female African slaves were dancing and playing musical instruments. From this picture, the ethnic origin of these slaves is identifiable as Yoruba, judging from the dancing postures of the male dancers and from the type of instrument played.⁵⁵ A vivid cultural preservation among the enslaved population of African descent in America, especially the Yoruba, about whom this study is concerned, is evident in this portrait.

Consistent with its Northern origin, the term "Youruba" does not occur in contemporary European sources, until Europeans began to penetrate into the interior of West Africa, and to adopt Northern usage, in the 20th Century. There are what seem to be versions of the name "Youruba" ("Yruba, Uraba, Euroba, etc.). There is also the word "Lucumi", which is best known as a term used in Cuba for slaves of Yoruba origin. In fact, the dominant form of Afro-Cuban religion, generally called *santeria* or *la regla de ocha*, is associated with the Lacumi, and is clearly derived from Youruba religion.⁵⁶

⁵² Ibid. p153.

⁵³ Ibid. pp154-155.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p159.

⁵⁵ Philip Morgan., Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry. University of North Carolina Press. 1998. Pp. 585 & 586.

⁵⁶ Christine Ayorinde., "Regla de Ocha-Ife and the Construction of Cuban Identity," in Identity in the Shadow of Slavery. (Ed) Paul Lovejoy Forthcoming.

It has, therefore, been noted that the use of the term "Lucumi" is a recent (19th century) development. Apart from Cuba and Brazil, the word "Lucumi" slaves are documented in Spanish colonies in America and elsewhere, including Peru, Colombia, and Mexico, from the beginning of the 17th century.⁵⁷ In the Diaspora, the term "Lucumi" was used as a genetic label to include all (or at least many) Yoruba-speaking groups. In Cuba, "Lucumi" is first mentioned in the study of slave ethnicities by Fernando Ortiz (1916) who named the sub-groups of the "Lucumis" as: the Egbado ("Egguado"), the Oyo ("Eyo"), and the Ijesa ("Iechas").⁵⁸ The actual term "Lucumi" is commonly believed to have derived from a Yoruba greeting *oluku mi*, "my friend".⁵⁹ The term "Lucumi" was, thus, current in West Africa during the 17th century and early 18th century, but virtually disappeared after the 1720s.⁶⁰

However, according to Ayorinde, the Lucumi genetic label was used in Cuba to refer to both Yoruba and non-Yoruba groups. Ayorinde says further that the amount of literature on Yoruba-derived religions and cultural forms in the Diaspora is more extensive than for any other African ethnic group.⁶¹ In the Diaspora, specifically in Cuba, previously the Regla de Ocha was known to be the religion of the Lucumi slaves from Yoruba-land. In the nineteenth century, however, this religion became open to all Africans of other ethnic origin as well as Cuban-born blacks and whites.⁶² In fact, the term "Lucumi" served all Yoruba speaking groups and some neighbors such as Ewe-Fon and Nupe, which was subdivided into: Lucumi eyo (Oyo) and Lucumi ife/fee (ife).⁶³ According to Ayorinde, it was Lorenzo Sama and Latuan, the latter, a

⁵⁷ Robin Law., "Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: "Lucumi and Nago" as Ethnonyms in West Africa," in *The African Diaspora-(Course Reading Kit)*. (Ed) Paul Lovejoy. 1999-2000. p51.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Robin Law., *The Slave Coast of West Africa 1550-1750.*, Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1991. p23.

-Also see Peter Morton-Williams., "The Oyo and the Atlantic Trade, 1670-1830," *JHSN* 3.1 (1964), 25-45.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Christine Ayorinde., "Regla de Ocha-Ife and the Construction of Cuban Identity," in *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery*. (Ed) Paul Lovejoy Forthcoming.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

Yoruba woman who arrived in Cuba in 1887, that unified the different Yoruba Orisha cults in Cuba into a single ritual body namely Regla de Ocha.⁶⁴ Several scholars have argued that the cultures of Cuba and Brazil clearly manifest the influence of "Africanism", retraceable to some specific African cultures.

Conclusion

Following from the above account, it is our contention that had there been equal effort directed towards other cultural forms and practices of the Yoruba Diaspora, instead of mainly concentrating on the religious-cult aspect of their tradition; a lot more than we know today would have been discovered about their cultural heritage. We also support the opinion that ethnic ties in Brazil, Cuba, Haiti, and other Caribbean islands seem to have continued their endurance due to the fact that most of the population was African-born until emancipation was accomplished. However, these ethnic affiliation and identities began to disintegrate when 'imported' Africans were outnumbered by Creoles.

The Yoruba ethnicity in Africa and in the Diaspora, therefore, came in different forms, some based on dwelling and on the same territorial unit, while others are related to commonality of language, religious beliefs, facial marking, common ancestral origin, and so on. Despite their various dialectal differences as well as social and political dichotomy, the Yoruba can be identified as people having a single cultural group from the perspective of a common intelligible language and a common history, whether it was negative or positive. It can also be concluded that, because of the cultural diversity of the people living in the region at the time of slave trade, the inter-group conflicts and the conquests, coupled with the greed of the chiefs with intention to make huge profits, fueled the slave trade, since the conquered were sold off for profits.

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⁶⁴ Ibid.

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