# A

ABOLITIONISM

Abolitionism is the principle of outlawing the slave trade and the institution of slavery. In the eighteenth century, the intellectual current of the abolition of the institution of slavery found expression in the works of great philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Adam Smith, who argued that all human beings are created equal and that any form of restriction placed on human freedom is a violation of some inalienable rights. There are strong indications that the missionaries and humanitarians that took up the challenges of campaigning against slave trade and slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were influenced by the thought and philosophy of these thinkers.

Slavery existed in virtually all human societies during ancient, medieval, and modern periods. This entry addresses the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in the nineteenth century and the institution of slavery in Africa during the twentieth century, from the Afro-centric perspective, with a focus on the effect of the abolition on Africa's economic, politics, and relations with the outside world. The transatlantic slave trade, which lasted for about four centuries, was carried out between Africa, Europe, and the Americas. The abolition of the transatlantic slave trade introduced new dynamics to the relations between Africa, Europe, and the Americas, demonstrating how external conditions affected African political, economic, and social history, and vice versa.

The year 1807 remains significant in world history. The abolition of the transatlantic slave trade opened a floodgate of new forms or patterns of relations between Africa and Europe. The first major question concerns the factors that necessitated the abolition of a centuries-old trade contributing greatly to changing the course of history of Africa, Europe, and the Americas. What did abolition mean to Africa (where the slaves came from) and to the Americas? From the opening years of the nineteenth century, a new world order was in operation, designed chiefly by Great Britain, focused on forcing and persuading her former American, European, and African accomplices to follow suit. While the use of force took the form of attacks on slave ships in African coastal waters, persuasion took a diplomatic dimension as treaties.

Why Was the Slave Trade Abolished? One of the most hotly debated themes in world history is the condition that led to the abolition of slave trade. The polarized nature of this theme can be seen in the ways economic considerations are capable of influencing other forms of actions, and vice versa.
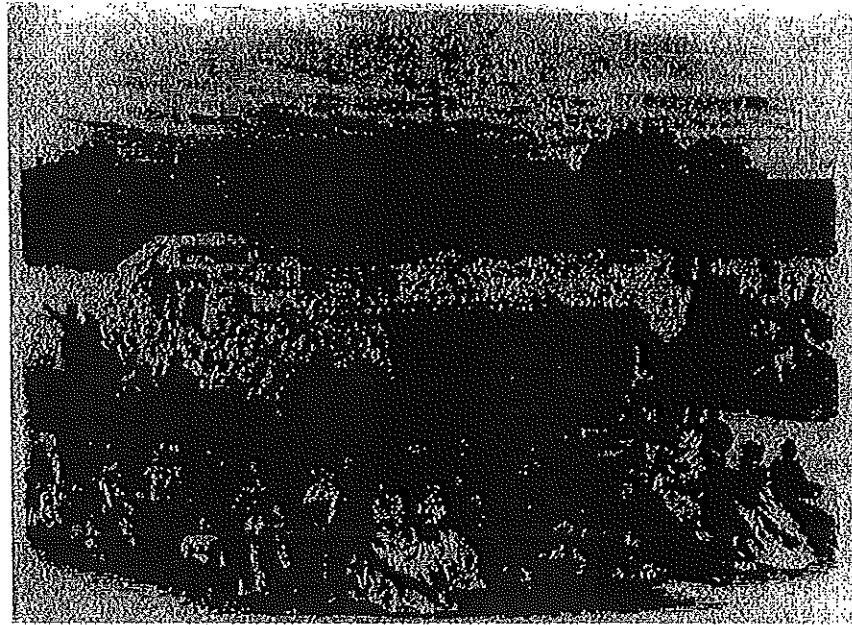
Abolitionism. Sketch of African Americans celebrating the abolition of slavery in Washington, D.C. 19 April 1866 by F. Dielman. Illus. in: *Harper's Weekly*, v. 10, no. 489 (1866 May 12), p. 300. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The first major argument is the humanitarian factor. Puritan organizations in Great Britain and the United States campaigned vigorously for the abolition of the institution of slavery in the two countries. A decisive development affecting interracial relations took place in 1772, when it became illegal for slaves to be removed from England against their will. The 1807 abolition of the transatlantic slave trade therefore had its origin in the progress made in the late eighteenth century and the relentless efforts of humanitarians continuing to pressure the British government. Philanthropists and humanitarians greatly influenced abolition when they initiated the idea of relocating suffering Africans who wished to return to their homeland in Africa. In 1787, about four hundred Africans settled on a piece of land acquired from the Koya Temna natives of Sierra Leone. The Americans followed suit. In 1822, the American Colonization Society founded Liberia, where they relocated freed slaves of African origin. These two colonies later developed as the bastion of Western education and culture in West Africa. Between the early nineteenth century and the 1880s, when the various European powers scrambled for African territories, missionary activities in Africa were focused on bringing light to the "Dark Continent," an ideology that played a significant role in influencing the partition of Africa among Europeans.

This historical development cannot be contested, in the sense that it actually happened. Puritan groups protested the slave trade and worked vigorously to make the British government outlaw it. But another position, which some intellectuals believe was responsible for the decision of the parliament and greater than the humanitarian gesture, was the effect of the Industrial Revolution on the mode of production. Marxist scholars have drawn a connection between the Industrial Revolution (change of mode of production from human to machine) and the transatlantic slave trade: Great Britain discovered that she needed machines more than human beings, who were required to work on labor intensive plantations in her American colonies. The loss of those colonies after the American Revolution in

1776 placed the British slave-trading enterprises at a level of minimal economic significance. British industries needed commodities such as palm oil and timber, which Africans could be made to produce in Africa, and no longer needed the sugar or tobacco of the Americas. An offshoot of this argument is that the Industrial Revolution took off from those resources that Britain derived from slave trade. After helping build industries, the transatlantic slave trade became anachronistic and had to be abolished, since the new pattern of production had outgrown the conditions that required it to come into existence in the first place.

The British abolished slave trade at the time that the African suppliers of human beings had accrued and were still accruing many resources from the trade and were therefore not interested in quitting. In several parts of the continent, on the eve of the abolition, the transatlantic slave trade bought immense wealth and honor to traditional rulers, private merchants, and "ordinary" people. The list of great slave-trading societies in Africa is long and includes the Kingdom of Asante (Ghana), Dahomey Kingdom (Republic of Benin), Benin Kingdom, and the city states of the Niger Delta (Nigeria). The centrality of the resources derived from slave trade to the fortune of African states partly explains why traditional authorities went against the British agenda.

The major European powers of Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Portugal had been involved in the trade that generated wealth and resources. The African coastal waters from the west to the east and the south had fortresses owned and managed by these European nations. The rivalry between Great Britain and her European counterparts that refused to yield to the abolitionist demands demonstrates the condemnation that the latter had for a scheme that affected their fortune. The clandestine nature of the trade after abolition, coupled with maneuvering strategies that took the form of slave smuggling, indicates the significance of slave trade to the economy and posterity of several European countries. Historians may never know the exact number of slaves transported to the Americas

after 1807. However, between 1811 and 1870, an estimate of 1.9 to 2.4 million slaves found their way to the New World, despite the British blockade and naval patrol of the African coastal waters. The Portuguese, who started the transatlantic slave trade in 1517, were also the last to back out at the tail end of the nineteenth century.

Abolitionism during the Nineteenth Century. Missionaries, explorers, and European officers all worked directly or indirectly to facilitate the abolition of the slave trade, in ways that were mutually exclusive. The era between the 1807 and the 1880s is known as the period of "legitimate commerce," the trade in commodities such as palm oil, timber, and vegetables in lieu of slaves. This period in Afro-European relations laid the foundation for another extremely significant period in African history and contact with the wider world. The scramble for and eventual partition of the continent was the product of several economic, social, and political developments that took place during the abolitionist period, both in the Europe and Africa.

The slave trade was abolished during the period when revenue from it meant a great deal to both Africans and their international accomplices. Africa wanted to continue to supply slaves as long as there were European demands. The intensification of interstate rivalry in most parts of Africa during the nineteenth century produced slaves as war booty. It seems obvious that the British started the abolitionist campaign by trying to persuade her African accomplices; evidence suggests Britain tried to sign treaties aimed at putting a halt to the trade. Most African states naturally rejected the proposal. The use of force, including stationing the British Anti-Slave Trade Naval Squadron in African coastal waters, was inevitable. This Squadron freed slaves on their way to the Americas and resettled them in Sierra Leone and Liberia. "Gun boat diplomacy," the naval patrol of African waterways and the bombardment of states that refused to comply with the abolitionist order, provided leeway for British intervention in local politics of Africans.

Gun boat diplomacy also played one African state or group against another, for example, the

chieftaincy dispute between two Lagos princes, Kosoko and Akitoye. The British accused Kosoko of slave-dealing and assisted Akitoye, who was pro-British, in regaining his lost throne; Akitoye conceded that he would abolish slave trade. The bombardment of 1851 and the establishment of British political control over Lagos in 1861 made the coastal city the first part of present-day Nigeria to be placed under British rule. In Asante (part of present-day Ghana), the numerous battles between the kingdom and the British was precipitated by the need to force the king to stop slave trade. Clearly, the abolitionist agenda provided the excuse for British intervention in local politics of Africa.

The British Abolitionist campaign did not take place in isolation. The exploration of different parts of the continent and the second wave of missionary enterprise had religious and economic under-tones. Christian missionaries such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and Wesleyan Society wanted to civilize the "savage" Africans, who for several centuries had sold their kinsmen to the Americas. Explorers ventured inland and discovered the great splendor and resources of the continent, while European officers aimed to put a halt to the trade in human beings by signing anti-slave trade treaties with local chiefs and convincing them to embrace the so-called "legitimate" commerce.

The role of the missionaries in the abolition was rooted in some racially inclined presuppositions. They saw the need to help "civilize" the benighted Africans who lived in the "Dark Continent." Christian missionary sects believed that the sins of the African soul should be cleansed through conversion to Christianity. Indeed, Christianity and the civilizing mission went hand in hand. The African traditional pattern of life was described as "uncultured," "unciv-ilized," "primitive," and "savage." Their religion was described as one of "fetishes" and their observances were "barbaric." If Africa and its peoples were to become civilized beings and be removed from dark-ness, they would have to embrace Christianity, according to the missionaries.

The abolitionist impulse was not devoid of con-tradictions. The insecurity of transporting slaves to the Americas made it advantageous to increase the domestic slave population and intensified the risk of slave revolt and civil disorder. The British sup-ported domestic slavery while the missionaries did not, and were also instrumental in slave revolts. The most classic example erupted in Calabar (southern Nigeria) in 1876. There are, however, references to missionaries owning slaves in Abeokuta (part of southwestern Nigeria). Great Britain wanted slaves to revolt because slaves who deserted their masters were easily recruited into the British Imperial army and made up the largest group of African troops during the numerous wars of imperial conquest.

Slavery and Abolition in Colonial Africa. By the late nineteenth century, the transatlantic slave trade had disappeared. The scramble for and par-tition of Africa between the 1880s and the second decade of the twentieth century led to imposed colonial rule on the continent until the last quarter of the twentieth century. The new pattern of aboli-tionist agenda designed by colonial powers, notably France, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, and Great Britain, was directed toward abolishing domestic slavery and other forms of servitude. The institu-tion of slavery and pawnship are preeminent in most African cultures. Abolitionist laws were never uniform: place and circumstances determined the degree of colonialist approach. The "official" sanc-tions that slavery received in most Islamic societies caused the colonial powers to exercise considerable caution. In some parts of Africa, the best strategy for avoiding revolt or insurgency was to reduce the degree of confrontation, especially during the early period of colonial rule. The case in Sokoto Caliphate of modern northern Nigeria is a classic example. The Caliphate was the largest Islamic empire in Africa before 1903, when the imperial army of Frederick Lord Lugard conquered it. While the British colonial government of Nigeria frowned on the institution of slavery in the south, in the north the government gave it official sanction and allowed it to thrive until 1936. On the one hand, colonialists frowned on domestic slavery and other forms of servitude, such as pawnship; on the otherhand, Africans were sub-jected to the highest degree of degradation, being

forced to work in mines and help build railways. In German colonies of southeastern Africa, people who refused to work for the colonial government had their hands or legs amputated. Colonial capitalist structures were implemented to facilitate the brutal siphoning of the continent's resources. Africans were also forcefully conscripted to fight during the first and the second World Wars; they fought and were killed in wars in whose origins they had no hand. The conditions of African labor in colonial Africa appeared to be worse than in the precolonial period. Colonial governments abolished slavery and other forms of domestic servitude because they wanted to be able to use African labor for their own purposes.

This situation allows a challenge to the humanitarian motives for the abolition of slavery. Events after the 1807 abolition of slavery indicate that economic conditions were of prime importance in European policy toward slave trade and slavery and that whatever Africa benefitted from Europe was accidental and never targeted for the good of the African continent or its people.

[*See also* Slavery.]

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ABRAHAMS, ROGER

Roger Abrahams is an interdisciplinary social scientist working in folklore, literature and anthropology, but equally engaged with sociology, sociolinguistics, and history. His research interests range from the cultural forms and practices of the African diaspora, American colonial history, and Appalachian folksong to North American display events and the role of African American Vernacular English in American education. Abrahams is best known, however, as a scholar of the African diaspora. Foundational to Abrahams's success in such an expansive and comparative endeavor is his sustained reflexive intellectual development, his skill in vitalizing and building institutions and institutional bridges, and his dialectical thinking.

Abrahams was born on 12 June 1933 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In 1955 he graduated with a BA in English from Swarthmore College. Abrahams went on to earn an MA in Literature and Folklore from Columbia University in 1959; and in 1961 he received his PhD in Literature and Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania.

Typical of Abrahams's scholarship is the fifteen-year period beginning with his research in urban Philadelphia in the late 1950s through his first ethnographic venture in the West Indies in 1962 to the second edition of his dissertation, published under the title *Deep Down in the Jungle* (1970). During this time, Abrahams elucidated a range of verbal art genres across both communities and described their shared performance parameters. Just as important, however, Abrahams proved remarkable at learning from critics of his urban American work, applying insights gained from his more seasoned field research when revisiting his earlier analyses, and integrating novel theoretical constructs from a range of social science fields. His evaluations of his own intellectual growth found in the introductions to the *Man of Words* (1983) and *Deep Down in the Jungle* are powerful early acts of reflexive anthropology.

A second key feature of Abrahams's career is the range of interpersonal skills he summoned in reinvigorating and constructing a number of institutions

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Potential Future. Gilroy's Black Atlantic concept will be influential for years to come, as it provides a compact and useful name for a complex real-world configuration. Whether Gilroy's own contributions will last as long is less clear. On the one hand, Gilroy's book and his subsequent writings have been acclaimed for their dense, allusive prose style, readings of selected major figures, analyses of contemporary music, refusals of ethnocentrism, critique of Europe, genealogy of modernity, and more. On the other hand, some commentators have found Gilroy disappointing. Some have accused him of overfocus on philosophy and aesthetics while avoiding the suffering of blacks. Others have attacked him for focusing on a few male elites and some aspects of popular music to the exclusion of much else. Most importantly, from the perspective of African thought, Gilroy pays scant attention to Africa itself. Clearly he prefers discussing the United States, the United Kingdom, and the anglophone Caribbean, and although he has regretted his neglect of the Hispano- and Luso-Afro-Diaspora, his exclusion of Africa has caused him less concern. To be sure, few would attack Gilroy's omissions in order to promote a single, essentialized Africa as the true origin of the Black Atlantic. Yet the broader Black Atlantic has depended crucially on Africa as source of ideas and traditions, as focus of imagination, and, indispensably, on Africans themselves. Absent Africa, there is no Black Atlantic.

These reservations about Gilroy, however, do not diminish the broader concept. Indeed, much recent work, as widely separated as theater studies (Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*) and agronomy (*Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*) has reinforced that there exists a multiply centered, massively networked, quatro-continental and archipelagic cultural and intellectual formation: the Black Atlantic. It is neither African, American, Caribbean, nor European, but is, rather, all of these at once and more. The Black Atlantic, and the thoughts classifiable under its umbrella, have developed massively in the past half-millennium and will continue in the next. Few intellectual producers, products, or movements on Atlantic shores are fully understood without this concept.

[*See also* Africanisms in the New World; Black Diaspora; Colonialism; Creole, Créolité; Glissant, Edouard; Métissage; Négritude; Postcolonialism; Syncretism; *and* Translation.]

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BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

See Biko, Stephen.

BLACK DIASPORA

The term "diaspora" is associated with Jewish history, notably with the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in 72 C.E., an event that led to the forced departure of the Jewish people from their original homeland and their dispersal to other parts of the world, where they formed new, exile communities. Their separate existence in these locations, reinforced by the hostility of host populations, fostered a strong sense of collective identity which was sustained by strict adherence to their religion and cultural traditions. The uncertain situation of these Jewish communities thus kept alive among them a strong sense of connection to the original homeland and nurtured a vision of eventual return.

Although the circumstances in other cases are not always identical to the Jewish experience, the term "diaspora," in its stronger sense, has been extended to describe the condition of other populations with

a similar experience of deportation and collective hardship in a foreign land. In the weaker sense, it is applied to emigrant communities with a history of settlement among a larger population, communities whose racial and ethnic peculiarities mark them out as different from the majority. Africans have in the course of history experienced both forms of expatriation, first in the Islamic world and later, as a direct consequence of their interaction with the Western world, both in Europe and, in more dramatic terms, in the Americas.

The African encounter with the Islamic world provides the earliest context for the emergence of a black diaspora. Africans have always had a presence in the Mediterranean world and Western Asia, a presence that predates the rise of Islam in the seventh century C.E. But it was with the advent of this religion that Africans began in significant numbers to inhabit the regions where Islam was to become predominant. Indeed, Bilal, the first person to chant the Islamic call to prayer, was reportedly a black man. In this early phase, Africans migrated to the various parts of the Islamic world to work as soldiers, administrators, and scholars. However, these were exceptional individuals; for the vast majority of Africans, migration to the Middle East and Western Asia was involuntary, the result of the Arab slave trade that developed later and lasted well into the twentieth century.

The Indian Ocean slave trade undoubtedly gave the strongest impulse to the formation of the black diaspora in the Islamic world. The main sources of African slaves included Zanj (the coastlands of modern Kenya and Tanzania), the land of Barbara (Somalia coast), Abyssinia, Kanem-Borno, and Bilad al Sudan (areas between the Middle Niger and the Atlantic coast). Slaves from these parts of Africa arrived at their numerous destinations through the trans-Saharan trade routes and the Indian Ocean. On reaching their destinations in the Middle East, slaves were sold directly to private owners and in public markets. The rights and privileges of slaves were stipulated in the Islamic law (Sharia). The most important provision is the limitation placed on the master's power over the slave: it was expressly stated

that the master did not have the power of life and death over the slave.

The status of slaves who were taken as concubines was also a cardinal aspect of Islamic law, which made a clear distinction between slaves who were also concubines and free-born wives. Slaves who were concubines could only regain their freedom at the death of their masters, while their children enjoyed freedom upon birth. Nevertheless, the concubines belonged to a category of privileged female slaves because, by bearing children for their masters, they became important members of the household. This has facilitated the integration of blacks into Middle East Moslem societies.

The years between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries saw the entrenchment of Islam in the Sudanese states of Africa, and blacks in the Islamic world acquired important positions of leadership and authority. The Ottoman sultan in seventeenth-century Istanbul had black eunuchs who watched over a vast harem. As military and security guards, some of these blacks wielded a lot of power because they determined who saw the sultan and the degree of attention to be given to visitors. In India, where an Islamic foothold had been established since the eighth century, blacks served in the Indian Islamic sultanates of Bengal, Gujerat, and Decan. Sultan Bahadar of Gujaret (1526–37) had 5,000 blacks in his service. A well-known black intellectual was Malik Anbar, who arrived in India in 1575 and was instrumental in the establishment of the financial administration of Decan. His legacy extended to the cultural sphere, for it included an interest in architecture and his influence in attracting scholars and poets to the court.

The descendants of blacks are to be found today in significant numbers in many parts of the Islamic world, notably in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. There are few reports of revolts by African slaves in the Islamic world, but the fourteen-year uprising of African slaves in Iraq in the ninth century—known as the revolt of the Zanj—directed against the Abbasid dynasty has the gone down in history as one of the most courageous gestures for human freedom, with profound consequences for the economy of the

Islamic world, anticipating in its scope and effect, by more than ten centuries, the Haitian revolution under Toussaint L'Ouverture.

Although they form substantial communities, blacks in the Middle East and Southeast Asia have no collective memory of their African origins, except perhaps as reflected in their skin color, and do not cultivate the sense of an African connection. It is with regard to the historic and ambiguous interaction of Africa with the Western world that the term "diaspora" begins to assume a meaning for black people. It is important to note that Africans were to be found in Europe well before the fifteenth-century seafaring revolution that occurred on the Atlantic seaboard and the slave trade that was one of its major consequences. Muslim Spain knew a good number of Africans who had emigrated from Africa across the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean. Africans in the Islamic society of southern Spain worked as servants in aristocratic Muslim homes and as laborers on agricultural plantations. Some were professional soldiers who were engaged in the armies of the Islamic rulers of southern Spain, helping them to control trade along the Mediterranean coastline.

The first group of Africans taken to Europe by the Portuguese arrived in Lagos, Portugal, in 1443. They were baptized as Christians and employed as servants. By the sixteenth century, black slaves accounted for 10 percent of Lisbon's population. In Seville, their population was estimated at between 3,000 and 4,000, and many Africans worked in the mines of Guadalcanal in Spain. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France, the number of blacks did not exceed 1,000–2,000, but by the end of the eighteenth century, when Great Britain and France had overtaken the Spanish and Portuguese in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, more Africans found their way to important ports of these two countries, working as sailors and in other trades. The presence of Africans in Europe during these centuries is recorded by European artists who depicted Africans in their works. The collections of artists such as Albrecht Durer (1471–1528) and Gerard Dou (1613–1675) contain paintings that illustrate the activities of African servants and soldiers. These artistic works helped portray the emotions and feelings of Africans and the atmosphere of their experience in Europe.

The forced migration of Africans to the New World during the Atlantic slave trade introduced a dramatic new element into the pattern of interaction between Africans and Europeans. Again, it is useful to note that the presence of blacks in the western hemisphere antedates the Atlantic slave trade. The first Africans to set foot in the New World arrived in the Caribbean as explorers, soldiers, and merchants. They accompanied the Portuguese and Spanish in their numerous voyages, which led to the opening up of the American continent in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Some Africans accompanied Balboa to the Pacific in 1513. Here, they worked collectively with Europeans in building the first ships on the Pacific Coast. The labor of the first set of Africans in the New World was also felt in the Spanish wars of conquest. Some 300 Africans were said to have joined Hernando Cortez in his subjugation of the Aztec Empire in 1519. St Augustine, the Spanish settlement in North America, was built with the labor of Africans in 1565.

The Atlantic slave trade transformed the character of African expatriation to the Americas; it dramatically increased the volume of migration by Africans to the New World and altered their conditions of existence there, where the defining feature of the black experience was slavery. From the early sixteenth century to the late nineteenth century, when slavery was finally abolished, millions of blacks were transported from Africa to work as slaves on New World plantations. It is not only their removal from their ancestral homeland but also their unhappy lot in America that constituted these populations into the Black Diaspora. Their race also functioned as an additional factor which gave a new dimension to their collective experience and imparted to it a distinctive character.

The Atlantic slave trade represents one of the most tragic episodes of human history. It disrupted African societies and generated an atmosphere of insecurity which has lingered in the collective memory to this day. The inhuman conditions under which the slaves were transported during this

"Middle Passage" entailed immense suffering and took a heavy toll in African lives. Those Africans who survived the journey faced a life of perpetual servitude and humiliation; they were thrust into what the historian Robert Edgar Conrad has called "a world of sorrow." Not only were they condemned to unremitting labor on the plantations, but they were reduced to a degraded status barely removed from that of animals. The rise of racism, concomitant with the expansion of the slave trade, compounded the bleak situation of blacks in the New World by its demoralizing effect. Ironically, the intellectual position of racism, which was posited on the idea of the inferiority of the black race, was elaborated by prominent European philosophers, among whom were Hume and Kant, and was codified, as it were, in the hierarchy of human races set up by Gobineau—a hierarchy that placed the black race at the lowest rung of humanity.

African slaves were to put to work mainly on sugar and cotton plantations, which reaped for their masters and investors in Europe vast returns. In addition, they introduced to the New World the cultivation of rice. Their labor was to prove decisive in the accumulation of the initial capital by which the industrial civilization in Europe was financed. The growth of the slave economy thus formed part of the process by which Africa itself was absorbed into a capitalist world system, a process that culminated in the imposition of colonial regimes upon most parts of the continent during the nineteenth century, thus creating the perception, as Blyden observed, of a universal condition of black people as a servile race, under the heel of the white man. This perception was to be a major point of concern in black diaspora discourse.

The brutal treatment of Africans in the American diaspora provoked slave revolts all over the New World. Of the many revolts that took place in the United States, the best known is the abortive one led by Nat Turner in Southampton, Virginia, in August 1831. The relative success of the revolts in Jamaica and the Dutch colonies in Surinam led to the formation of colonies of free blacks, or "maroons," who wrested their autonomy from their enslavers and continued to enjoy their free status in their mountain redoubts. The most celebrated slave revolt in America was that led by Toussaint L'Ouverture in the French colony of Saint-Domingue. After L'Ouverture's capture and deportation to France, where he died in prison, his lieutenant Dessalines carried on the struggle until slavery was overthrown in the colony, which was declared an independent republic in 1804, under the name Haiti.

Apart from the economic impact of their labor, the presence of Africans in the Americas has had important cultural consequences. Slavery and servitude did not obliterate the ideals of African culture. Different ethnicities introduced to the Americas, especially Cuba and Brazil, religious beliefs and practices that were specific to their places of origin. The Ketu (in present-day Republic of Benin) were instrumental in the introduction of the cult of *Osisi* and *Omolu*, while the Oyo Yoruba introduced *Sango*, the deified king of the Old Oyo Empire. The Egba of Abeokuta brought *Yemoja*, goddess of river. Osun, introduced by the Ijesa, became the deity of fresh water in Brazil. People from Ife introduced Obatala, the deity associated with creation. The merging through syncretism of African deities with Catholic saints—hence the term *Santeria* for Cuban religions—enabled African cultural practices to survive during slavery and to thrive after its demise. Yemoja has been compared with the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, and Nanan Buruku, the oldest of the water deities, has been compared with St. Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary. Other deities were also renamed: *Ogun*, the Yoruba god of iron and warfare, merged with St. George, and *Sango* the god of thunder, with St. Jerome.

Perhaps the most significant transfer of African cultural forms to the New World was in the area of music. All over the Americas, Africans developed new musical forms and performance styles based on their African roots. Thus, *samba* evolved in Brazil and *rhumba* and *son* in Cuba, the latter with its characteristic beat known as *clave*. In North America, the spirituals emerged as the earliest form of self-reflection in lyrical terms on the part of black people; their religious themes were later extended in the

Gospel songs associated with the black church, which has always functioned as perhaps the most important African American social institution. The secular forms of black musical expression, beginning with the blues and jazz, have formed the basis of popular music worldwide.

African languages and the oral tradition associated with them also played an important part in the emergence of distinctive black cultures in the diaspora. Speech forms rooted in an African linguistic foundation developed everywhere, and some, like Papiamento and Haitian Creole, have evolved into fully fledged languages. The African imagination has also flourished in America. The trickster heroes central to whole cycles of animal tales in Africa were carried over to the New World: the Wolof *leuk* became "Brer Rabbit" in North America, while the Akan *anansi* became "Nancy" in the Caribbean. It is not only in the folk tales but also in the written literature that African orality continues to function as the determining principle of imaginative expression in the Americas, as exemplified by the very structure and idiom of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle*. And there is hardly any doubt that the originating impulse of Toni Morrison's "magic realism" derives from a narrative mode that reflects an African conception of reality.

The literary and intellectual movements in the black diaspora testify to the various modes of response to black people's experience of historical adversity in the New World, a situation that generated a sense of longing for Africa as a place of refuge. The slave narratives provide an expressive record of the physical and emotional stresses of life under slavery and thus served to advance the Abolitionist cause; they also compose an image of Africa that runs through the various movements for a return to the ancestral continent, to which Edward Wilmot Blyden and Martin Delaney in the nineteenth century and Marcus Garvey in the twentieth were so powerfully committed, and which also found adherents in Brazil under the label *Volta na Africa*. The work and activities of these diaspora black writers

demonstrate the connection between the sentiment of historical and existential predicament engendered by slavery and the Utopian perspectives that came to inform their emigrationist aspirations and activities.

Black diaspora literature came henceforth to represent an effort not only to represent the plight of black people to the world but also to construct, by reference to an African inheritance, an intellectual and imaginative foundation for black collective life and expression in America. A pan-African perspective came readily to them, arising from their sense of an African connection which came to inform their handling of themes that revolved around the vindication of the black race and gave meaning to their sustained reflection on issues of black existence. The writers and intellectuals thus addressed the race question and its implications for blacks both in the New World and in Africa, of which they held out a unified vision that emerged only later on the continent itself.

The contribution of diaspora black writers and intellectuals to African thought can be measured by the immense scope of the influence they exerted on Africans involved in such movements as pan-Africanism and *Négritude,* in which the preoccupation with political liberation went with a concern for the cultural revaluation of Africa and its place in the world. This latter concern is evident in the work of Frantz Fanon and Walter Rodney, for beyond the pertinence of their radicalism to the project of colonial liberation, their emphasis falls on their conception of African reconstruction as the condition for an African project of modernity. It is worth pointing out here the role that diaspora blacks have played as teachers and even missionaries in the modernization process in Africa.

The theme of African renewal thus came to be elaborated in the black diaspora as part of the struggle for emancipation among black people in the United States. This struggle has had a profound impact on Africans. For there is a real sense in which, in its intellectual formulation, African nationalism, indeed contemporary thought in Africa, owes its inspiration largely to black diaspora writers and

intellectuals. It is not without interest to observe that the formative influence of diaspora intellectuals on African thought has today assumed a new significance with the concept of "African Renaissance."

[*See also* Atlantic Ocean Slave Trade; Candomblé; *and* Négritude.]

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F. Abiola Irele and Saheed Aderinto

BLACK MOSLEMS AND THE NATION OF ISLAM

Wallace Fard Muhammad, an itinerant salesman and religious teacher, founded the Nation of Islam (NOI) in Detroit, Michigan, in 1930. Fard, who seems to have believed that he was God, "anointed" Elijah Poole, born in Sandersville, Georgia, in 1897, as his divine messenger, dubbing him Elijah Muhammad. Fard died in 1933, leaving his followers in Elijah Muhammad's care. Under Muhammad's stewardship, the NOI prospered, although the early efforts in the name of Islam were both denied and rejected by most mainstream Muslims. Yet the organization was able consistently to acquire new members, both during the 1930s—a period of sustained economic and social instability characterized by the Great Depression—and following the end of World War II in 1945. Although the group numbered only about eight thousand when Elijah Muhammad took over, it grew rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s, partly as a result of the fiery preaching of one of its ministers, Malcolm X (born Malcolm Little in 1925). Malcolm X was renowned for his advocacy of black separatism, black nationalism, and black pride. He was assassinated in Harlem, New York, in 1965. Many of Malcolm X's ideas can be found in his book *The End of White World Supremacy.*

The NOI has two main beliefs: first, that God came to the earth in the persona of Wallace Fard Muhammad, and, second, that followers should pray five times a day to the holy city of Mecca. The Nation's official beliefs are set out in various publications, as well as in speeches from the organization's leaders. Sometimes these involve inflammatory and racist statements, including the view that all Caucasians are "white devils." Elijah Muhammad's teachings may be found in two of his books, *Message to the Blackman in America* and *History of the Nation of Islam.* Shortly after Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975, the NOI underwent a thoroughgoing theological transformation. Under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad's son, Warith Deen Muhammad, the NOI moved swiftly toward the mainstream of Sunni Islam, becoming the largest body of Sunni Muslims in the United States. Warith Deen Muhammad renounced black separatism and the origins of Black Moslems and established the World Community of Al-Islam in the West, later called the American Muslim Mission. The NOI minister Louis X, who later became Louis Farrakhan, initially supported Warith Muhammad but soon reestablished the NOI, sometimes also known as the Black Moslems, in 1977. Seeking to separate the NOI from mainstream Sunni Islam, Farrakhan claimed that "Elijah Muhammad never intended for us to follow completely what

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BACK TO AFRICA AND VOLTA NA AFRICA

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, some influential people and Puritan groups in London and the United States initiated programs targeted toward relocating African slaves in England and the Americas back to Africa. This scheme became expedient because of several developments between the 1780s, when Puritan groups in England began a serious campaign against slavery, and 1807, when the British parliament outlawed the transatlantic slave trade. Britain began to globalize the humanitarian gesture by persuading and forcing their former African, American, and European accomplices to follow suit. A major development in the history of slavery was the 1772 abolishment in England. Before this period, black slaves in England worked as domestic servants and in the numerous ports. The population of Africans in England increased after 1776 when those who participated in the American Revolution were freed. But the emancipation of slaves did not result in economic, social, and political freedom. The liberated Africans in England had neither social nor economic power for upward mobility. Their status soon degenerated into that of social outcasts. They had limited access to social amenities and a good number of them had no place to live except on the streets of London.

It is against this backdrop that a group of British philanthropists and parliamentarians such as Granville Sharp, William Wilberforce (known as the father of abolishment of slave trade), and Henry Thornton, a wealthy Londoner, initiated the idea of relieving these poor Africans of their suffering by relocating those people interested to their homeland in Africa. In 1789, a group of about 350 Africans (out of an original 500) were settled on a piece of land acquired from the Koya Temna people of Sierra Leone. The second group of repatriates were liberated African slaves who had hitherto been settled at Nova Scotia by the British government after the 1776 American Revolution. In 1792, one thousand freed slaves joined their London colleagues, who had been adjusting to the realities and challenges in their new African home. The third wave of Sierra Leonian migrant settlers were 550 to 590 Maroons, who were former Jamaican slaves that had been captured and relocated to Nova Scotia by the British. This group arrived in Sierra Leone in 1800.

The British success fired the imagination of the people and government of the United States, where both freed and enslaved Africans were subject to high degrees of deprivation and brutality. Christian groups in the United States were convinced that the freed Africans could be genuinely free only if relocated to their birthplace or origin. The stratified nature of all slave societies is the greatest impediment to the complete social and economic emancipation of slaves. In 1816, some white men established the American Colonization Society for the purpose of relocating consenting blacks back to Africa. Accordingly, in 1822, the first group of blacks from the United States landed in Cape Mesurado (located in present-day Monrovia, the capital of Liberia).

The second and perhaps the most important episode in the history of the return to Africa was the development of a new class of people and a new culture in Liberia and, most important, Sierra Leone. That class development is closely connected to the activities of the British abolitionist campaign. Between 1807 and the 1870s, the British anti-slave trade naval squadron attacked slave vessels, freed the captives, and resettled them in Sierra Leone.

The population of the "Recaptives" in Sierra Leone increased as the British intensified their abolitionist agenda. By the 1860s, a new class of people called the Creoles emerged from the marriages between the African American Settlers and the Recaptives. The Creole culture is thus the miscegenation of the Western culture of the African American settlers and several aspects of the indigenous culture of the Recaptives. The Creole language known as Krio is a blend of trade pidgins derived from European languages, the indigenous languages of the Recaptives, and the languages of the Temne and Mende—the original owners of the land on which both the African Americans and the Recaptives were resettled. The emergence of Creole culture had far-reaching consequences for the pattern of interracial and ethnic relations in Sierra Leone, for it led to the disappearance of the pronounced cultural dichotomy between the Recaptives and the African Americans. The Creoles developed into a very powerful economic and social class. They acquired western education and were employed by the colonial government as clerks and officers. The list of important Creoles is long and includes James Africanus Horton, a renowned physician, and his missionary counterpart, Bishop James Johnson.

The diaspora of the Creoles and the Recaptives within West Africa is also significant. A good number of them began to develop an interest in returning to their African homelands for the purpose of propagating western education and culture. Abeokuta, a Yoruba town located in southwestern part of what is now Nigeria, became the first hinterland town to embrace missionaries and give opportunities to the Creoles and the Recaptives. The two classes of returnees contributed greatly to the development of Abeokuta, investing their resources and taking part in long-distance and coastal trade, at a time when Abeokuta's survival was threatened by both its Yoruba and non-Yoruba neighbors.

[*See also* Abolitionism *and* Slavery.]

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Saheed Aderinto

BAKER, HOUSTON

In 1982, Houston Baker wrote "[O]nce I had abandoned my graduate school plans to write definitive critiques of British Victorian literature and turned to black American literature, 'cultural nationalism' became the ideologically determined project in my intellectual life." Thus, Baker began a groundbreaking career that would take him through the cultural nationalism of the Black Arts movement, the post-structuralist and deconstructionist discourse of the 1980s, and black feminist criticism in the 1990s to studies of masculinity, rap, and the Academy. With works like *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*, Baker shaped black aesthetic discourse, becoming one of the most incisive theorists of African American literature and culture.

Born in 1943, Houston Baker was educated at Howard University (BA in 1965) and the University of California–Los Angeles, where he received his PhD in 1968. He has taught at Cornell, Yale, Duke, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Virginia, and has directed many departments and programs in African American Studies. He holds several honorary doctorates and numerous awards for excellence in scholarship, writing, and teaching.

Critical anthologies like *Black Literature in America* (1971) attest to Baker's role as a field-defining scholar, but his pioneering work in black literary theory is certainly his strongest contribution. Comprising several books, numerous articles, reviews, edited collections, and even poetry, Baker's work has given students and scholars of African American literature an arsenal of interrogatory tools with which

Makerere University (Uganda) and the University of Nairobi (Kenya) are among the most successful in revenue diversification activities within East Africa.

Borderless Universities. So-called super-systems—universities operating beyond their national boundaries—have been an added feature of the market university profile. The African Virtual University remains the largest virtual university linking many state institutions in different countries. South Africa's UNISA University is today the largest African state university with campuses in a number of African states including Kenya and Ethiopia. America's USIU and Damelin College and Australia's Edith Cowan University are among the international institutions with local franchises.

While the era of the entrepreneurial university has provided increased opportunities to pursue higher education and has generated additional revenues for state universities, critical situations remain. Issues of quality and equity, the emphasis on Mode 2 (applied knowledge) and the neglect of Mode 1 knowledge (basic knowledge) have featured prominently. Without serious research programs, many of the emergent institutions run the risk of becoming glorified high schools.

Assessment. Higher education in Africa, to sum up, has been a product of the prevailing sociopolitical and economic thought about the role of education in development. From the colonial to the current market university, the influence of global thinking about higher education has been a key variable in the development and redesign of the African university. Questions of relevance, quality, equity, and external efficiencies (the ability of graduates to be economically and socially productive) have been at the core of policy debates. As universities become more diverse and complex, indigenous African thinking about the nexus between higher education and national development in the context of the new market university will indeed be critical.

[*See also* Colonialism; Decolonization; Development; Education; *and* Epistemology and Theory of Knowledge.]

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Ishmael I. Munene

URBANIZATION

This entry contains two subentries: An Overview; and Pre-Colonial Urbanization.

An Overview

Urbanization is a concept or phenomenon that is difficult to define. This quandary is partly a product of the wide range of meanings people give to it. For instance, urbanization has been seen as a process of transformation of rural communities into urban centers. Social scientists therefore see it in terms of increase in population and human social and economic activities. To others, urbanization is measured predominantly in terms of availability of physical infrastructures such as modern buildings and architecture, and public amenities such as electricity, tarred roads, and pipe-borne public water.

What should be the optimum size of an urban center in terms of population and landmass? This is another major controversy, since scholars do not agree on the ideal size of a place that has been transformed into an urban center through the process of urbanization. For the purposes of this discussion, urbanization can be defined as a process involving increases in both population and human socio-cultural and economic activities. The main merit of this working definition is that it will provide an opportunity of examining three major phases of African urbanization: precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial.

Precolonial Urbanization. Precolonial urbanization is characterized by the populous development of existing states and empires in Africa before the advent of colonialism. Urban centers and great cities existed in Africa before European invasion and subjugation of the continent. Trade and empire building through wars and conquest played a significant role in Africa's precolonial urbanization. In North Africa, the Phoenician city of Carthage was at the peak of an economic and population boom up until 146 B.C.E., when the Romans razed it. In the Western Sudanese region, trans-Saharan trade was chiefly responsible for the development of urban centers such as Timbuktu and Sankore. These two major urban centers of the Songhai empire went into extinction as a result of the Moroccan invasion of the empire in 1591 C.E. The Hausa city-states such as Kano of present-day Nigeria also owe their development to the trans-Saharan trade, which connected the Songhai empire to North Africa. In the West African forest belt, great empires such as Oyo and Benin and the city-states of the Niger Delta, Bonny, and Okrika owed their rise and ascendancy to a combination of factors, including transatlantic trade and huge territorial expansion through wars and diplomacy. Along the East African coast Kilwa and Shanga were places where evidence of urbanization was found in precolonial Africa.

Precolonial cities were centers of cultural and social production. They were largely culturally heterogeneous, attracting people from all over the world. Representatives of nearly every race lived in the coastal city-states of East Africa. The same applied to North Africa, which came under enormous European and Asiatic influence because of its proximity to the Mediterranean—the main international gateway of the world in medieval times. Cultural borrowing and emergence of distinct urban culture were inevitable as people of different racial and cultural backgrounds interacted and intermarried. As centers of commerce, the precolonial urban centers facilitated trade relations among states while guaranteeing the possibilities of intermarriage and other avenues of empire building.

Colonial Urbanization. The imposition of colonial rule from the late nineteenth century intensified the migration of people from one part of Africa to another. The process of urbanization during the colonial period of African history is completely different from the precolonial one in several respects. Urban centers were chiefly developed to serve the economic need of the colonizer. The introduction of wage labor facilitated the movement of people from the rural areas into urban centers. Colonial urban centers, in order to be easily maintained, fed, and controlled, had to be located in the core of accessible trading areas, with access to natural resources, coast, roads, and grasslands. The largest chunk of colonial urban centers was located close to the coast.

Development of port facilities in areas close to the coast automatically facilitated the integration of African economies into the vortex of capitalism through the exportation of raw materials and the importation of European manufactured goods. In this category of urban centers are Abidjan (Ivory Coast), Lomé (Togo), Accra (Ghana), Cotonou (Republic of Benin), and Lagos (Nigeria). These port towns were also the capitals of the various nations-states. Not all the major urban centers in Africa were established close to the coast. Some, such as Kaduna (the capital of the northern region of Nigeria), were established far in the hinterland and developed to serve administrative needs. Others owed their growth to the influence of the railway system, mining settlements, and military camps.

Some urban centers also developed out of old precolonial cities. Khartoum and Omdurman (in present-day Sudan) and Kampala (Uganda) are good examples of urban centers of this class. Generally, colonial urban centers were characterized by the existence of tarred roads, electricity, schools, and a public water supply, which made them attractive for rural-to-urban migration.

Colonial urban centers were known for cultural heterogeneity because they facilitated the interaction of people from different historical and cultural roots. Like their Western counterparts, several places of socialization can be seen in the major cities of Africa. Beer parlors, cinema houses, and red-light districts attracted large pools of urban dwellers. Cultural heterogeneity produced new forms of social and economic behavior that were traditionally alien or uncommon before the urban centers came into existence. Western education, culture, and Christianity flourished in schools which up to the second decade of the twentieth century were largely in the hands of Christian missions.

New forms of criminal behavior such as currency counterfeiting and theft appeared to be an inevitable aspect of colonial urbanization because of urban unemployment and the breakdown of cultural and traditional values and ethos. Most figures of unemployment ranged from 8 to 15 percent. While Dakar (Senegal) recorded 10 percent unemployment in 1955, its Abidjan counterpart recorded 18 percent for the same year. Prostitution, a social aspect of urban lifestyle, gained a considerable degree of institutionalization partly because of the masculinized nature of urban centers, which limited the presence of women and their access to social and economic mobility and freedom.

Postcolonial Urbanization. The pattern of Africa's postindependent urbanization is characterized by a population explosion. Several rural areas have been transformed into great urban centers since the 1950s when African states began to gain independence from their former colonial masters. One of the major attributes of postindependent urbanization is acute urban poverty. Urban poverty, which had been noticed during the colonial period, became institutionalized as postindependence African nations battled with economic strangulation, austerity, and the total collapse of state or institutional welfare services. Urban unemployment had been noticed in African cities such as Lagos in the 1930s. Post-1960 development has been sporadic, since the governments of most independent African countries have been unable to ameliorate urban unemployment and poverty. The direct implications of unemployment are a high crime rate and societal instability.

But the main challenge of postcolonial urban centers is the development of slums. The major African urban centers from Lagos to Addis Ababa, from Cairo to Johannesburg, are contending with the crises of urban slum—a product of the breakdown of efficient government and poor urban planning. The inadequate and, in some cases, total lack of basic infrastructural facilities such as electricity, pipe-borne water, and accessible roads, coupled with population explosion, created crises of unending demise in urban centers. While places like Ikoyi in Lagos are well planned and provided with all the basic infrastructures, other parts of the city such as Ajegunle and Maroko are slums. Virtually all African cities have this dual character of "good" and "bad." Urban decadence not only hinders the medical fitness of the people but also increases the risk of epidemics as more people live in compact and unhealthy neighborhoods.

It is misleading to suggest that colonial and postcolonial urban centers have not offered any positive advances. Urban centers facilitate the entrenchment of new areas of socialization such as churches, mosques, clubs, and sporting centers. All of these places of human interaction help people to build alliances such as business partnerships and networks, inter- and intraethnic and racial collaborations, voluntary and hometown associations, to mention a few. All these forms of human interaction facilitate upward mobility and peaceful coexistence. Urbanites sometimes tap the advantages of multilingualism in urban centers by learning more languages.

[*See also* Lagos Plan of Action.]

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Pre-Colonial Urbanization

Large settlements were present in ancient Egypt by the fourth millennium B.C.E. at Hierakonpolis and elsewhere (Bard), but they subsequently developed in many other parts of Africa, although their form varied greatly (Fletcher). Some were densely occupied and long-lasting, others were centers of low density, some had populations that fluctuated seasonally or over a longer period, and sometimes the entire settlement shifted every few years. Ancient Egypt and Carthaginian, Greek, Roman, and Islamic North Africa were part of the urbanized Mediterranean world (Connah, *Forgotten Africa*), but in the rest of the continent urban centers should be defined in more general terms. They consisted of concentrations of people among whom a proportion had nonagricultural occupations, people who were mainly dependent on food from elsewhere and who formed communities who thought of themselves, and were thought of by others, as different from nearby rural settlements.

These urban settlements had differing roles: political, religious, cultural, manufacturing, commercial, and military, while some combined several of these. However, their ties with agricultural production often remained strong because it formed their main resource base, frequently combined with commercial

activities. This association has persuaded many scholars to seek an economic explanation for the development of African cities, but sociopolitical factors could have been equally important. Thus the Yoruba, of southwestern Nigeria, had an urban tradition extending over a thousand years, but the Igbo, of southeastern Nigeria, chose to remain village dwellers. Both groups had a high population density supported by rainforest and savanna agriculture, and both were technologically sophisticated with wide trading contacts, but their settlements differed mainly because they organized their governance in different ways (Connah, *African Civilizations*).

The earliest city in tropical Africa that has been well studied is Kerma, on the Nile, in the Sudan. This was a large urban center by about the middle of the second millennium B.C.E. Excavations have uncovered extensive traces of buildings, mainly of rectangular houses of mud brick or wood, in a settlement fortified with a ditch and a mud wall. The economy was based on mixed agriculture in the surrounding region, in which barley and cattle, sheep, and goats were important, but hunting and fishing were also practiced. Trade in raw materials sought by the Egyptians seems to have been significant.

Kerma appears to have been the political and spiritual capital of black Africa's first identifiable state. Within the city was a large circular building of wood and mud brick, at least 33 feet (10 meters) high, which was clearly a structure for the elite. There was also a monumental mud-brick temple that has survived, its base measuring 89 x 171 feet (27 x 52 meters) and its height probably exceeding 62 feet (19 meters). Outside the city was a cemetery of several thousand graves, among which were two smaller monumental mud-brick structures and a substantial number of burial mounds. Some of the latter were unusually large and contained a principal burial accompanied by many other individuals, who appeared to have been sacrificed. Collectively, the archaeological evidence from Kerma indicates a city with a centralized secular and religious authority. Subsequently, similar urban developments took place in the first millennium B.C.E. at Napata and Meroë, also on the Sudanese Nile, and in the first millennium C.E.

Nevertheless, Indigenism marked a turning point in Haitian literature, in its coming of age and independence from French literary movements. Haitian Indigenism is a forerunner of both Négritude and *créolité* (Creoleness).

[*See also* Black Power; Creole, Créolité; Price-Mars, Jean; *and* Négritude.]

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Marie-José Nzengou-Tayo

INITIATION

In traditional Africa, virtually all aspects of society involve initiation. Initiation rites are carried out for the purpose of admitting people into a new class, organization, or status. Initiation ceremonies are also carried out as people move from one stage of their lives to another. In this respect, age determines the type and nature of initiation ceremonies that are carried out. Some initiation ceremonies are also sex or gender specific. In this connection, female initiation ceremonies are sometimes different from the male. Africans believe that an individual exists in three different teleological realms: the world of the ancestors, that of the living, and that of the generation unborn. Age is very significant because it represents the movement from one stage of life to another. Initiation ceremonies are carried out as an individual moves from one of stage of existence to another.

At birth, a lot of rituals are carried out to initiate a newborn baby into the world of the living. New babies are not considered members of the family until all traditional rites are carried out. Initiation at birth involves consultation with the oracles and the gods, and performance of different types of

spiritual cleansing. The oracles have the power of revealing the destiny of the child, so part of initiation at birth is knowing the personality the child is going to take on the in future. The parent might also be given guidelines on how to bring the baby up and avoid troubles. Naming ceremonies in some cultures involve carrying the new baby to the family, clan, or village shrine to determine if the baby truly belongs to the member of the family.

Adolescent initiation involves the passage from childhood to adulthood. This rite of passage varies from culture to culture. It is between the age of twelve and sixteen among the Ngulu of East Africa. Adolescent initiation is also a classic example of age- and gender-specific type of initiation. The initiation rites of boys and girls are carried out separately. During this period, female children are taught the secret of marriage, domesticity, and how to be excellent mothers. Among the Bemba of Southern Africa, *Chisungu* is the name given to female puberty rites. That of men is called *Chisungun*. In most cultures, circumcision is carried out during puberty rites. Girls below the traditionally accepted age of puberty are not taught how to have sex or take care of men's emotional and physical needs. For boys, the success at initiation determines the admission into some association such as age, grades and, of course, the class of potential husbands. Marriage cannot take place without adolescent-oriented initiation, because virtually all aspects of traditional marriage practices are revealed during this period. Age governs the nature of information people are expected to acquire. Initiation rites are the only traditionally accepted methods of revealing the aspects of the life of the society that adults are expected to know.

The world of the living leads to the world of the dead or of the ancestors. The rituals carried out for the dead are meant to initiate the dead into the world of the ancestors. The transition from the world of the living to that of the ancestors is therefore not complete without rituals. The spirits of the dead that have not been initiated into the world of the ancestors are capable of affecting the well-being of the community. This is because the corpse belongs to neither the realm of the ancestors nor that of the living. His or her spirit will be at the crossroads—roaming about with no entity to commune with. A situation of this nature is capable of infuriating the dead, who could start tormenting the living by appearing harmfully in their dreams or even in the real world. Among the Yoruba of modern southwestern Nigeria, proper burial of the dead is considered a responsibility the living owe the dead. The type of burial rites is sometimes determined by the cult to which the dead ones belonged. For instance, adherents of Ogun cannot bury advocates of Obatala, and vice versa. Burying the dead in accordance with his or her faith plays a significant factor in the corpse's passage/transition into the ancestral world and the nature of the relationship he or she would establish with the living.

[*See also* Sacrifice.]

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Saheed Aderinto

ÌWÀ

Ìwà is a derivative of the verb *wà* (to exist/to be) prefixed by the nominalizer *ì-*. It denotes existence or being as borne out in the meaning of other lexical combinations, such as *ìwàláyé* (existence/being in the world), *ìwàláàyè* (existing in life/living), and

child abduction, ritual murder, cannibalism, and vampirism.

[*See also* Àṣẹ; Divination; Magic; Mangu; *and* Religion and the African Diaspora.]

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Phillips Stevens Jr.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Precolonial Africa was structured in a way that allowed the society to recognize the indispensability of women. Role differentiation was obtainable and most societies were structured so that the two sexes performed functions or roles in a complementary manner. Women accrued status equivalent to that of men, and their presence in social, economic, and political configuration of the society was recognized and treated as part of the physical and temporal existence of the society.

It is important to know how colonial rule reconfigured the status of African women. First, the imported socially constructed sexual dichotomy or divide that was not pronounced in precolonial Africa played a significant role in eroding the status of women during the colonial period. The first major blow to the status of women was the poor attitude of colonial administrators and missionaries to female education. While men were encouraged to go to school and were prepared for the public and political space, lip service was paid to women's education because they were expected to be prepared for domestic life. Men therefore took precedence in leadership positions. Economically, they were more buoyant because the colonial capitalist structure, such as the railway, mines, and civil service, were all designed to attract a large pool of competitively cheap male labor.

Urbanization and monetization of the economy also constituted a serious blow to the role and status of women. Colonial urban centers were structured to attract male migrants, while attempts were made to prevent women from leaving the rural areas to migrate to the towns, because their absence from home would reduce procreating, taxable adults, and the production of food. The colonial masters also practiced discriminatory policies in the areas of agricultural policies. For instance, among the Igbo of modern southeastern Nigeria, men and boys were trained to use new agricultural implements and were allowed to take over the production of palm oil and kernel from women, who had monopolized these activities in precolonial times.

Equally important was the treatment of women as sexual objects by the colonialists. Throughout the colonial period, women were seen and treated as purveyors of venereal diseases and "immorality." Derogatory names such as "surplus," "unattached," and "undesirables" were used to describe women who deviated from traditional norms by not marrying or

living "under the roof of a man." In colonial Asanti (part of modern Ghana), spinsters were frequently arrested and released only after producing their bridegrooms. In Tanganyika, Kampala-Kibuga (part of present-day Uganda), and Zimbabwe, compulsory medical screenings for venereal diseases were carried out on all unmarried females who migrated to urban centers.

Although colonialism eroded the place of women in the public spaces, women still played a considerable role in undermining colonial domination and facilitating the attainment of self-determination. For instance, the Women's War of 1929 broke out when women of the Owerri and Calabar provinces (southeastern Nigeria) reacted to news about the introduction of a women's tax. The proposed tax represented a peak of all the numerous social and economic injustices perpetrated by the British and their African collaborators. The women demanded the removal of a warrant chief whose activities were inimical to their well-being. The Women's War (known locally as *Ogu Umunwanyi*) spread from Oloko—where a representative of a warrant chief had wanted to conduct an enumeration of people and their property—to virtually all parts of the Owerri and Calabar provinces. It took several days for the colonial troops to disperse the crowd, which was estimated at about ten thousand women.

The Women's War as a form of anticolonial movement rested essentially on traditional African thought and custom associated with protest against injustice. In traditional Igbo and Ibibio cultures, "making a war" or "sitting on a man" is an institutionalized form of protest that women embark upon in order to demonstrate their disapproval of unjust behavior of their husbands or leaders of the community in general. A man is capable of losing honor and prestige in the community if his wife wages a war against him. The act of "sitting on a man" or "making a war" includes abusing, cursing, and threatening to destroy property. War could be waged without killing people or using firearms.

A commission was put in place to investigate the causes of the war, which had been described as "mob action." This reaction was contrary to the modus operandi of wars that the women had been used to: they had acted in accordance with popular decisions made during meetings, which usually lasted several hours and sometimes days. All the women dressed in the same way: they all wore short loincloths, all carrying sticks wreathed with palm fronds, and all had their faces smeared with charcoal or ashes. They also bound their heads with young ferns. They were holding pestles, the symbol of womanhood that is also believed to have the power of invoking the spirit of ancestresses. The smearing with charcoal and ashes is the traditional means of protection and purification against enemies. The women represented themselves as vulture-messengers of the gods, which, according to custom, should not be armed.

Like all other forms of uprising, the war left many people (mostly women) dead and many were injured, but the British learned the lesson—women should not be treated as underdogs. The Women's War episode is one of the most studied and popularized to demonstrate the reaction and response of women to patriarchical oppression.

In Kenya, women fought vigorously during the Mau Mau uprising by joining hands with men during the numerous stages of the rebellion. Some of these included following their male counterparts to the forest where strategies for the uprising were planned, and becoming initiated into cults designed to facilitate the success of the uprising. By 1972, when the protest against the hegemony of the white minority reached its peak in Zimbabwe, women were trained and indeed fought for the liberation of the Zimbabwean independent soul. Their roles during this period went beyond providing food and war supplies.

These examples should not be taken to mean that women registered their presence in colonial Africa through a show of violence alone. There is evidence of how women formed political parties either as a women's wing of a major sectional party or as completely independent ones. In northern Nigeria, where religious observances restrict female public appearances, a women's wing of the Northern Element Progressive Union and the

Northern People's Congress came into existence and protected the interest of women in the politicking of the period. The Egba Women's Union, led by Mrs. Ransome Kuti, was responsible for the agitation that led to the abdication of *Alake*, the paramount ruler of Abeokuta (southwestern Nigeria) in 1948. In Uganda, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) agitated for the return of the exiled *Kabaka* (king) of Buganda.

The need to reduce the incidence of social questions such as prostitution, which emerged partly as a result of the male-dominated nature of urban space and the restricted access that women had to the control and accumulation of wealth, was a major program of the Women's Party in Lagos. They were the first to ask for the introduction of women police officers for the purpose of policing female prostitution. They were unilaterally responsible for calling the attention of the colonial government of Nigeria to the problems of street hawking, which exposed young girls to the danger of kidnapping and masculine sexual aggression. When the Social Welfare Office was established in 1942, the Women's Party joined the government establishment in compiling a comprehensive report of the social problems of juveniles.

Postindependent Africa is characterized by the greater involvement of women in public spaces. The nature and dynamics of the women's movement in postindependence Africa took a more dynamic dimension with the coming into existence of the United Nations Protocol on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The significance of this protocol to independent African states is that signatories—as part of the provision of the protocol pledge—agreed to give more recognition not only to women's presence but also access to active participation in domains, which were conventionally regarded as male preserves. Postindependent Africa is also characterized by the proliferation of departments, commissions, or ministries that address women's affairs. The place of women in public spaces increased as more African countries returned to civilian rule. In 2005, Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia became the first African female head of state. Women are now being voted as state governors, ministers, and directors—of commissions. The creation of offices for wives of heads of state and governors indicates that women now have some executive power, which can be used to influence policy making at state and federal levels. It becomes easier for women's political parties and nongovernmental organizations to approach their constituents—who are wives of state governors, ministers, and senators—for help.

The rate of female enrollment in schools has increased, and the consolidation of a class of female professionals that did not exist in colonial Africa has now taken place. Female professional bodies such as the African Women Lawyers Association have served as representatives of members at national and continental levels. Organizations of this nature embarked on lobbying aimed at influencing legislature targeted toward women. Policies aimed at improving the quality of female professionalism are also the major purpose for the establishment of female professional associations. Professional groups such as the Association for Professional African Women in Communication (APAC) sought to use the power of the media to correct the misrepresentation of women in public and private spaces. Some associations such as the African Women's Development Fund provide financial help toward the activities of women's movements.

Women's nongovernmental organizations found a place in the campaign for the prevention and ameliorating of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Apparently, several economic and cultural factors cause women to suffer more from the devastating effects of disease. Some women's associations are also aimed at reducing the incidence of prostitution, human trafficking, and child labor. Although prostitution existed in Africa prior the attainment of independence, the postindependence economic austerity increased the rate at which women are trafficked for sexual exploitation both within and outside Africa. Women's organizations are also instrumental to the campaign against several cultural practices that are considered deleterious to the welfare of women. The most classic example in this

regard is female genital cutting or female circumcision. Organizations such as the Association for Reproductive and Family Health and many others work to sensitize the government about the medical implications of female genital cuttings.

[*See also* Gender.]

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Saheed Aderinto

WRIGHT, RICHARD

Richard Wright was one of the most significant twentieth-century African American writers. His novel *Native Son* (1940) and his memoir of his Mississippi youth, *Black Boy* (1945), brought into public consciousness the reality of African Americans' experience of white racism with a rhetorical force hitherto unimaginable. Despite the success that followed, Wright moved to Paris in 1947 where he lived, increasingly cut off from the United States, until his death in 1960. He continued to publish both fiction and nonfiction and contributed to public debate in France and beyond on racial segregation in the United States and on the emergence of anticolonial nationalism in Africa and Asia. None of his later work attracted the critical esteem (particularly in the United States) or the financial rewards his early work had enjoyed.

Life in United States, 1908–1946. Richard Wright was born near Natchez, Mississippi, in 1908. His father was a sharecropper, his mother a teacher. His grandparents had been slaves. His childhood,

adolescence, and early adulthood, recorded in *Black Boy*, were marked by poverty, violence, and family breakdown. His father abandoned the family, his mother fell gravely ill, and his relationship with his Seventh-Day Adventist grandmother was tense and difficult. His early schooling was erratic, but later he made rapid progress and graduated as valedictorian from Smith-Robertson Junior High School in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1925. He moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where he secured access to the public library, normally denied to African Americans, by using a borrowed card. Much influenced by H. L. Mencken, the radical Baltimore journalist, Wright read widely in European and American fiction, philosophy, and politics.

In 1927 Wright moved to Chicago. There he worked as an insurance agent and with the South Side Boys' Club, which gave him the understanding of the African American south side of the city he drew on in *Native Son*. He also worked in the post office, where he first encountered white people with radical political opinions. Increasingly involved in the political life of Chicago, he joined the Communist Party and held office in the local John Reed Club, a writers' group organized by the party. He published poetry and short stories. In 1937 he moved to New York, where he worked for the *Daily Worker* and for the Federal Writers' Project. He published a volume of short stories, *Uncle Tom's Children*, in 1938 and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1939, which enabled him to complete his first novel.

Native Son is the story of an angry, violent, African American youth, Bigger Thomas. Living in poverty in Depression-era Chicago, involved in the death of a wealthy young white woman, Bigger Thomas is hunted relentlessly, baited by prejudiced officials, charged with murder, and driven to acknowledge a strange pride in his crime. In the third section of the novel, which deals with the trial, Wright uses the voice of Bigger's defense lawyer to give a broadly Marxist account of his predicament. In 1940, as later, the impact of the novel mainly derived from the driving, realistic narrative of the events leading to murder, arrest, and trial, told essentially from Bigger's viewpoint. *Native Son* had a major success: it was adopted as a Book-of-the-Month Club choice,

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Paul W. Hanson

SLAVE NARRATIVES

The institutions of slavery and the slave trade constitute a significant aspect of the history of human existence. In examining this crucial aspect of world history, historians have used a variety of documentary sources, which include but are not limited to those produced by legislative houses in various parts of the world and the maritime industry. Although these sources have helped historians to unravel the history of the slave trade, when it comes to the history of slavery as seen by slaves and former slaves, the most credible source material remains the slave narratives. Although slave narratives can be found in all cultures where the institution of slavery thrived, this entry focuses on slave narratives of Africans and people of African descent in the Americas between the sixteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.
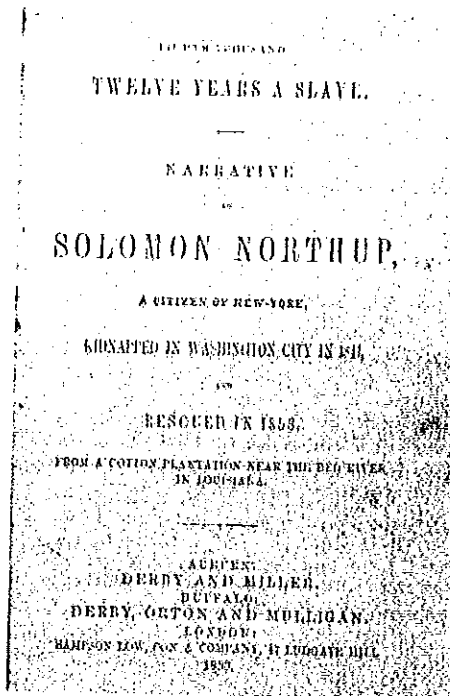
Slave narratives are autobiographical writings by or on behalf of slaves and former slaves. They contain valuable information about the severity of slavery and issues of emancipation. Slaves of African descent in the Americas continued the tradition of storytelling that they brought from Africa. Others came under the influence of Western education through missionary and humanitarian activities. This gave them the tools to document their own experiences through autobiographies. Some of these writings were best sellers of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Two types of slave narratives are discernible: oral and written. Oral slave narratives were handed from one generation to another. Some of the men and women taken to the Americas were priests and priestesses, tribal rulers, and custodians of traditional heritage in their various African communities. An important part of African traditional culture these people were expected to perform was storytelling. Generally, regardless of class, people could narrate their past at any given period. In the absence of a written language, presentation of history and its transmission from one generation to another in oral form was one of the only means of guaranteeing the recollection of the past on the American plantations. Oral narratives sometimes contain information about slaves' places of origin in Africa, how they were captured and sold, the Middle Passage experience, and life on the plantations. Oral narratives are capable of lasting for several generations, depending on a variety of factors, including the potency of memory and the ability of slaves' descendants to continue the tradition of transmitting the past. A major threat to oral slave narratives was family disintegration, which was very common during the period of the transatlantic slave trade. Still, the tradition of oral historical narrative continued up to the twentieth century.

Written slave narratives began to appear in the late eighteenth century. A good number of slave narratives of this period took autobiographical forms and were written by men and women who were lucky to have acquired Western education through humanitarian and Christian missionary activities. A typical documentary slave narrative contains information about Africa, the Middle Passage experience, and life as a slave in the Americas. The last sections

TWELVE YEARS A SLAVE.

NARRATIVE
OF
SOLOMON NORTHUP,

A CITIZEN OF NEW-YORK,

KIDNAPPED IN WASHINGTON CITY IN 1841,
AND
RESCUED IN 1853,

FROM A COTTON PLANTATION NEAR THE RED RIVER
IN LOUISIANA.

AUBURN:
DERBY AND MILLER.
BUFFALO:
DERBY, ORTON AND MULLIGAN.
LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, SON & COMPANY, 47 LUDGATE HILL.
1853.

Slave Narrative. The title page of Solomon Northrup's narrative *Twelve Years a Slave* published in 1853. In 1808 Northrup was born free in New York state; was kidnapped and sold into slavery in Louisiana in 1841; and returned to Saratoga Springs, New York after his freedom was restored mainly through the efforts of Samuel Bass (a Canadian). He concluded his book: "I have no comments to make upon the subject of Slavery. Those who read this book may form their own opinions of the 'peculiar institution.' ... This is no fiction, no exaggeration. If I have failed in anything, it has been in presenting to the reader too prominently the bright side of the picture. I doubt not hundreds have been as unfortunate as myself; that hundreds of free citizens have been kidnapped and sold into slavery, and are at this moment wearing out their lives on plantations in Texas and Louisiana." NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, MANUSCRIPTS, ARCHIVES, AND RARE BOOKS DIVISION, SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE; ASTOR, LENOX, AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

normally have information about the attainment of freedom and life outside slavery.

The autobiography of Gustavus Vassa, also known as Olaudah Equiano (c. 1745–1797), is perhaps the most widely known slave narrative of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was published in 1789 as *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. Going by the volume of scholarly work that has been written on this book, it is not inappropriate to talk of a "historiography" of Gustavus Vassa. Born probably in present-day southeastern Nigeria, Equiano was captured and sold into slavery as a child. In the summer of 1745, Equiano (renamed Vassa) was sold to an officer of the Royal Navy, worked for a while in North Carolina, and eventually saved enough to buy his freedom. Interesting aspects of his biography include his experience as a slave, as a voyager, and as an abolitionist.

Whereas Vassa was probably born in Africa and spent a good part of his life in Britain, Frederick Douglass (c. 1818–1895), another prominent former slave, was born and raised in Talbot County, Maryland. His father was a white slave owner, and his mother was a black slave. He worked under several slave owners until 1838, when he absconded and escaped to New York. There he joined antislavery organizations and soon became a celebrated antagonist of slavery, an activist, and a statesman. In 1845, he published his well-known book *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. This autobiography includes stories of the conditions of servitude, including physical and mental hardships. Douglass's autobiography also provides insight into slave owners' disposition toward education among slaves. Slave owners outlawed education for slaves, realizing that education was a powerful tool in the slaves' struggle to gain freedom. They also punished free people (including whites) who dared teach them how to read and write.

Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is a wonderful account on the experience of female slaves. Unlike Vassa, who was born in Africa and brought to the Americas, Jacobs was born in North Carolina to a mulatto slave around 1813 and died in 1897. She narrates her ordeal as the physical and sexual property of her master, an experience that many female slaves shared. She was denied access to freedom when she had the chance of marrying a free black man and was impregnated by her master against her will. Jacobs's autobiography stands out

from other slave narratives because it presents a rare feminine perspective on slavery. Further, Jacobs had an extraordinary experience that included access to education, a high-priced privilege among free black men, much less female slaves.

Other well-known slave autobiographical narratives of the nineteenth century include William Wells Brown's *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave*, Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave*, and Henry Bibbs's *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibbs, An American Slave*. It is important to note that these authors worked fervently for the abolition of slavery. Their writings were also aimed at providing an intellectual weapon for exposing the ills of human servitude.

Only the educated former slaves like Harriet Jacobs and a few others were able to document their experiences while million of slaves and former slaves could not, partly because of their illiteracy. An opportunity for mass documentation of life histories and the narratives of former slaves came between 1936 and 1938, when the Works Progress Administration hired hundreds of people to document the narratives of some two thousand former slaves in nineteen states. The data collected during this project (known as the Federal Writers' Project's Slave Narrative Collection) has helped historians to understand the life of slaves and the institution of slavery in America, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century.

[*See also* Slavery.]

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SLAVERY

Slavery, a marginal feature, institution, or mode of production of a social organization whereby individuals are defined as outsiders, stripped of their basic rights (including their reproductive capacities), commodified, and coerced to work either for other individuals or for political or economic corporations, has existed in most regions of the world. Yet the scope, duration, and variety of forms of enslavement to which Africans have been subjected throughout history have turned slavery into a major component of the African experience on the continent as well as in the diaspora.

Domestic Slavery (African Internal Slavery). Ancient Egypt was long presumed to be one of the earliest examples of state use of large-scale coerced labor, most notably for monumental building projects. In a context of generalized serfdom and in the absence of a slave market, foreigners deported to Egypt during the great conquests were specialists, such as Nubian archers or Lybian charioteers, to be incorporated into the army (Yoyotte, p. 117; Zayed, pp. 141–142). Agriculture by and large did not rest on slave labor, and slaves/servants who were attached to households or temples could own property, be taught to write, and marry the free. Moreover, archaeological research at Deir el Medina, a workers' village near the Valley of Kings, inhabited for 400 years in the New Kingdom era, revealed that those who excavated the royal tombs (including quarrymen and stonecutters, both Egyptians and foreigners) were salaried state employees who, on occasions, would go on strike (Lesko, p. 12). Particularly controversial is the issue of the Hebrews' enslavement by the pharaoh. Their flight out of Egypt under Moses' leadership is the subject of *Exodus*, the second book of the Jewish Torah and of the Christian Old Testament—an account of contested historic accuracy. The adoption of the narrative of Hebraic