

History 861

The second week of class, January 29 we will be discussing some major issues that will recur throughout the course. The following reading list is important for you to read in order for us to have a decent discussion.

Readings: Paul Lovejoy, Transformations in Slavery, Chapter 1. This book is out of print, but I have copyright permission to reproduce it for this course. It is available at Kinko's. Each week will contain readings from this text. It is suggested you get a copy for your personal library, even if it is only in photocopy form.

Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, "African 'Slavery' as an Institution of Marginality," in Slavery in Africa, ed. Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, UW Press, 1977, pp. 3-81.

This has become a classic discussion of slavery in Africa with rather strong objections as well as agreements with their approach.

Martin Klein, "The Study of Slavery in Africa: A Review Article." JAH 19 (1978):599-609.

"Multiple Reviews" by Meillassoux, Cooper, and Birmingham, African Economic History 5 (Spring 1978):37-47.

Paul Lovejoy, "Indigenous African Slavery, Historical Reflections 6 (1979):19-61. [This is an overview article that contains discussion of Miers and Kopytoff, as well as a rejoinder by Kopytoff.]

Walter Rodney, "African slavery and other forms of social oppression on the Upper Guinea coast in the context of the Atlantic slave trade," in Forced migration, J. E. Inikori, ed., London, 1982, pp. 61-73 and 286-89. [Also appeared in JAH, VII, 3 (1966):431-33] [This is a classic article that considers the question of slavery in Africa before the Atlantic slave trade, which will obviously come up in our discussions of the preceding readings.]

Major topics that will be considered in the coming weeks:

Islam and the Slave Trade
Beginnings of the European trade; the role of sugar
Workings of the Atlantic Slave Trade
The Use of Slaves in West Africa: "domestic" slavery vs. plantation slavery
Slavery and the Slave Trade in Central and West Central Africa
Slavery at the Cape
The Numbers and Tribes Game
Indian Ocean Slave Trade and East African Slavery
Women and Slavery in Africa
Abolition of the Trade; Abolition in Africa
Review discussion: Effects of slavery, the slave trade, and abolition on Africa.

I am waiting to see the enrollment in the course in order to arrange discussion sections and class presentations of your own seminar papers.

The Issue

Many African leaders and governments hold that there is a core of being African that survived the colonial period intact and must serve as the foundation for building the new African nations. This is the 'African tradition'. As the celebrated Nigerian historian J. Ajayi put it: 'the colonial period was but an interlude in African history'

On the other hand, some historians of Africa argue that the older African traditions (there never was a single tradition) were destroyed by the colonial powers and had disappeared as a living reality by c.1930. Customary law is but a creation of the colonial order.

Using various case studies, the members of this seminar will attempt to test these claims and clarify the issue.

Approach : In order to achieve this goal, one must first clarify the notion of cultural tradition. The following positions have been held:

- Tradition is (1) an overarching, static and uniform mode of thought, a given not in need of analysis [Many anthropologists when they talk about culture; imperialist, nationalist, neo-Weberian and Marxist Leninist historians of Africa: Glassman: 7]
- (2) idioms of thought, based on perceptions of the past, invoked and manipulated to express changing demands in specific social contexts: in short tradition is a flag of convenience to legitimize a position held on other grounds. Traditions are invented [E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger]
- (3) long-term (many centuries) basic continuities in cognitive reality, i.e. physical reality as conceptualized and explained in the mind. Tradition is a process: at one time basic choices are made and never put into question again, although their potential is further elaborated on over time. A living tradition changes constantly, because it determines its own future by accepting or rejecting change according to its principles.
- (4). Tradition grows out of daily life and does not really exist [one possible reading of Cohen, Odhiambo]

In this seminar and in the discussion of this issue it is clear that position (3) is meant, but with an eye on positions (1) and (4) and keeping the reality of position (2) which is as 'real' as (3) in mind.

To tackle the issue it must further be tested in a way that can yield results pro or con. To use mainly rural cases (one per participant in the seminar) will allow one to do this. One needs (a) to have a good view of what a culture and society were before the colonial impact, say c.1850 or 1860 (b) have some knowledge about the major impact of the early colonial order on practices (e.g. production, labor), institutions and the transmission of cognitive realities in education and religion (c) to have a good basis of information for the society after the first colonial impact c.1930.- Such an approach and discussion in seminar will allow one to arrive at an answer.

Cases : The following are proposed. Students can propose others.

Mende	Benba
Asante	Lamba
Igbo	Luo
Kosi	Ganda
Kpe	Rwanda
Beti	Maravi (Nyanja/Shire Valley)
Nkundo (needs French absolutely)	Lczi
Bobangi	Shona
Tabwa	Nuer
Kuba	Zande
Kongo	Ovimbundu (needs German absolutely)

Mechanics : Each participant chooses one case and writes two papers. The first deals with the situation in the 19th century and (optional) the main 'facts' about the colonial impact. The second paper builds on the first and presents the situation c.1930 followed by the conclusions reached as to the continuity or not of the 'tradition'. -While one can focus on some parts of culture and society [e.g. religion, education, *language* institutions, even agriculture and food production] these must be seen in relation to the whole.

No one is expected to use the full bibliography available for each case, but the major available works must be used and to some extent tested for reliability, for the points relied on in the discussion. Consult with instructor for each case.

Background reading : Recommended not required:

- (a) Hobsbawm, E., Ranger T. (ed): The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge 1983
Kuper, A., The invention of Primitive Society, London 1988.
Mudimbe, V.Y., The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge, Bloomington 1988
Wagner, R., The Invention of Culture, Chicago 1975.
- (b) Cohen, D., A. Odhiambo, Siaya, Ithaca (Cornell) 1989.
- (c) For the 'context' of each paper read the relevant sections in the Unesco General History of Africa (Graduate Reading Room) as required. Vols 5 (1500-1800) and 6 (1800-1880) are not published yet, but 6 may well be available in time. Vols 3/4 may be most useful. To fill the gaps, use the Cambridge History of Africa vols. 4 and 5.
- (d) Vansina J., Western Bantu Tradition and the notion of Tradition - Paideuma, 35(1989):289-300 [offprints to be distributed]. This is an example of a 'tradition'.