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STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF RANGER'S ESSAY

A SUMMATION OF COMMENTS*

by

KENNEL A. JACKSON, Jr.

[Ed. Note: Readers will recall that we carried a major Essay on "African Religious and Cultural History and the Historiography of the Diaspora" in *Ufahamu*, IV, 2 by Prof. Terence O. Ranger. We are pleased to provide our readers with a thoughtful response to Ranger's article. *Ufahamu* has always encouraged readers to engage in constructive debates with contributors.]

The goals of this commentary are threefold. To begin with, it is important to comment on the virtues and the strengths of Ranger's paper, "African Religious and Cultural History and the Historiography of the Diaspora." Secondly, it is important to record specific disagreements, reservations, and skepticisms. And lastly, a section is included on other possible important areas of cross-fertilization between African and Afro-American history.

The Strengths of the Ranger Essay

Ranger has presented a slightly different intellectual perspective on Melville Herskovits' *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), a book which has too often been 'measured' by ideological standards. He examines the state of knowledge on African religious systems during the period of Herskovits' writing and

*On November 3, 1973 Prof. Terence Ranger presented a paper with a title, "Recent Developments in the Study of African Religions and Cultural History and their Relevance for the Historiography of the Diaspora" at the African Studies Association Meeting; Syracuse, New York. His paper was later published in *Ufahamu*, IV, 2(Fall, 1973) under the title "African Religious and Cultural History and the Historiography of the Diaspora." The following article is a Reconstruction of Comments made at Syracuse on Ranger's paper. As must be clear to the reader, these remarks have been lengthened--and considerably in places--but their outline is essentially the same as it was originally.

research. He concentrates on the question of what types of information Herskovits had at his disposal to 'fuel' his hypotheses about African religions and their survival capacity in the New World. Thus, Ranger is interested broadly in the history of evidence on African religions and the way that this history shaped Herskovits' conceptions. This approach reveals to us the reasons for the persistent weaknesses in the Herskovits formulations, and it assists us in explaining the remarkable certitude that is pervasive in *The Myth of the Negro Past*. (It would appear that Herskovits, inhabiting a much more limited intellectual sphere, with fewer distinctions to harass his analysis, with a much less diversified body of information to manipulate, could advance a whole range of rather astonishing assumptions--even though they were poorly documented, rested on inadequate foundations, and were untested.) Despite the fact that the Ranger discussion of *The Myth of the Negro Past* is extremely short, it distinguishes itself quite easily from the highly committed and highly polarized statements by previous scholars. In 1942, for example, when E. Franklin Frazier reviewed the same book for the *Nation*, he assailed it on several grounds, particularly on its peculiar impressionistic interpretations; on its hackneyed scholarship; and on its appalling use of pseudo-scientific tracts and pamphlets to buttress its arguments. Ultimately, however, Frazier's acerbic attack was a political one. Frazier was particularly indignant at Herskovits' suggestion that by investing the Afro-American with a history and a culture -- a history and culture beyond the past of slavery -- the status of the Afro-American would be substantially altered. Unlike Ranger, Frazier did not refer to the central issues of evidence. By raising the question of evidence, Ranger has indirectly hastened the re-evaluation of Herskovits' controversial research.¹

At another level, the Ranger essay contributes a degree of subtlety to the discussion of African religion in the American context that has been noticeably absent from the writing of American historians. He warns that African religions should not be viewed as a seamless whole. In establishing this point, he calls into question assertions from Orlando Patterson's *The Sociology of Slavery* (1967) and August Meier and Elliott Rudwick's *From Plantation to Ghetto* (1970), both of which pointedly assumed a forceful similarity between different African religious idea-arrangements. However, it is once again to Ranger's credit that while he is arguing for the individuality of African religions, he avoids drawing the predictable and obvious distinctions. He draws only the fine distinctions: the different conceptions of evil, the beliefs concerning salvation, the differences in prophetic styles from community to community, the roles assigned creator-gods, and the multiple forms of witchcraft. This portion of Ranger's

article is very important because the mistake of suggesting homogeneity in African beliefs is so extraordinarily common in even the best American historical writings. John Hope Franklin's *From Slavery to Freedom* (1947), for instance, over-generalizes the characteristics of African religions. Vincent Harding's otherwise provocative "Religion and Resistance Among Antebellum Negroes, 1800-1860" (1969) does not rise above the Franklin account. Gerald Mullins' *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Virginia* (1972) demonstrates an acquaintance with African historiography and social anthropology, but his grasp of that material is elementary. Hence, confusions proliferate. Early slave religion is mentioned only once, African notions of time and time-reckoning are distorted, and Mullins' discussion of the functions of African *rites de passage* is so archaic that it belongs to a sociological age before Van Gennep. To wit, Mullins has the scholar John S. Mbiti "hailing" not from East Africa, but from West Africa.

There has emerged recently another who attempts an understanding of the diversity of African religions. John Blassingame in his *The Slave Community* (1972), struggles with the diverse phenomenon of African religious ideas, but summarizes the slave experience with their religions in North America by claiming, "In the United States, many African religious rites were fused into one -- voodoo."² Obviously, this short review does not reveal an edifying record of misconceptions. In a critical sense, the skill with which American historians have debated the interplay of African religious ideas in the slave context has only incrementally progressed from 1918, when Ulrich Phillips writing on "The Discovery an Exploitation of Guinea" in *American Negro Slavery*, presented the religions of West Africa as an undifferentiated whole.

In addition to admonishing American historians to respect the immense differences in African religions, Ranger proposes a most intriguing program for research. He proposes that we conduct studies of the differentials involved in the survival of religious ideas in early slave society. Ranger does not presume that survivals were widespread. He does not assume that beliefs and religious customs and religious roles and various religious theatrical motifs survived intact over long periods of time. He does not premise that different African beliefs when set in the conditions of the slave South were smelted down into some common religion. What he proposes is considerably richer, and more variegated. He is interested in asking a wide series of questions about the destiny of African religious forms in slave communities. What religious concepts survived in the formative years of these transplanted black cultures? What types of religious practitioners endured the

duress of slavery? Why were certain ideas of African religion more durable in these cultures than others? Why were some more serviceable than others; and how were they serviceable? How were African religious ideas utilitarian for slaves in responding to intra-slave community pressures and clashes? How did various creeds or parts of religious creeds co-exist and compete with one another in the slave communities? What persons acted as the reinterpreters of African religious concepts within the framework of the larger European religious mythologies and ideas? Each of these questions puts forward a new vision of slave religion. Each could lead to a fertile association of African religious history and Afro-American history.

The last contribution of Ranger's paper is perhaps its most general one, but also one of great intellectual power. Ranger contends that slave culture probably developed greatly in the years prior to 1800 when slavery was still a nascent economic enterprise. This was, for many reasons, a most crucial span of time. The American society at the time was culturally quasi-European: it possessed a heterogeneous ensemble of European family economic and political traits and living patterns. This was the period when slaves engaged in re-inventing their culture -- under the force of new contingencies. During this time, the slave communities were germinating a vast array of accommodations; developing characteristic avenues of assertion and non-assertion; evolving strategies for their protection and survival and for thwarting the impact of slavery itself; developing codes of loyalties as well as strong anti-loyalties; and generating collective attitudes to personal industry, family amalgamations, aliens, overlord-whites and whites outside the hierarchies of authority. Also, this was the period in which slave communities were developing ideals of personal display; the striking oral formulae for stating their communal plights that we find later in their secular and religious songs; were perfecting those dramaturgical skills for handling the ordinary encounters with whites; and were developing their particular aspirations for freedom.

Obviously, however, American historians have not fully recognized the significance of this period. One of the most shocking gaps in American historiography dealing with Afro-American slavery coincides specifically with this period.³ Usually, when we see slavery as portrayed by American historians, it is in complete grotesque flowering and after 1800. The pawns are clearly positioned. The inter-working of the races has already become a ritualistic theater. On the one side, the slaves are passively laboring in nameless solitude. On the other side, the master-classes are all performing powerfully and paternalistically. Few American historians have

probed deeper than the 1800 date, into the fluid circumstances of the early slave South. And when they have done so, many of their studies have concentrated either on the legalistic aspects of slavery or on the attitudinal responses of whites to the presence of blacks. Examples of this tendency are Carl N. Degler's "Slavery and the Genesis of American Race Prejudice" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1959) and parts of Winthrop Jordan's *White Over Black* (1968). One cannot fault the legitimacy of these studies; but neither can one argue that they are examinations of the creation of slave communities and slave culture. It is therefore clear that the early period in Afro-American slavery has yet to be reconstructed; and it is certain, too, that this reconstruction will require the tools and techniques of an advanced sociological history -- with a capacity for uncovering the history of submerged groups.

Criticisms and Questions on the Ranger Essay

In considering the possibility of the influence of African religions in North American slavery and on the American slave, it is enormously important that we should not confuse the North American example with its Latin American and Caribbean counterparts. In this paper, the cases Ranger presents are taken mostly from the slave experience of Africans in Cuba and Brazil. (One of the most interesting quotes in the paper is selected from Esteban Montejo's *The Autobiography of a Run-away Slave*, 1970, an individual story of Cuban slavery.) Specific instances of the interactions between African religions and other religious ideas in North America are few. Ranger is fully aware of the differences that existed in the various slavery systems; but he does not press them far enough. To infer the resolution of cultural interactions in North America from the Brazilian and the Cuban evidence is quite possibly unsound -- even if suggestive.

What are the factors that require that a different historical equation be devised for North American slave culture? What are the particular cultural divergencies in the slave situation within the Americas that might have resulted in possible marked variations in the impact of African customary forms? Why are examples from Brazil or Cuba not adequate for understanding slave religion in North America? First of all, the slave population that came to exist in America was at a much earlier point in time a native-born community. (In Virginia of the 18th century, these slaves were called "country-born.") Apparently, this was not the case for Brazil or in Cuba or, say, in Jamaica. Robert Fogel in his recent researches in preparation for his forthcoming book, *Time on the Cross* estimates that by 1740, eighty percent of the North American

blacks were born within the country. He estimates also that this figure did not decrease after 1740. A partial explanation of this fact might be that the slave trade to America was temporarily discontinued between 1780 and 1808, thus limiting the infusion of new slaves into the South, whereas the slave trade ran steadily forward into the middle of the nineteenth century for Brazil and Cuba. Undoubtedly, this single fact had an important consequence for the future of African cultural forms in North America. Here, slaves were severed from their African experience much earlier than elsewhere. Here, slaves were unable to replenish their store of cultural ideas from Africa, or to refurbish old ones with new additions. Transmission of cultural ideas under these circumstances -- with the force of African society rapidly receding into the background -- would have been exceedingly problematic. Of course, this does not preclude the possibility of retentions, but it does introduce a rather awesome obstacle in the path of scholars following the history of survivals in slave culture.

A second factor that has to be taken into account for the North American case is that of racial ratios between whites and blacks. Throughout the slave history of the United States, slaves were nearly always a decided minority in the population. Only in South Carolina before 1820 did slaves constitute a majority (60%, it is estimated). By contrast, Brazilian slaves outnumbered whites even into the nineteenth century. This contrast between the black/white ratios of Brazil and North America is sharpened by another set of facts. From the demographic evidence, it appears that the number of slaves on individual plantations in Brazil was probably much larger than in North America. For instance, on those American plantations specializing in the cultivation of tobacco in the 1780's, a community of fifty slaves would have been a very large one. This also holds for American cotton plantations, where only one percent of the total number had more than one hundred slaves. Many Brazilian estimates boasted hundreds of slaves. For the American slaves, the numerical presence of whites was an overwhelming reality: they were surrounded by Europeans and European cultural norms. They were also existing in small-scale units, on each plantation, thus relatively separated from analogous small-scale units of other slaves. Perhaps, these factors inhibited the preservation of African cultural complexes in North America.

Other factors, besides these, probably inhibited the survival of African cultural elements in North America. By 1840, approximately four hundred thousand slaves were centered in urban environments, out of the reaches of the communal culture of the plantations, and therefore, probably not reinforced by this particular slave culture. Finally, although slaves from

different parts of Africa were mixed on plantations throughout the Americas, specific enclaves of slaves from particular ethnic groupings were more prevalent in Brazil and the Caribbean area than in North America. In short, North American slaves would have had less of an opportunity to be fortified in slavery by the culture of their countrymen. They had to contend with many African cultures, as represented by the diversity of individual slave's origins. It is no mere coincidence that the slave revolts in Bahia city between the 1800s and the 1830s have their genesis in Yoruba or Hausa slave enclaves, whereas no revolts or slave conspiracies in North America had a particular ethnic character.⁴ The central conclusion is that African culture in North America appears to have been destined to play a less decisive role in the formation of slave society.

Yet, this conclusion has its limitations. Assumptions about its lack of durability frequently collide with the facts. African cultural forms -- diverse and plentiful in North America initially -- might have been far more resilient, far more supple in their adaptation, far more elastic than an historian can understand at this stage of their researches. We, as scholars, should not expect the fate of African culture in North America to be a straightforward proposition. Continuity of African cultural elements may not have depended simply on their capacity to persist. (Professor Ranger, for example, intrigues us when he speaks of the possibility of cultural continuity for certain ideas through substitution.) Cultural forms might have retained their outward cast while taking on new inner content. African cultural ideas might have been utilized by whites to revivify their customs and institutions. Cultural ideas might have been suppressed for some time, owing to immediate and powerful pressures, and then, reappeared later on, when circumstances were either more propitious or there was a societal demand for those ideas. Some cultural forms might have grown independent of social need and might have not been tied to a clear function, and thus, had an autonomous life within slave society. Cultural forms dominant in Africa might have had a secondary, nearly subterranean life in America. All of these possibilities must be investigated.

African Religion in North America: c. 1800-1860

If we concede the possibility that certain components of African religions persisted in North American slave culture through the first two centuries of slavery, the question then arises as to the fate of these ideas after 1800 or so -- when the process of Christianization of slaves was fully underway. If we allow the slim possibility that certain religious idioms of African origin survived the imposition of European cultural norms, the question then becomes: what happened to these idioms?

What was the fate of those surviving elements of African religion? Did Christian cultural forms displace entirely the previous African heritages as slavery itself became more entrenched and more routinized in its ideological effectiveness? Presently, the view of the religious history of slave culture between 1800 and 1860 is dominated by the institutions of Christianity -- many historical accounts are preoccupied with slave Christian culture, and Christian churchmanship among the slaves. Overlooked in these accounts is the very real possibility that African religious ideas persisted tenaciously within the increasingly Christianized culture of slave communities, and grew as parallel religious institutions to Christian institutions. These institutions might have been heirs to Ranger's African religious concepts and styles. Is it possible that slave religion after 1800 was a hybrid affair, one part of which Christian in its conceptual premises and the second part a transformed African religious practice?

In the archives of the state of Virginia, a church register from a western community during the late 1870's suggests that parallel religious systems might have existed. There, in the register from a black community less than two decades after freedom, we find a clergyman complaining about the fact that his ministry was forced to compete with "conjurers" in the countryside. From what can be deduced from the fragments of his report, the "conjurers" were an informal group of men and women who divined the ailments of members in his congregation, forecast the lots of his parishioners, and who addressed specific needs of distraught black Christians. (Cf. *Pages from Gravel Church*, Historical Archives of Virginia, Richmond.) Is it possible that these conjurers, operating in the hamlets of post-Civil War Virginia, inherited the style-- if not the specific content -- of African ritual experts and divination masters? John Blassingame comments in *The Slave Community* (1972) that slaves often appealed to conjurers on a host of problems -- to ensure their health, to prevent separations in slave families, for curing illness, to prevent floggings, and to guarantee them success in romance.⁵ Certainly, the conjurers and persons like them should be studied more closely, and specifically with reference to African religious practitioners and customs. What could this suggest for the future of historical studies of slave religion? Perhaps the history of North American slave religion from 1800 to 1860 will be broadened to encompass religious practices beyond the formal Christian churches or congregations. Then we might be able to develop a picture of slaves using Christian churches for some needs, other religious ideas to satisfy others, and ritual experts such as conjurers to handle still other life-crises.

The Reactionary Content of Religion in North American Slavery

On pages 29 and 30 of the last issue of *Ufahamu*, Ranger writes,

One concern of recent religious historiography has been with the role of African religious leaders in revolts against white rule.... Instead of merely saying that very often African revolts had prophetic leadership we are beginning to examine more closely the contrasting potentials of different types of prophetism for the mobilization and sustenance of revolt. And secondly, we are beginning to realize that the prophetic role could sustain a number of responses to colonialism other than the response of revolt.⁶

It is this last remark that prompts questions on the reactionary content of certain religious idioms in the slave culture. Here, we are not speaking solely of those derived from an African base. What was the potential of certain religious ideas for minimizing the dissonance among slaves? What place did religions as a whole, or specific components of religion, have in disguising oppressive conditions or in compensating for oppressive circumstances? Did religions disguise the essential disharmony of interests that obtained between the slave masters and the ambitions of slaves for their eventual autonomy from the rule of masters -- did religion disguise this conflict of interests, thereby quieting the spirit of revolt? Or, did the imported ideas coming from African religions act -- in those transitional years of American slavery -- as an ideological device that curbed the instinct toward slave mobilization? Questions such as these have always existed in the background of slave history. And recently, they have reappeared in their most emphatic form in Cobbs and Grier's *The Jesus Bag* (1971). The investigations of these questions could become the basis of an appraisal of the political volatility of certain religious idioms. We could begin to measure the political potential -- the political dynamic -- of particular religious ideas and religious behavior.

The Impact of African Religions on American White Populations

One of the questions that spins-off from the Ranger essay is whether African religious forms, and black religious forms in general, influenced the religious conduct of European settlers in North America. Did whites consult Afro-American spiritual figures and use their customs as an additional spiritual strategy in resolving their difficulties? (Some of the material in B. A. Botkins *Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery*,

1945 broadly suggests this, but very broadly indeed.) One wonders whether Mark Twain's "Nigger Jim" in the garden of his master's house involved in some peculiar rite, was not just a curio, but rather the literary manifestation of some deeper tendency in Southern society -- namely blacks servicing the spiritual needs of whites. Was there a 'mulatto culture' of religion in the American South? Is it possible for scholars to break down the barriers between white religion and black religious forms to show the interpenetrations between the two spiritual domains, the interacting components, to show the holistic quality of traditional Southern religion?

A Question on the Centrality of Afro-American Religion

Now, for an irreverent question on the issue of the significance to the Afro-American community. In 1943, Arthur Fausett wrote a small book entitled *Black Gods of the Metropolis*. It was a description of separatist churches, and was generally undistinguished and very uneven in its treatment. However, in the introduction, Fausett struck a note of skepticism that recommends the book in spite of its clear flaws. He wondered openly whether Afro-Americans were as inclined to religion and to religious metaphors for collective expression as traditional scholarship had supposed. In a minor way, Fausett was calling into question whether the church was as central to Afro-American society as had been assumed. He puts the point in an amusing fashion: "There is a general assumption that they (the Afro-Americans) are as predisposed toward the appeal of religion as fish are to water." Fausett was not the first student of Afro-American society to raise this question, for five years earlier, in 1938, Benjamin Mays in *The Negro's God* had complained, "It has been taken for granted that the Negro is over-emotional and super-religious." (Both Fausett and Mays might have been aiming their skepticism at scholars like Melville Herskovits who wrote in *The Myth of the Negro Past*, "For underlying the life of the American Negro is a deep religious bent that is but the manifestation here of the similar drive that, everywhere in Negro societies, makes the supernatural a major focus of interest," p. 207) If we pursue Fausett's doubts, it might be worthwhile to ask whether scholars and other interpreters of Afro-American society have painted Afro-Americans as being much too enthralled with religions, too bound up in religious ideas, too easily magnetized by religious concepts. Have we viewed the church in particular and religion in general as being more central to the history of Afro-American communities than they actually are or were? Where these questions lead in scholarship is a matter of guesswork. But they should be added as footnotes -- as heretical footnotes -- to any discussion of religion and its workings among Afro-Americans.

Comparative "Extentions" to the Ranger Essay

The suggestiveness of the Ranger essay on religion reaches beyond the confines of its specific subject. It is perhaps one of the very few essays with explicit comparative objectives in the field of Afro-American and African history. It is a beginning chapter in an intellectual effort that has yet to be firmly established. By its example, it urges us to consider other linkages between these two fields. Rather than end these minor comments with the conventional words of praise for the boldness of Professor Ranger (which is more than apparent), it would be probably more fitting to attempt to further the advance made in his paper for a comparative Afro-American and African history by suggesting one topic -- one topic out of many -- for possible future exploration. This topic lies broadly within the field of intellectual history, or more specifically, within the field of historiography.

Afro-American and African intellectuals have shared a common interest in the past. Nearly in every generation, even when they have been denied honor for their work, this interest has been renewed and furthered. The -- history -- has not been an obsession among these intellectuals, as argued recently by D. Gordon in *History and Self-Determination* (1971). Nor has there been any single reason for their concern with the past. Perhaps this is because these intellectuals thought that a true understanding of the past would be an important intellectual lever on the present, and a galvanizing force in preparing for the future. The very first line of Arthur Schomburg's essay in *The New Negro* (edited by Alain Locke, 1925) captured this sentiment: "The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future." In a similar vein, Jacob Ajayi wrote in 1961, "That the African past must play an important part in the process of nation-building in Africa today is no longer in doubt." (*Journal of Negro Education*.)

This long-standing concern with history has surfaced in example after example in many other places. We find, for instance, that Frederick Douglass in 1852 broke away momentarily from his abolitionist activities to lecture American audiences on the place of Egypt in black history, and on the merits of the historic black civilizations. In the *Liberia Herald* of the early 1830's, the editor was thrashing out the historical problem of Cush and what he calls 'the Abyssinian dynasty' rather than commenting on Monrovia society of the day. Or if we look closely at J. E. Casely Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911), it is obvious that it was considerably more than a carefully-couched novelistic venting of his nationalism, but also a dialogue about African history carried out in the voices of Hayford's characters. W. E. B. DuBois' writings, particularly

after *The Souls of Black Folk* (1902), constituted one of the great modern meditations on the larger meaning of African and Afro-American history. Even more importantly, his research showed a dogged independence of intellect, working to reclaim black history from its antagonists. And, it is of some importance that when Bloke Modisane chose to write of his own life in South Africa that he opted for the searing title of *Blame Me on History* (1953). Lastly, though it is little known, some of the very last speeches by Malcolm X and some of his most poignant reflections were his personal interpretation of the stages in African and Afro-American history. (*Lectures on Afro-American History*, 1966.)

It would be wrong to perceive this concern with the past as originating from a unity of intellectual impulses. Nor would it be correct to see this interest as arising out of the same conjunction of historical forces. To illustrate this point, it is important to indicate that there are not only black intellectuals who seek in the past some intellectual or political value. But, there are those writers who deliberately defile the past, such as Yambo Ouologuem in *Bound to Violence* (1971). And there are those intellectuals who declare themselves to be mild apostates from the past such as Orlando Patterson in his most recent essays.⁷ In other words, this interest in history involves many different ideas and different personalities, many stances, and just as many historical circumstances that produced those stances. This is no small topic for exploration. And, it will require a yeoman's labor to bring it into full perspective.

Footnotes

1. Incidentally, an interesting chapter on the uses of ideas could be written on the intellectual and political influence exerted by *The Myth of the Negro Past*: it was indicated by progressive scholars in the 1940s; ignored by their successors in the 1950s; and rescued from a slow decline into total obscurity with the advent of Afro-American cultural nationalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Cf. G. B. Johnson's review in the *American Sociological Review* April, 1942, p. 289 for a shrewd analysis of the analysis of the political implications of the Herskovits contentions; and Ruth Benedict's estimate in *Books*, January 18, 1942, p. 16 of the book's place in scholarship on Afro-Americans and Caribbean areas. *The Springfield Republican*, on the publication of the book, echoed what were probably Herskovits' ambitions for his work: "Perhaps the scientists can do what the abolitionists could not -- set the Negro free."
2. A possible source for Blassingame's conclusion might have been his reliance on the work of Zora Neale Hurston -- who is cited in his footnotes -- the Afro-American anthropologist and novelist whose *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Voodoo Gods: An Inquiry into Native Myths and Magic in Jamaica and Haiti* (1938) were studies of the religio-magic practices of surviving voodoo cults in the Americas. Hurston's descriptions in these books veered toward the rustic. Still, *The Slave Community* redeems itself on the question of slave religion by a number of unexpected illuminations into the status of the conjurer in slave society and on the inter-relationships between white and Afro-American religion in the 19th century deep South.
3. The extent of this lacuna can be gauged by the mere three pages of bibliography on "The Origin of Slavery in the British Colonies of North America" in James M. McPherson's edited *Blacks in America: Bibliographical Essays* (1971).
4. For these statistics, the author is grateful to Professor Carl N. Degler's correspondence from The Queen's College, Oxford (January 23, 1974).
5. Cf. The slave narratives of Henry Bibb entitled *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb*, 1849 for allusions to "conjunction and witchcraft" in the slave communities; and also the *Narrative of William W. Brown*, 1847, whose author William Brown chronicles his conversion to and activities as a conjurer.

6. T. O. Ranger, "Recent Developments in the Study of African Religious and Cultural History and Their Relevance for the Historiography of the Diaspora," *Ufahamu* IV, 2 (Fall, 1973), pp. 29-30.
7. "Rethinking Black History" in *Harvard Educational Review*, 1971; and "On the Fate of Blacks in the Americas" in *The Public Interest*, 1972.

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