

INTRODUCTION

GERMAN COLONIAL AUTHORITIES turned to Booker T. Washington because they hoped that the prominent African American educator would bring to Africa the industrial education that he often suggested trained blacks in the New South to become diligent and compliant laborers contributing to a modern, postservitude economy. Germany, like other European powers, desired similarly subordinate and productive black labor in its own African colonies. The Tuskegee personnel who worked in Togo succeeded in transforming African cotton growing because they brought with them techniques and assumptions about agriculture, labor, race, and education from the American South. They found such ready partners in the German government because Germany, unlike any other colonial power in Africa, but like the United States, undertook the long transition from bound to free agricultural labor only in the nineteenth century, beginning with the abolition of servitude in 1807.¹

The Tuskegee cotton expedition to Togo brought together German and American models and ideologies of race and free agricultural labor. It brought together the long American history of servitude and emancipation, Jim Crow, sharecropping, and the promises of a “New South,” with the long German history of the colonization of Eastern Europe, the partition of Poland, the end of servitude, the migrations of Germans and Poles, and the promise of an expert state that used social science to control and develop its territory and population. These two histories converged in, and on, an even longer West African history of coastal trade with Europe, succeeding from gold, to slaves, to palm oil, of the promise of abolition wrecked by European colonial conquests in the nineteenth century, of the transformation of a once relatively independent participant in Atlantic trade networks into a subordinate agricultural producer in a capitalist world economy. The Tuskegee expedition to Togo helped transform the political economy of race and agricultural labor characteristic of the New South into a colonial political economy of the global South, separated from core capitalist countries by what W.E.B. Du Bois called the “color line” and the African American novelist Richard Wright later called the “color curtain,” at least as important as the better known “iron curtain” that once separated East and West.²

The expedition is a mere curiosity, its narrative little more than a colonial adventure story, unless it is understood in its connection to the three regional histories it brought together—African, German, and American.



FIGURE I.1. Map of German Togo. The Republic of Togo today is slightly smaller than the German colony, part of which was annexed to the English colony of Gold Coast, today Ghana, after the First World War. Only the locations discussed in this book are indicated on the map. The two principal areas of operation of the Tuskegee expedition were Tove and Notsé. Map drawn by Meghan Kanabay, based on a map in Albert F. Calvert, *Togoland* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1918).

Understanding the expedition, in turn, illuminates these three regional histories as elements of a transnational history of free labor, global agriculture, and the conscious and unconscious struggles waged by cultural, social, and economic producers against the rule of capital and the state. This transnational approach is all the more important because the histories of Africa, Germany, and the United States have, until recently, been cut off from global history by tendentious exceptionalisms. Exceptionalism has been central to American self-conceptions from the earliest Puritan settlers to the most recent American neoconservatives.³ While German exceptionalism, the so-called German *Sonderweg*, or special historical path, has been widely and usefully criticized, the study of German imperialism has, until recently, been hobbled by the view that overseas expansion had more to do with the domestic politics and culture of Germany than with the societies it ruled or with its contributions to a political and economic hegemony far greater and longer-lived than its own brief colonial history.⁴ The exceptional treatment of sub-Saharan African history has long consisted in excepting the region and its inhabitants from history altogether.⁵ The Tuskegee expedition to Togo stands at a point where both historical exceptionalism and comparative history meet transnational history. Transnational history demands and allows historians to apply the microhistorical cultural methods that we have developed over the past decades to the macrohistorical political-economic questions that these newer methods once seemed—incorrectly, I believe—to have eclipsed.

Booker T. Washington came to the attention of German colonial authorities fortuitously, as a result of growing European interest in the American cotton industry.⁶ In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, the United States accounted for two-thirds of world cotton production. During the American Civil War, a “cotton famine,” caused by declining southern production and the Union blockade of the South, made Europeans acutely aware of their economic dependence on American cotton. After the Civil War, while the United States produced ever more cotton each year, it also consumed an increasingly large portion of that cotton in its own domestic textile industry.⁷ In the period 1902–14, America produced more than half the world’s cotton crop, followed by India, which produced about a sixth. Industrial textile mills could use the short-stapled Indian crop only in limited quantities, however, and only by mixing it with American cotton. Cotton textile production grew in many other nations as well, heightening the pressure on the limited American supply of cotton. In the period 1904–14, the United States exported more than 60 percent of its total crop. Great Britain consumed about 40 percent of these exports, and Germany consumed between 25 and 30 percent, with France a distant third at around 10 percent.⁸

German interest in American cotton, as well as in the cheap Midwestern grain that threatened the Junker estates of eastern Germany, led the German embassy in Washington, D.C., to create the position of agricultural attaché. In 1895 Baron Beno von Herman auf Wain, from Württemberg in southwestern Germany, became the first to take this position. Upon arriving in Washington, D.C., he immediately turned his attention to cotton growing.⁹ Baron von Herman traveled to Atlanta for the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition, and he may even have been part of the audience that heard Booker T. Washington make his famous “Atlanta Compromise” address.¹⁰ Two years later, in 1897, Baron von Herman toured the cotton-growing regions of the South and concluded that American preeminence in the global cotton market resulted from its large population of black growers, both in slavery and in freedom. The residents of regions of the South that did not produce cotton explained to the baron, he reported, that there was no cotton because there were no mules, there were no mules because there were no Negroes, and there were no Negroes because there was no cotton.¹¹

Though clearly mocking the circular logic of southern wiseacres, Herman, like many experts, believed that cotton had to be grown by blacks, both because of their supposed unique ability to withstand labor in hot weather and also because of a vague sense of a natural connection between blacks and cotton. This connection, Herman concluded, presented an opportunity for Germany in its African colonies, for, he related to the German *Reichskanzler*, the “Negro” (*Neger*) in Africa required less than a fifth of the wages paid in the United States, which would more than compensate for any comparative inefficiencies in production.¹² For the entire period of his service in the Washington embassy, Herman worked assiduously to transfer American cotton expertise to German Africa, reporting on American cotton growing, encouraging German agricultural experts to inspect cotton farming in the American South, and even traveling to study cotton growing in the German East Africa (present-day Tanzania) toward the end of his tenure in Washington, in 1901.¹³

While Germans did not, by any means, invent the idea that there existed a fundamental connection between industrial-grade cotton and American blacks, those involved in Germany’s colonial cotton projects made more of this idea than any before them had. Baron von Herman worked closely with the Colonial Economic Committee (*Kolonialwirtschaftliches Komitee*, hereafter KWK), a private organization that supported research in colonial agriculture, to reproduce the American economy of black cotton growing in Africa. The corporate members of the KWK represented many types of business, including large banks and heavy industry, but textile manufacturers set the agenda of the organization, which focused its efforts on improving cotton growing in the German colonies.¹⁴ The KWK

agreed with Baron von Herman that, since black labor was the most important factor in American cotton production, Germany might develop its African colonies along American lines to compete with the United States.¹⁵ At least one official in the Colonial Department of the German Foreign Office agreed with the KWK and Baron von Herman that it would be “very practical” to use “colored young” men from America to teach cotton growing to Africans.¹⁶ In the summer of 1900 Herman traveled to Boston to meet with Booker T. Washington, who was there to address the National Negro Business League. The Baron persuaded Washington to recruit “two negro-cottonplanters and one negro-mechanic . . . who would be willing to come over to . . . the colony of Togo in West-Africa to teach the negroes there how to plant and harvest cotton in a rational and scientific way.”¹⁷ The expedition would be financed by the KWK and supported by the German government in Togo.

A Tuskegee faculty member, James Nathan Calloway, led the expedition, helping the other members, as Herman put it, “in finding the necessary authority towards the native population and in having at the same time the necessary respect towards the German government official.”¹⁸ Born in Tennessee in 1865, Calloway began working for Tuskegee Institute immediately after graduating from Fisk University in 1890. He joined the agriculture department in 1897, the year after George Washington Carver established it, and managed the institute’s 800-acre Marshall Farm.¹⁹ Calloway’s younger brother, Thomas Junius, was a lifelong friend of W.E.B. Du Bois, with whom he had roomed at Fisk.²⁰ The summer before his older brother traveled to Togo, Thomas J. Calloway and W.E.B. Du Bois mounted an exhibit on African Americans at the Paris Exposition of 1900.²¹ While James N. Calloway worked in Togo, his youngest brother, Clinton Joseph, joined the agriculture department at Tuskegee, and later became director of agricultural extension programs at the institute.²² Coming from a family close to Tuskegee, James Nathan Calloway evidently won the trust of Booker T. Washington to represent the institute in Africa.

Less is known about the three younger Tuskegee men who accompanied Calloway. Allen Lynn Burks had graduated from Tuskegee in agriculture the year before the expedition. Shepherd Lincoln Harris had come to Tuskegee from Union, Georgia, in 1886 to study mechanics, but had never completed a degree. John Winfrey Robinson graduated from Tuskegee in 1897, spending a year teaching school in Alabama before returning to Tuskegee for postgraduate training in agriculture.²³ Robinson would have undertaken his agricultural studies under James N. Calloway, the expedition leader, and George Washington Carver, the famous director of Tuskegee’s agriculture department. The twenty-seven-year-old Robinson would soon become the most important member of the expedition.



FIGURE I.2. James Nathan Calloway, the leader of the Tuskegee expedition, travels by hammock, as was customary for dignitaries in German Togo. German officials used hammocks made of African cloth because it was sturdier than the European cloth sold in West Africa. The man grasping Calloway's hand is likely John Winfrey Robinson, who would soon become the head of Tuskegee efforts in Togo. Source: Personal collection of Constance Calloway Margerum, granddaughter of James Nathan Calloway. Reprinted with permission.

The group first landed in Lome, the capital of the German colony on the West African coast between French Dahomey (present-day Benin) to the east and British Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) to the west. Calloway and Robinson, assisted by Burks, established and supervised an experimental cotton farm in Tove, a group of six villages about sixty miles inland from Lome. On the experimental farm, Robinson bred a strain of cotton whose staple resembled American Upland cotton closely enough to be used as a raw material in industrial textile mills, and the Tove plantation produced these seeds for the entire German colony. Local government stations compelled Togolese growers to cultivate this new cotton varietal and to sell their produce to European firms. Shepherd L. Harris, the fourth member of the expedition, established his own cotton farm, which was to set an example of cotton growing and domestic economy that Africans might imitate.



FIGURE I.3. John Winfrey Robinson at the twenty-fifth-anniversary celebration of Tuskegee Institute, 1906. Robinson returned from his work in Togo to participate in the celebrations. He poses here in a robe he brought back from Togo, along with a collection of Ewe and Hausa objects. He resumed his work in Togo after the celebrations until his death in 1909. Source: The Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

After a year in Togo, Calloway traveled briefly to the United States, returning in May 1902 with five Tuskegee students who planned to join Harris in setting up model cotton farms. These new settlers met with disaster when their landing boat capsized in the notoriously rough surf off the coast of Togo. Two of these settlers, Hiram Dozier Simpson and William Drake, drowned. The remaining three—Hiram Simpson's wife, Walter Bryant, and Horace Greeley Griffin—made it to shore. Simpson's widow soon married Griffin, and the new couple set up a model farm, as did the bachelor Bryant.²⁴ Later that summer, Harris, the first model farmer from Tuskegee, died of a fever. Burks, another of the original four expedition members, returned to the United States at the end of that year, in December 1902. Calloway himself returned to his position at Tuskegee several months later, at the beginning of 1903, leaving Robinson in charge of Tuskegee's work in Togo.²⁵ Calloway's experience in Africa imparted in him a lifelong interest in international education, even after he left

Tuskegee for Langston University in Oklahoma, before finally settling in Chicago.²⁶ The last Tuskegee settlers, Walter Bryant and Mr. and Mrs. Griffin, stuck it out in Togo through the end of 1904. The deaths of Simpson, Drake, and Harris dissuaded the remaining Tuskegee students scheduled to go to Togo, and George Washington Carver, whom Booker T. Washington had charged with recruiting students for Africa, failed to enlist any others for work in the German colony.²⁷

John W. Robinson remained in Togo to set up a cotton school in Notsé (Nuatjä in German and Notsie in English), near the town of Atakpame, that would train Togolese themselves, rather than African Americans, to serve as model cotton farmers. Robinson had by then made himself at home in Togo. He learned to speak Ewe, the main language of southern Togo, and married two Togolese women, one at Tove, the location of the experimental plantation, and another at Notsé, the location of the new school. (Togolese women commonly shared a single husband, and there was nothing illicit about these multiple marriages.) Robinson's family ties to Togo did not prevent him from participating in the coercive programs of the German colonial state. German officials forced a number of young men from each of the seven districts in Togo to attend the three-year program at Robinson's school. The government then forced the cotton-school graduates, about fifty each year, to settle as model cotton growers under the supervision of district officials. The government took over the school from the Colonial Economic Committee in 1908 so that Robinson could travel to the North of Togo, where he planned to found a similar cotton school. Before he could do so, however, he drowned in the Mono River, when his boat capsized.²⁸

The cotton projects that Robinson and the other Tuskegee expedition members carried out at Tove and Notsé were remarkably successful, breeding and propagating a cotton varietal that flourished in Togo and produced a staple suitable for European industry. The agricultural institutions that Tuskegee founded at Tove and Notsé remained in nearly continuous operation under the French government after 1914 and under the independent Togolese Republic since 1960, although their approaches and goals have changed considerably. The Tuskegee cotton program taught all the European colonial powers in Africa that it was possible to replace indigenous cotton with varietals suitable for mechanized spinning and weaving, to train Africans to grow cotton extensively, and to persuade growers to export this cotton as a raw material, rather than spinning and weaving it locally. Colonial cotton programs, including the efforts of Tuskegee in Togo, though carried out in the name of, and sometimes even with a sincere belief in, economic progress, have been a political and economic disaster for Africans because of the coercion they

involved, the economic opportunities Africans had to forgo to grow cotton, and, today, the terms of trade that force West African growers to compete with lavishly subsidized American and European growers.²⁹

Readers may be surprised by the colonial undertakings of Tuskegee Institute, a normal school established and run by African Americans. European and American interventions in Africa were oppressive and exploitative, to be sure, and the Tuskegee expedition to Togo was no exception. Yet, these interventions were part of a colonial “civilizing mission” in which many Europeans and Americans, including Booker T. Washington and the participants in the expedition, believed as earnestly as their present-day counterparts believe in economic development, democracy, and human rights.³⁰ Writing at the end of his life, as a citizen of independent Ghana, W.E.B. Du Bois reflected on his own youthful enthusiasm for the colonial civilizing mission: “French, English and Germans pushed on in Africa, but I did not question the interpretation which pictures this as the advance of civilization and the benevolent tutelage of barbarians.”³¹ Du Bois rejected his youthful view only after years of practical political experience, including his gradual rejection of Tuskegee ideas in the early twentieth century, his study of Marxism in the middle of the century, and his later experience with anticolonial revolutionaries, including Kwame Nkrumah, president of Ghana.

The histories of empire and of the global South provide a transnational perspective that helps answer the question of whether Washington opposed or cooperated with southern racism, a question that remains central to many areas of scholarship, political thought, and activism to this day. Historian Robert J. Norrell has recently come to the defense of Washington, arguing that the struggle against the racist terror raging in the United States in the 1890s and after was more important to Washington’s life than were his more banal political machinations or his well-known conflicts with W.E.B. Du Bois.³² Earlier scholars of Washington and African American thought at this time, including Louis R. Harlan and August Meier, similarly showed how Washington worked behind the scenes against segregation and disfranchisement, even while publicly seeming to accept or even to endorse the ever-worsening disfranchisement and segregation in the New South.³³ In a glowing review of August Meier’s book, the sociologist St. Clair Drake, a graduate of Hampton Institute and the University of Chicago, wished that the author had “explored the quite considerable influence of Washington’s confidante, Robert Ezra Park, and had he made some mention of Washington’s attempts to apply his ideas in Africa.”³⁴ *Alabama in Africa* explores these strands connecting Tuskegee Institute to European colonialism in Africa and to the distinct

school of sociology that the German-trained social scientist Robert E. Park founded at the University of Chicago. Placing Tuskegee in transnational political, economic, and intellectual histories not only fills gaps in the literature on Booker T. Washington, but also clarifies his apparently inscrutable politics by indicating how they functioned in multiple contexts in Germany and Africa, as well as in the United States.

Considering Booker T. Washington from the perspective of empire reveals not only the ambivalent politics of Tuskegee Institute, but also how these politics changed over time. Tuskegee Institute contained an emancipatory, even revolutionary—and finally unrealized—potential. Both Washington and Du Bois participated in the African American struggles against racism in the United States, in the international and imperial politics of the United States, in the transnational politics of European colonialism and of Pan-African anti-imperialism, and even in the rise of Germany as a world power. What in retrospect appears as a clear distinction between Du Bois and Washington in fact emerged only gradually. In the 1890s, Washington sought to employ Du Bois at Tuskegee to add a sociological component to the agricultural research with which George Washington Carver hoped to transform the political and economic position of rural blacks in the American South. Washington's work with the German empire in the first decade of the twentieth century ended these plans, and led Washington to the conservative positions for which he is remembered today. In their engagement with American, African, German, and transnational histories, Du Bois and Washington each elaborated views about race and emancipation, about imperialism, civilization, and uplift, and about the role of African Americans in the United States and in the world. Their fraught encounters with empire in the crucial decades around the turn of the twentieth century, we shall see, finally shaped both the radical politics of Du Bois and the conservative politics of Washington.

When European powers met in Berlin in 1884–85 to work out the terms under which they would divide nearly all of Africa among themselves, they claimed sovereignty not by right of conquest but rather as a common humanitarian effort to end slavery in Africa and to replace the slave trade with “legitimate” trade, for example in agricultural commodities grown with free labor.³⁵ These colonial powers took up the abolitionist claim that Christianity, commerce, and civilization would help bring an end to the slave trade in Africa.³⁶ Sierra Leone, a colony founded in 1787 by British abolitionists, became, after Britain outlawed the slave trade in 1807, a settlement for Africans freed from illegal slavers. In 1816 Americans opposed to the presence of free blacks in the United States founded the American Colonization Society, an organization that established Liberia in 1822 as a settlement of manumitted American slaves. While many

supported colonization as a means of gradually ending slavery, leading abolitionists to detect covert support for slavery and racism in the plan to remove free blacks from the United States.³⁷ President Abraham Lincoln espoused colonization almost his entire life, and historians continue to debate whether he did so out of genuine conviction or only to win wider support for abolition.³⁸ Slavery, in fact, continued to exist within many European colonies in Africa, and Europeans ruled their colonies, for all the rhetoric of international humanitarianism, with brutal force. The colonization of Africa, nonetheless, formed a central part of the abolition of the slave trade. This paradoxical juxtaposition of liberty and domination was in fact a—perhaps the—fundamental feature of the global economy that emerged in the period between the American Civil War and the First World War.

Germany was neither as recent nor as insignificant an imperial power as is often suggested.³⁹ Germany stood behind Britain and France in the size of its overseas colonial empire, but emerged as the premier European land power after 1871 and, by the 1890s, had surpassed Britain as an industrial economy and challenged the island nation as a global naval power. Merchants from Bremen and Hamburg played a major role in the European trade with West Africa since the middle of the nineteenth century. Already in 1847, the North German Mission Society of Bremen worked closely with the Victor trading firm, also based in Bremen, to evangelize the region of West Africa that would become southern Togo and Gold Coast. Germany also played a leading diplomatic role in establishing European sovereignty over Africa, beginning with the West Africa Conference held in Otto von Bismarck's Berlin residence in the late fall and winter of 1884–85, presided over by the German *Reichskanzler*. By the time of this conference, Germany had already established protectorates in Southwest Africa (present-day Namibia), Togo, and Cameroon. On February 27, 1885, the day after the Berlin conference closed, the German East Africa Company, headed by the infamously brutal Carl Peters, received imperial status, making present-day mainland Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi the fourth German protectorate in Africa. Germany also claimed Pacific island colonies in the 1880s and after, building, as in Africa, on decades of involvement by German merchants. These included northeast New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, the Marshall Islands, Western Samoa, the Caroline Islands, and the Mariana Islands. The German navy also controlled the Shandong Peninsula of China as a base for operations in the Pacific Ocean. Germany further pursued an informal empire in the Middle East by cultivating commercial ties with, and offering military training to, the Ottoman Empire, and undertaking a Berlin-Baghdad railroad project. It is often pointed out the German state lost more money than it earned in most of its colonial enterprises. Such ac-

counting, however, reveals little, for colonial states, then as now, do not serve themselves or, patriotic rhetoric aside, a nation, but rather provide infrastructure, administration, and military and police support, typically at taxpayers' expense, to private firms working overseas.⁴⁰

Cotton occupied a special place in attempts to replace the Atlantic slave trade with legitimate commerce. People in every corner of the earth have grown cotton since antiquity, but the spinning and weaving machines of the industrial revolution required American cotton, which had long been grown by slave labor. The voracious appetite of European industry for American cotton had made slavery more profitable than ever in the United States in the decades before abolition. Cotton nearly won the Confederacy English and French support during the Civil War.⁴¹ Even after abolition, European consumption of American cotton made the gross oppression and exploitation of blacks in the South economically viable, even profitable. For some abolitionists and antiracists, cotton grown with free labor in Africa would be more than just one item of legitimate trade among others; it would challenge the economic power that southern landlords had built up with the labor of blacks, both in slavery and in the partial freedom that replaced it in the Jim Crow South.

Booker T. Washington was not the first African American to intervene in African cotton growing. In 1859 and 1860 the African American abolitionist and physician Martin R. Delany explored the Niger Valley to determine whether cotton growing in Africa might simultaneously support a black exodus from American slavery and racism and also challenge the economic power of the slave South.⁴² While Africans in many parts of the continent grew cotton for their own textile industries, African cotton, like cotton from most parts of the world outside the United States, was unsuitable for mechanized spinning and weaving. Delany chose the Niger Valley because, as in much of West Africa, its residents had long produced high-quality cloth from locally grown cotton.⁴³ Delany shared the assumption, common at the time, that, as he put it, "cotton cannot be produced without negro labor and skill in raising it," and he hoped that cotton grown by free labor in Africa would allow Africans and African Americans to "enrich themselves, and regenerate their race" rather than "enrich the white men who oppress them."⁴⁴ Delany also hoped that African Americans would bring "the habits of civilized life" to Africans, for he, like many white and black visitors to the continent, regarded Africa as a primitive region whose people needed outside assistance to become "civilized." Like many Europeans and Americans, Delany hoped to liberate blacks in Africa from their supposed backwardness and at the same time liberate blacks in America from slavery and racial oppression.⁴⁵ Settling African Americans in Africa as cotton growers might, Delany

ventured, achieve both of these ends, but nothing, ultimately, came of his scheme.

Many European textile experts believed, like Delany, that black people had a special affinity for growing cotton, and so, while they also tried to get American cotton to grow in many parts of the world, Africa figured prominently in their cotton efforts. French colonists began promoting cotton growing in Senegal as early as 1817.⁴⁶ When, in the 1840s, the British East India Company sought to grow American cotton in India, the land that had taught the world how to grow, spin, and weave the fiber, it recruited cotton experts from Mississippi.⁴⁷ In the nineteenth century, Egypt developed a fine, long-stapled cotton that has been used ever since to produce particularly soft fabrics, but in quantities too limited to cover the massive needs of the European textile industry.⁴⁸ Whereas Delany hoped that growing cotton in Africa would challenge the oppressive and exploitative conditions under which blacks grew cotton in the United States, many European colonial powers hoped to grow cotton in Africa by reproducing the oppressive and exploitative conditions of the United States. The collaboration of Tuskegee Institute with the German government of Togo brought together two dimensions of African cotton growing, which reflected two dimensions of the colonization of Africa: on the one hand, an emancipatory, if misguided and ethnocentric, effort to improve the conditions of blacks on both sides of the Atlantic; and, on the other, an anti-emancipatory effort to establish black cotton farming in Africa that would enrich white economic elites in Europe as much as it did their counterparts in the United States.

The events of the Tuskegee expedition to Togo emerged from, and also helped create, a structure of capitalism in the period between the Civil War and the First World War that prefigures our own era of globalization.⁴⁹ In the nineteenth century the European economy cast an ever-widening net over the globe, so that, for example, German workers might operate English machines lubricated with West African palm oil to spin American cotton. As the scale and technology of production increased, manufacturing moved from the privacy of producers' households to the supervision and discipline of the factory. The agricultural labor that supplied the raw materials for such industrial production, however, took place far from centers of capital and involved relatively little mechanization. As steamships, railroads, and canals facilitated the transportation of agricultural raw materials to industrial areas, manufacturers became exposed to the climate, the labor, and the agricultural markets of far-flung regions about which they had only minimal information. Commodity bourses in Chicago, New York, Liverpool, Bremen, and elsewhere, in the course of the nineteenth century, established reliable standards for various

global raw materials, including cotton. Standardizing agricultural products for these bourses required exercising ever-greater discipline over producers from Alabama to East-Elbian Germany to West Africa and beyond.

Political and economic domination based on racist hierarchies in the southern United States and elsewhere established regimes of labor discipline that were, in their own way, as necessary in the fields that produced agricultural raw materials as were the very different regimes in the factories that processed them.⁵⁰ Race, to be sure, was not dreamed up in the nineteenth century, but racial types did come to serve new economic functions as old categories like “slave” and “serf” ceased to organize agricultural production. Racism functions, as sociologist Robert Miles has suggested, as part of the labor process—not merely as an ideology—because it shapes the way work is organized and exploited.⁵¹ Specifically, describing a group as a race suggests that it is an exceptional instance of the generic category “human,” requiring special treatment. Singling out a group as a race often involved social-scientific study, excessive political and managerial control, and especially poor pay. The production of cotton for the world market after slavery depended on placing African Americans in such a racist state of exception. The production of German sugarbeets relied on placing Polish migrant workers in an analogous position of racial subordination. The transition in Africa from precolonial coastal trade to European capitalist control of African agricultural labor also brought with it a new racial classification. Africans, with the help of Tuskegee Institute, would become “Negroes” only in the early twentieth century.

Race is, at one level, totally imaginary, a hallucination that organized populations transnationally, much as national identity organized the inhabitants of a territory ruled by a single state.⁵² A racial image grouped blacks in Africa, the United States, and elsewhere, giving rise to the idea that Tuskegee Institute might reproduce the American South in Africa, but also inspiring various Pan-African forms of anticolonial solidarity. Whiteness similarly produced transnational solidarities that furthered the project of colonial domination. Even as European states competed for overseas territories, they usually assumed certain allegiances based on their common “race.” When disagreements among white people did lead to shooting, the warring parties even used less harmful bullets against each other than they did against nonwhites, on whom they fired the gruesome expanding bullets that the British produced in their arsenal at Dum Dum, near Calcutta.⁵³ Individuals defined themselves as white in relation, primarily, to blacks, but also to a whole gradation of people of color and of white people perceived as not fully white, groups such as Poles that we would today call ethnicities, as well as whites who, because of their poverty, did not exhibit all the traits that white elites liked to attribute to their own “race.”⁵⁴

In addition to its imaginary function, race is also a kinship system, neither more nor less real than those studied by Lewis Henry Morgan, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Gayle Rubin, or Monique Wittig.⁵⁵ Race assigns identities to individuals based on various conventional laws of biological descent, such as matrilinearity or the “one drop” rule. Like all kinship systems, race assigns age and gender roles and regulates sexual behavior, compelling reproductive, often patriarchal heterosexuality, and prohibiting not only incest but also certain forms of exogamy that violate various, and variously enforced, racial taboos. The complex of race, patriarchal heterosexuality, and political and economic power continues to shape much of the world today. This complex appears clearly, for example, in the 1965 Moynihan report, an official study that has had a great influence on United States policy toward African Americans. “Ours is a society,” concluded that U.S. Labor Department report, “which presumes male leadership in private and public affairs. The arrangements of society facilitate such leadership and reward it. A subculture, such as that of the Negro American, in which this is not the pattern, is placed at a distinct disadvantage.”⁵⁶ This book studies the emergence of this complex of oppression and exploitation undergirded by race and sexuality in the transnational world of imperialism.

In postemancipation plantation agriculture around the world, sexuality, gender, kinship, and race became central to many regimes of political and economic control in the apparently “natural” form of the heterosexual, monogamous family. German smallhold farmers, African peasants, and American sharecroppers all appeared in domestic spheres that seemed at least partly independent of the global economies for which they worked. In fact, the paternal control of fathers over wives and children in such households, and the monogamous heterosexuality that this presupposed, became essential aspects of the over supervised and underpaid labor basic to the production of agricultural goods as cheap raw materials for industry elsewhere. German and American social scientists agreed that family farming presented an ideal model of controlling emancipated workers. Such domestic economies committed families, these social scientists believed, to an existing social order as much as they did to specific houses on specific plots of land. Smallholding checked the mobility and slowed the urbanization of workers that seemed to many social scientists to threaten the social order. Smallholding also, many social scientists held, kept farmers in paternal relations of domination with large landowners, often former masters of slaves or serfs, who might rent them land or employ their occasional labor. Smallholding furthermore tied individuals to monogamous, heterosexual patriarchies that brought paternal relations of domination inside the household, controlled sexuality, and thereby maintained racial lines of descent.

Sharecropping in the American New South became an important transatlantic paradigm of labor control. The labor-repressive function of the agricultural tenant household in the New South was especially tragic for African American freedpeople, who had struggled, in the aftermath of slavery, to establish family farms as means of defending their liberty and autonomy against would-be white masters. Faced with widespread black resistance to reintroducing the gang-labor system characteristic of the slave plantation, planters subverted African American demands for autonomous family farms through a particular sharecropping system that provided a brutally effective form of labor coercion. While the resulting sharecropping arrangements did foil the most authoritarian ambitions of planters, they also defeated, to much more devastating effect, the self-emancipatory efforts of freedpeople.

Social scientists on both sides of the Atlantic helped states make the family farm a general model for social control, pointing to the advantages of the patriarchal household and the smallhold farm. The smallhold farm, the peasant household, was hardly an autochthonous social unit, preceding and resisting the intrusions of the state and capital.⁵⁷ Small agricultural producers in the global South have long had complex and dynamic relations to larger structures of colonial and neocolonial exploitation and oppression, relations that the static label “peasant” tends to mask.⁵⁸ Creating peasantries became an important strategy of political and economic control in the reconfigured plantation belt that emerged in the wake of emancipation.⁵⁹

Sociology became a transatlantic science in the last decades of the nineteenth century in part because the family farm became a transatlantic structure of political and economic control, promoted by state and business elites in the American South, the German East, and Colonial Africa. German social scientists regarded sharecropping, the smallhold of the American New South, as a model for the control of free agricultural labor, one that became particularly important as they began advising their own government on policies of “internal colonization” to check the “Polonization” of the Prussian East. The social policy and the political economy of the American South thus already informed the German social scientists who, as historian Daniel T. Rodgers and others have shown, deeply influenced the many American sociologists and economists who studied with them.⁶⁰ German social scientists not only trained W.E.B. Du Bois in the most advanced methods of sociology, but also learned from him about the “Negro question” in the United States, often drawing lessons from the African American sociologist at odds with his own antiracist writings. The German decision to request help from Booker T. Washington in transforming the political economy of Togo resulted from decades of mutual influence between German and American social science and social policy.

The Tuskegee expedition to Togo, in turn, made these transatlantic networks even broader and denser, as it brought smallholding to West Africa for purposes of agricultural production, social control, and racial ordering similar to those in the American South and the German East.

The school of sociology that emerged at the University of Chicago after the First World War became the most important American variant of this transatlantic social science. It was founded by Robert E. Park, the Tuskegee Institute sociologist and close adviser to Booker T. Washington, who combined his own scholarship on black labor in Africa and the United States with the expertise of William I. Thomas, the colleague who had recruited him to the sociology department, on Polish labor in Europe and the United States. The Chicago school of sociology emerged from the study of the two groups, blacks and Poles, that had inspired the study of free agricultural labor in the United States and Germany in the first place, and that had provided models for colonial synthesis in Togo. Park and Thomas hoped that their sociology would help states and economic elites devise pedagogies that could accommodate workers of various racial and ethnic backgrounds to the global capitalist division of labor. They would expand to the workers of the world the projects advocated by the Verein für Sozialpolitik for eastern Germany, by Tuskegee Institute for the New South, and by the German colonial state for Togo. In Chicago, however, Park and Thomas encountered blacks and Poles who were urban rather than rural and thus challenged their normative and analytic models of smallhold farming. During the First World War, Chicago became a major destination for African Americans leaving the South, and for decades the city had also been a major destination for Poles seeking better opportunities in the United States than those offered by seasonal labor in German agriculture. Chicago school sociology became urban sociology because the rural people who served it as models for the racial division of labor fled the countryside.

The regionally differentiated and globally interdependent capitalist economy of the nineteenth century emerged through the proliferation of a network of stable identities, both human and nonhuman. The globally traded raw materials of the nineteenth century were the products of biological and social control, much like the people who grew them. Agriculture had always involved modification through selection, and the global commodities markets of the nineteenth century expanded this ancient element of agriculture into a means of labor coercion. American cotton and European sugarbeets acquired traits useful to industry because managers and overseers controlled their biological reproduction and the processes by which they were planted, cultivated, and harvested. West African palm oil had much greater flexibility, both as a biological organism and as a

good used by humans, and thus became an inextricable part of the political and economic autonomy that many West Africans enjoyed between the end of the slave trade and the beginning of colonial domination. Introducing cotton into West Africa did not simply mean scattering American seeds on African soil, but rather introducing to Africa a simultaneously biological, economic, and political regime of control. Industrial-grade cotton and confining racial categories of blackness were both causes and effects of this regime of control. Agricultural workers in the global South found themselves incorporated as members of specific races into a social-biological regime of control that also included the engineered crops they grew and the farms on which they grew these crops.

Charging race and kinship with stabilizing capitalist orders in the global South gave extraordinary importance to sexual desire, perhaps the only force more mobile and fungible than capital itself. In every case studied in this book, sexuality provided an avenue of rebellion against the capitalist household. Anxieties about sex between black men and white women plagued white elites around the world, and assuaging these fears may have been foremost in Washington's mind when he spoke of the races remaining socially "separate as the fingers" in his Atlanta address. Washington's interest in domesticity, both in Alabama and in Africa, also reflected his recognition of both the fragility and the importance of particular forms of monogamous heterosexuality. Polish migrant laborers, at least half of whom were young women, enjoyed a sexual autonomy unavailable to their brothers and sisters in the households of their fatherland. They engaged in extramarital sex in farm workers' barracks and even chose their own partners for marriage. Polish and German authorities alike decried this sexual autonomy, especially among young women. German colonial attacks on African economic autonomy concentrated on the independence of women's households in polygamous marriages and on women's physical, sexual, and economic mobility. Colonial authorities sought to replace the individual autonomy of the Togolese extended household with the personal and sexual constraint of a patriarchal family farm.

Capitalism produced not only the stability of biosocial identities, the fixity of fields and households that ensured the predictable flow of cotton and other crops to the commodity markets of the global North. It also simultaneously undermined the constraints on which the political economy of empire depended. The routines of capitalist production often allowed, often impelled, individuals to leave family and home, as seasonal or permanent migrants. Indeed, the imperatives of kinship also, through the functioning of the incest taboo, expelled individuals from the very households to which they also bound them. Many individuals chose to disregard Booker T. Washington's famous advice to "cast down your

buckets where you are,” and capitalism made many kinds of exodus possible. Political and economic authorities used racial identities to integrate individuals into specific places in an order of capitalist production, based, in the era after slavery, on cash and contracts, but individuals could also use the mechanisms of cash and contracts to challenge not only the meaning of racial identity but even political and economic authorities themselves. The kinship systems of “race” stabilized capitalism in many regions of the world, but capitalism also destabilized these kinship systems, sometimes even producing that dreadful and hopeful flash of bare capitalism, of bourgeoisie and proletariat, a moment when, as Marx wrote, “all that is solid melts into air.”⁶¹ Capitalism has created a thousand ways to trap workers but also a thousand ways for workers to revolt and, ultimately, again to borrow Marx’s words, to expropriate the expropriators.⁶²

The October Revolution challenged the global political and economic conditions that had fostered conservative academic sociology, Tuskegee Institute, German internal colonization, and the European “civilizing mission” in Africa. Before the First World War, Social Democrats, including Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg, subjected the work of the Verein für Sozialpolitik to careful criticism, rejecting the authoritarian statism of German social scientists, their valorization of the patriarchal household, their calls to keep workers in the countryside as small farmers, and their support for overseas colonization. The workers’ movements inspired by the Russian Revolution, which soon came to call themselves “communist,” took an even more aggressive stance against colonialism and racism. The failings of the Soviet Union to live up to its early promises are well documented. Most important for this study are the international support and the less quantifiable inspiration that the communist movements gave to many African and African American radicals. Many of the first generation of University of Chicago students, the intellectual grandchildren, in a sense, of Booker T. Washington and Gustav Schmoller, incorporated the radical environment of Chicago, as well as communist ideas about racism, imperialism, and capitalism, to create a sociology that criticized and sought to transform the conditions of oppression and exploitation, conditions to which sociology had also contributed. This book ends at that hopeful period between the two world wars, when workers and colonized societies around the world struggled against exploitation and oppression, inspiring new political alliances and new sciences and pointing toward new forms of democracy and prosperity.