PART ONE

1

Ladinos, Gelofes, and *Mandingas*

On the lush island of Hispaniola in 1522, Admiral Diego Columbus, governor and son of the explorer, received a most unusual gift early Christmas morning. At the sound of the second cockcrow, some twenty enslaved persons, heretofore proscribed within what was a sizeable *ingenio*, or sugar mill and its environs, lay aside their fears and set upon a path of alteration. Intent on spreading sedition throughout the island, the insurrectionists moved to mobilize an equal number of coconspirators on neighboring establishments. Machetes in hand, they literally dismembered plantation personnel and livestock as they proceeded, initiating a "wild and bloody expedition under dawn's early light." In their wake lay torched houses and fields, while "here and there in the open ground lie the decapitated bodies of unfortunate whites who [the insurgents] were able to catch off-guard." On December 28 they reached the cattle ranch of Melchoir de Castro, some thirty miles from the island's capital of Santo Domingo, upon which they may have been planning an assault. By then, however, they no longer enjoyed the element of surprise; a mixed force of Europeans and indigenous persons under Melchoir de Castro's leadership, both militia and volunteers, attacked the desperate band of Africans, effectively ending the revolt. Those not immediately killed took to the hills, only to be captured within a week. When the dust settled, some fifteen bodies were recovered, including those of at least nine Europeans; Diego Columbus reflected that if the uprising had not been quickly quelled, many more "Christian" lives would have been lost. Thus began the first collective insurrection of Africans in the Americas, a movement largely composed of Senegambians, a significant proportion of whom were probably Muslim.[1]

[1] See Carlos Federico Gulloit, *Negros rebeldes y negros cimarrones: Perfil afroamericanos en la historia del Nuevo Mundo durante el siglo XVI* (Montevideo, Argentina: Fariña Editores, 1961), 79–84; Franklyn J. Franco, *Los negros, los mulatos y la nación dominica* (Santo Domingo: Editora Nacional, 1969), 14–15; Leslie B. Rout, Jr., *The African Experience in Spanish America: 1502 to the Present Day* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge U. Press, 1976), 104–05. Also see Brent Singleton, "The

The insurgence was not the first act of rebellion on record by Africans in the New World. To be sure, there were, all along, so many occurrences of individual and composite rebellion – from mutinies and suicides aboard the slavers to poisonings, sabotage, work stoppages, thefts (or reappropriations), and an assortment of culturally informed responses to captivity. The first recorded instances of resistance were in 1503, when Nicolás de Ovando, Hispaniola's first royal governor, wrote to Isabella requesting that she prevent further shipments to the colony of enslaved *ladinos*, or persons possessing knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese languages and cultures, but who also often had connections to either Senegambia, Islam, or both. De Ovando had arrived earlier in April of 1502 and was already complaining that the ladinos on the island were "a source of scandal to the Indians, and some had fled their owners," establishing maroon communities in the mountains.[2]

While many resisted their enslavement, other ladinos served as personal attendants to the early Spanish colonists, and they constituted a significant number by the second quarter of the sixteenth century; "a perusal of the early accounts of the exploits of the conquistadores will reveal the fact that the Negro participated in the exploration and occupation of nearly every important region from New Mexico to Chile." With chasms of discrepancy between their treatment as prescribed in *Las Siete Partidas* (regulations originally developed in the thirteenth century that provided the basis for subsequent slave laws) and their actual experience, Africans taken from Cuba along with natives of the island carried the artillery of Hernan Cortés in his campaign in Mexico, and they were among those sent by Velásquez to punish Cortés for insubordination in 1520. In 1534, Pedro de Alvarado, the lieutenant of Cortés, brought 200 enslaved Africans on his expedition to Quito (Ecuador), most of whom died in the snows of the Andes, while a number of Africans carried the baggage of Diego de Almagro and Rodrigo Orgoñez through the Andes from Cuzco to Chile, often paying the ultimate price. Hernando Solano marched with four Africans, one of whom was a woman; Diego de Pantojas had an African in his company; and so on.[3] The list of Africans so engaged is rather extensive, but perhaps the

Ummah Slowly Bled: A Select Bibliography of Enslaved African Muslims in the Americas," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22 (2002): 401–12, for a helpful list of sources on the general subject of African Muslims in the Americas. Sources listed by Singleton that were not useful to this study are not cited. Further, citations to the same sources sometimes differ in form between Singleton and the present work. Finally, while a number of sources listed by Singleton have applicability beyond this chapter, this will be the only citation to the Singleton compilation.

[2] See Rolando Mellafe, *La introducción de la esclavitud negra en Chile: tráfico y rutas* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1984), 10–11; Rout, *African Experience in Spanish America*, 22.

[3] See J. Fred Rippy, "The Negro and the Spanish Pioneer in the New World," *Journal of Negro History* 4 (1921): 183–89; Gonzalo Vial Correa, *El africano en el reino de Chile: Ensayo histórico – jurídico* (Santiago: Instituto de Investigaciones Historicas, 1957). *Las Siete Partidas*, compiled between 1256 and 1265, was a "compendium of Justinian law and local custom which became a reference point in all legal matters of Spain and its later colonial empire. The rights and obligations of those enslaved were enumerated in *Las Siete Partidas*, and in this manner, the institution of slavery was recognized as an integral part of the Spanish society and was given a legal basis." See

most distinguished of them all was "Estevánico, or Estévan, an Arabian black from Azamor, in Morocco," who, if a historical figure, was quite the swashbuckler and agent of Spanish imperialism in what would become New Mexico and Arizona.[4]

As opposed to anglophone North America, where the meeting of Africans and the English was so novel and startling as to be a nearly cataclysmic event, the engagement between Africans and Europeans in what would become Latin America was in many ways an extension of an interaction begun hundreds of years earlier in Iberia, North Africa, and elsewhere in the Mediterranean.[5] Muslim expansion into Iberia in 711 initiated a prolonged period of occupation that lasted nearly 800 years, culminating with Grenada's fall in 1492. Muslim conquerors introduced (or reintroduced in some instances) scientific, religious, and classical studies, along with architectural innovations and a quality of civilization both unique and superior to much of what was current in Europe, The Portuguese and Spanish became well acquainted with Muslims, a diverse assembly of differentiated unequals that included Arabs, Berbers, Arabo-Berbers, and West Africans. Together, they comprised the unwieldy and heterogeneic category referred to as "Moors" by Europeans. Spanish use of the term *Moor* in the sixteenth century, therefore, was not necessarily a reference to race as it is currently understood. Indeed, Berbers and Arabs had had such extensive "contact with Negroes" that they had "absorbed a considerable amount of color." Rather, *Moor* referred to a *casta* (as opposed to *nación)*, a designation that "did not intend to imply a racial factor but rather a cultural characteristic – Islam."[6]

Africans were therefore present in al-Andalus (Iberia) since Islam's arrival there, but they actually seized political control with the coming of the Almoravids in the eleventh century. The emergence of the Almoravids signaled the dawn of a new dispensation: North Africa achieved unification under the authority of an indigenous regime, having had extensive experience with occupational forces, from the Carthaginians to the Romans to the Byzantines to the Arabs. The Sanhaja Berbers, in a feat similar to the prophet Muhammad's consolidation of the Arabian peninsula under a central government, initially extended their influence south to the Senegal River and the dominant power of

Frederick Marshall Rodriguez, "Cimarrón Revolts and Pacification in New Spain, the Isthmus of Panama and Colonial Colombia, 1503–1800" (Ph.D. diss., Loyola U. of Chicago, 1979), 14.

[4] See Frederick W. Hodge, Jr., "The Narrative of the Expedition of Coronado, by Pedro de Castañeda," in J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Original Narratives of Early American History: Spanish Explorers in the Southern United States, 1528–1543* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), vol. 11; Woodbury Lowery, *The Spanish Settlements Within the Present Limits of the United States, 1513–1561* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), 278–82.

[5] See, for example, Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1968), and compare with Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York and London: Norton, 1982).

[6] See Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico," *Journal of Negro History* 31 (July 1946): 276–77.

legendary Ghana (to the river's east), and they may have played a role in the kingdom's demise. The Sanhaja then crossed Gibraltar, thereby effecting an empire that connected auriferous West Africa to the markets of southern Europe, establishing a formidable presence in the western Mediterranean in the process.[7]

Almoravid control of al-Andalus was achieved by military conquest. A significant proportion of the Almoravid army, in turn, was West African.[8] In employing West African soldiers in Iberia, the Almoravids were continuing a practice begun by the Umayyads at least since the reign of al-Hakam I (796–822), when they were among the palace guard and the garrisons.[9] While denying them rank and promotion, Abd al-Rahman III (who reigned 912 – 961), al-Hakam II (who reigned 961–76), and al-Mansur (who reigned 976–1002) also used "black" troops, who formed a so-called black honor guard under al-Hakam III. Enslaved, these soldiers comprised an *'abīd* or servile army, although many were eventually manumitted and merged with other categories of Andalusian Muslim society. The long and extensive interaction between North and West Africans, bond and free, both in Africa and al-Andalus, was such that the distinction between "black" and "white" Africans was often devoid of biological meaning, though it was maintained as part of very real social conventions.

Notwithstanding the importance of West African recruits as soldiers, the majority of those involuntarily transported from West into North Africa and beyond the strait were female, true for most components and periods of the entire transsaharan slave trade. It is therefore appropriate to speak of the transsaharan trade as predominantly a trade in women and young girls, who were multiply exploited in that even those purchased for domestic labor were just as vulnerable sexually as were those recruited as concubines. Because the progeny of slaveholding fathers and enslaved mothers followed, when acknowledged by the former, the status of their fathers in keeping with Islamic law, individuals from such backgrounds could achieve degrees of social distinction.

The volume of the early transsaharan trade, which was gender specific, was low. Indeed, the lofty empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay, while engaged in a modicum of slave trading, were far more renowned for their supplies of gold. The Lake Chad area was an exception to this characterization, featuring a long and close association with the slave trade across the Sahara. Even so, the number of West Africans enslaved in Iberia, to either Muslims or Christians, was not very significant in the early stages of the Muslim presence in al-Andalus. The end of Moorish rule in Portugal in 1250 brought with it a significant decrease in

[7] See Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge U. Press, 1987).

[8] See John O. Hunwick, "African Slaves in the Mediterranean World: A Neglected Aspect of the African Diaspora," in Joseph E. Harris, ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Howard U. Press, 1993), 303.

[9] See E. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, 3 vols. (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve, 1967), especially vol. 3; also see Rout, *African Experience in Spanish America*, 13–14.

the availability of manual labor, as many Muslims fled the realm for Grenada, while the cessation of conflict also meant the discontinuation of a ready supply of war captives. The Portuguese therefore sought to augment their labor force with West Africans, purchasing them from Muslim traders at Guimarães in northern Portugal. Merchants at Barcelona also purchased captives at Tunis and North African markets from the eleventh through the fifteenth centuries, and, from the late fourteenth century, Africans bought in North Africa were sold in Cádiz. However, these *sarracenos negros*, or black Muslims (in anticipation of C. Eric Lincoln), were quite expensive as a result of the costs of transsaharan commerce, and they remained more the exception than the rule in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Portugal.[10]

The African's fate would begin to change in the fifteenth century with the convergence of maritime innovations, New World "discoveries," and the Great Dying of aboriginal populations in the Americas. The Atlantic would begin to supplant the Sahara, bringing Europe directly into contact with subsaharan Africa. The Portuguese onslaught can be said to have begun with Prince Henry "the Navigator" (who navigated little of anything), who, in his command of Portuguese forces at Ceuta (Morocco) in 1418, set in motion attempts to take the North African (Barbary) coast and to explore further south along West African shores in search of both Prester John (imagined by Europeans to be a powerful Christian ruler and potential ally in the struggle against the "Saracens") and the Rio de Ouro (River of Gold). In 1441, Nuno Tristão and Antão Gonçalves reached Cape Blanc, where they took prisoner eleven *azenagues* (Tuareg) and one "black" woman. The captives were first brought to Portugal and then returned to West Africa and exchanged for ten "blacks," gold dust, and ostrich eggs. By 1444, Lançarote de Freitas, having helped found the Lagos Company, returned to Portugal from the West African coast with 235 azenague and "blackmoor" captives, where most were sold in Lisbon or Lagos. The designation *blackmoor* suggests that the Portuguese identified these West Africans as Muslims remarkable for their skin color. Because they are assigned neither an ethnic nor a place-name comparable with that of *azenague*, the origins of these particular blackmoors are uncertain; they could have been trade captives from south of the Senegal River or members of the various Sudanese enclaves found throughout the area north of the Senegal, or they may have already been enslaved to Tuareg slaveholders and therefore progenitors of the *bella*, transhumant communities in perpetual subjugation.[11] If they originated south of the Senegal, not all would have been Muslim before leaving West Africa, but they may have subsequently converted in Europe, a speculation about which more will be stated later.

[10] See Rout, *African Experience in Spanish America*, 3–12.

[11] See Edmond Bernus, *Touaregs nigériens. Unité culturelle et diversité régionale d'un peuple pasteur* (Paris: Editions de l'office de la recherche scientifigue et technique outre-mer, 1981); Claude Meillassoux, ed., *L'ésclavage en Afrique précoloniale* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1975).

Nuno Tristão did not stop there. Later in 1444 he reached the Senegal River itself, followed by Dinis Dias's voyage to Cape Verde the following year. Having finally reached "the land of the blacks," or "Guinea," the Portuguese soon learned that negotiation and trade were preferable to violence. Establishing commercial stations on Arguin Island, Cape Verde, points along the coast of Sierra Leone, and on the Gambia and Geba Rivers between 1445 and 1460, the Portuguese exchanged wheat, textiles, horses, and weapons for gold dust, spices, ivory tusks, and human beings. Interestingly, the Tuareg made the transition from trade bait to trade partners, and in 1445 the Lagos Company began purchasing West Africans from the Tuareg. Three years later, some 1,000 had been shipped to Portugal, and in the fifty years between 1450 and 1500, 700 to 900 captives were imported into Portugal and Madeira annually.[12] This dramatic rise in the West African trade could not go unnoticed, and, in the absence of official war with West Africa, it was justified with Hamitic discourse: Gomes Eanes de Zurara, who himself participated in a slave raid sometime before 1448, argued that the enslavement of ten Muslim captives brought to Portugal in 1442 was "in accordance with ancient custom which after the Deluge, Noah laid on his son Cain [Canaan] cursing him in this way: that his race would be subject to all the other races of the world."[13]

By 1462, the Portuguese had become veritable slave trading entrepreneurs and were supplying Spain with captives as well. Their dependability was such that in 1479 they reached the Treaty of Alcaçovas, granting Portugal the right to supply Spain with African captives. The Portuguese brought "cheap" West African captives into Cádiz and Barcelona as well as Valencia and Seville. Importation estimates are uncertain, but Valencia may have received some 5,200 captives between 1477 and 1516, while a 1616 census in Cádiz reveals that West African captives outnumbered Berbers and North Africans by more than 20 percent. Seville, however, had the largest concentration of enslaved Africans by 1565 – some 6,327 out of a municipal population of 85,538, and some 6 percent of a 100,000 total estimate of enslaved persons in Spain. The percentage of West Africans in this total estimate is unknown, but it is clear that the slave trade, after the 1503 establishment of the Casa de Contratación (a maritime council administering trade with the American colonies) in Seville, had in sixty years contributed to the population and was a factor in Seville becoming both a "thriving metropolis" and Spain's largest city.[14]

Most of the West Africans sold by the Portuguese in Spain after 1462 were known as *negros de jalof*, and they were also referred to as *gelofes*. This is clearly a

[12] See Rout, *African Experience in Spanish America*, 3–12.
[13] Ibid., 12; Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *Chronique de Guinée* (Dakar: IFAN, 1960), 93–94.
[14] See Ruth Pike, *Aristocrats and Traders: Sevillian Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca and London: Cornell U. Press, 1972), 1; Rout, *African Experience in Spanish America*, 15–16; Colin Palmer, *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570–1650* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1976), 7–9; Celestino López Martínez, *Mudéjares y moriscos sevillanos* (Seville: Editorial Renacimiento, 1994); Emiliano Endrek, *El mestizaje en Córdoba: Siglo XVIII y principios del XIX* (Córdoba: Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 1966).

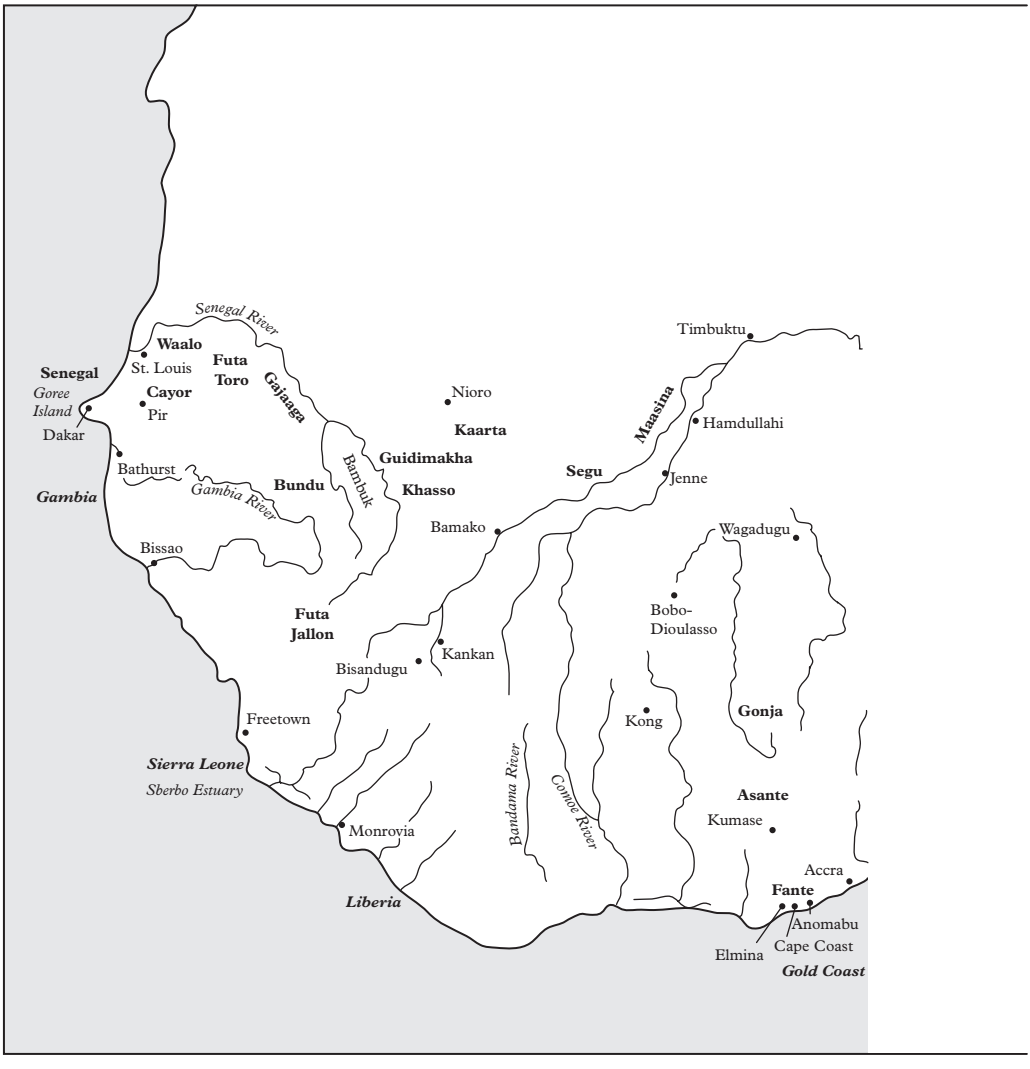
reference to the empire of Jolof near the Senegal River, but, given the Portuguese area of operation, the reference must include all persons recruited from the Senegal to Sierra Leone (see Map 1). By the end of the fifteenth century, *mandingas* (Mande-speakers) from the same general area were also being marketed, while West Central Africans from around the Congo River, called *bantu* by the lusophones, began arriving in Iberia in 1513. Whatever their origin, these persons were brought to Spain to live and work. Women served as domestics and sexual objects; men as "footmen, coachmen, and butlers, while others functioned as stevedores, factory workers, farm laborers, miners, and assistants to their owners in crafts."[15] Others were purchased by the crown and used in the galleys in construction projects, and although not all galley slaves were West Africans, many were.[16] Interestingly, the 1522 Santo Domingo rebellion is attributed to negros de jalof.

Jolof was an empire more or less contiguous with the northwestern portion of the contemporary state of Senegal. Founded in the thirteenth century, it was composed of a number of vassal states, including Waalo, Cayor, Siin, Salum, Baol, and Takrur (which later became Futa Toro). A multiethnic composite inhabited by Wolof, Mande-speakers, Fulbe (or *hal pulaaren,* "speakers of Pulaar," who were further subdivided into settled, at times ethnically mixed, Tukulor communities and Fula or Fulani pastoralists), and the Sereer, Jolof in its pluralism foreshadowed the majesty of imperial Songhay in the interior of the West African savannah. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century references to negros de jalof therefore refer to multiple ethnolinguistic groupings, among whom the Wolof may have been prominent.

After the middle of the fifteenth century, a number of arguably interrelated events eventually led to the disintegration of Jolof into its constituent components. The old Malian empire, whose outer western provinces included polities in Senegambia, went into decline (though it lingered in atrophied condition through the seventeenth century), leaving a power vacuum in the upper and middle Niger valleys filled by imperial Songhay. The transition from Mali to Songhay, however, encouraged vassal states in Senegambia to also consider independence. With profits to be made from trading with the slaving Portuguese along the coast, and an obligation to protect the citizenry from falling prey to that very traffic, vassal states asserted their interests. Between 1490 and 1512, Futa Toro broke away from Jolof suzerainty under a new, nominally Muslim Denyanke dynasty. Siin soon followed, and, by the middle of the sixteenth century, coastal Cayor gained its independence, effectively ending a 100-year process during which Jolof's imperial status (and very existence) steadily dissipated.

It was therefore out of an atmosphere charged with warfare, political transition, and social volatility that many of the negros de jalof were taken into Iberia.

[15] See Rout, *African Experience in Spanish America*, 15–16.
[16] See Charles Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, 2 vols. (Bruge: De Tempe, 1955), vol. 1, 842.



MAP 1. West Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

While many were certainly Muslim, it is likely that most were not. Islam had moved into the West African savannah through the Sahara by the beginning of the ninth century and as a result of Berber and Arab commercial activity. Some subsaharan African (or "Sudanese") merchants living in the savannah and the *sāḥil* (or sahel, literally "shore" or transition zone between the desert and the savannah) began to convert, so that Islam became associated with trade, especially long-distance networks of exchange. In some societies, political rulers also converted to the new religion with varying degrees of fidelity, so that Islam became a vehicle by which alliances between commercial and political elites were

MAP 1. Continued.

forged. One source, for example, stated in 1455 that the religion of the "Zilofi" kingdom of "Senega" (a reference to the Wolof and other constituent groups of the Jolof empire) was "Muhammadanism: they are not, however, as are the white Moors, very resolute in this faith, especially the common people."[17] For many centuries thereafter, Islam in Senegambia (and elsewhere in West Africa) remained the religion of merchants and rulers, the faith of the elite, who seldom interfered in the beliefs of the peasantry. Generally speaking, reformers

[17] See G. R. Crone, ed. and trans., *The Voyages of Cadamosto* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1937), 31.