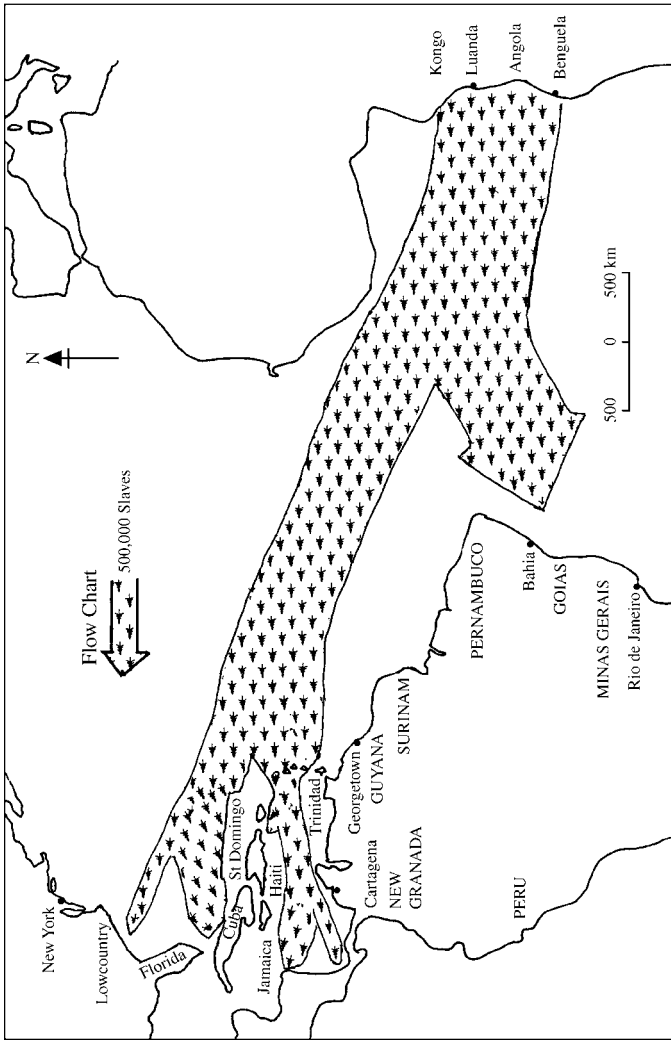


# Introduction

LINDA M. HEYWOOD



In 1658, an enslaved African by the name of Ignacio Angola appeared before a Holy Inquest held in the city of Cartagena. The Inquest was collecting evidence to be presented to Rome for the process that would attest to the sanctity of Pedro Claver, a Jesuit priest who had labored among the Africans of the city from 1616 (he was finally sanctified in 1896). The details Ignacio gave about his life reveal a range of cultural familiarity with Christian beliefs and European cultural traditions that were common to many enslaved Central Africans coming into Americas, but were rare among their counterparts originating from West Africa. Ignacio testified that he had been baptized in the kingdom of Angola, and had been purchased, along with a companion, Alonzo Angola, and taken to Cartagena. On his arrival, he received further religious training in “prayers and mysteries,” and was confirmed in the cathedral. Thereafter he spent the next 30 years laboring among enslaved Central Africans as a translator of the “language of Angola,” alongside the saintly Pedro Claver.<sup>1</sup> This ease of Ignacio’s integration into the European world in both Africa and Cartagena characterized the experiences of many Central Africans in the Americas, and it helps to explain, in part, why details on Central African cultural traditions in the Americas may have escaped detection by scholars. This book is a corrective to this neglect, as it as it argues for an early and continuing Central African cultural presence in the American Diaspora.

This introduction is divided into three sections. In the first section, I survey the general direction that the scholarship on the African Diaspora has followed from the first set of studies that appeared in the early years of the twentieth century to those appearing at the century’s end. The purpose here is to show how the collection fits into the still-growing field of African Diasporic studies, yet offers a new perspective to the concepts, foci, and debates of earlier works on the African Diaspora. The new perspective makes two points. It puts culture as a dynamic element in the study of the African Diaspora, and it shifts the focus from an overemphasis on the West African experience to include Central Africa. The second section provides a demographic picture of the Central African Diaspora, and it argues the case for the necessity of the Central African focus that the book takes. The last section guides the reader through the various parts of the book and highlights the main themes and issues that tie it together.

#### HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THEORY IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

Scholarly works on the African Diaspora has a long and interesting history. Unlike African history, the earliest scholarly works of the African Diaspora

1 Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia (Bogotá), *Process of Saint Pedro Claver*, fols. 133–135.

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were either written by African Americans or were published in journals founded by African Americans. The African American scholar and racial theorist W. E. B. Du Bois can be considered the founder of the field with the publication of his “The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States,” which appeared in 1896 as the first volume in the *Harvard Historical Studies* series. Two decades later, the founding of the *Journal of Negro History* (1916) by the African American Carter G. Woodson provided the first forum for scholarly works dealing with the history of Africans and their descendants. Woodson, the journal’s editor until 1950, made a concerted effort to publish and promote the history of all aspects of the African and African American experiences in the Americas from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries. Indeed, before the appearance of the journal *Slavery and Abolition* (1979), the *Journal of Negro History* remained the only academic journal devoted exclusively to research on the African Diaspora. The journal, accepting works from scholars from different racial and national backgrounds, presented a wide range of articles that profiled the still-vibrant cultural traditions of African-descended populations in the Americas. Moreover, the lead that Howard University took from the 1920s in teaching courses on the “Negro in Ancient Civilization and the Negro in Modern Civilization” also helped to institutionalize the field of African Diasporic history.<sup>2</sup> Despite being a pioneer in encouraging research on the history of Africa and its Diaspora, the Negro History School eventually concentrated more on the United States experience, and it did not have as visible an impact on the later research trends and the theoretical models that came to define the African Diaspora as a field of study. A later generation of scholars, many working in fields other than history and representing many races and nationalities, played a more direct role in shaping the concepts and issues that came to dominate the writing of African Diaspora history.

The works of this new generation of scholars began appearing during the 1930s to the early 1950s. Among the most important of these scholars were Rodrigues (1905 [1945]), Ramos (1934 [1940]), Querino (1932 [1988]), Herskovits (1941) Carneiro (1948 [1986]), and Bastide (1960 [1978]), who primarily focused on Afro-Brazilian culture. Others, including Ortiz (1906 [1973]), Price-Mars (1938), Beckwith (1929), Herskovits (1933, 1941), Lachetene (1938, 1940) Beltrán (1946), Turner (1949 [1973]), and Maya Deren (1953 [1970]), explored the African presence in the culture of communities of African descent in the

2 Michael Winston, *Howard University: Department of History, 1913–1973* (Washington, DC: Department of History, 1973).

Spanish-, English-, and French-speaking regions of the Americas.<sup>3</sup> These studies had several major shortcomings, however. For one, most of the scholars were ethnographers and anthropologists, and (aside from Herskovits) they had little or no training in the history of the African slave trade or in African history. Moreover, they failed to consult the available works on African history or those that focused on the slave trade that were available at the time. Thus, one finds no references to the works of French scholars such as Maurice Delafosse, Charles Monteil, and the German Adolph Ihle, or of the African Americans, Dubois and Woodson.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, most of the works focused on what the authors at the time believed were the more important Yoruba and Dahomey (West African) manifestations, to the neglect of the more elusive Central Africa elements.

Scholarly publications that revolutionized the field of African Diaspora studies beginning in the 1960s into the 1980s brought attention to the strong demographic contribution of Central Africans to the slave trade. Philip Curtin's path-breaking study, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (1961), which was the first serious attempt to give a rough estimate for how many enslaved Africans left Africa for the Americas, was the first work to reveal this strong Central African presence. Nevertheless, this did not lead to more research on Central African cultural traditions, as economic historians interested in the study of the slave trade and its impact on the economies of Europe and America came to dominate the field. Thus, following Curtin's study, other works in the genre stressed the economic organization of the trade, investment patterns and profitability, slave demography, mortality, and

3 Nina Rodrigues, *Os Africanos no Brasil*, 3rd ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1945 [1905]); Arthur Ramos, *O Negro Brasileiro*, 2nd ed. (Rio de Janeiro, 1940 [1934]); Manuel Querino, *Costumes Africanos no Brasil*, 2nd ed. (Recife: Editora Massangano, 1988 [1932]); Melville Herskovits, "On the Provenience of New World Negroes, *Social Forces*, 12 (1933): 247–262; Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941); Edison Carneiro, *Candomblés da Bahia*, 7th ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1986 [1948]); Roger Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, trans. Helen Sebba (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1978 [1960]); Fernando Ortiz, *Los Negros Brujos: La Hampa Afro-Cubano* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1973 [1906]); Martha Beckwith, *Black Roadways: A Study of Jamaican Folk Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1929); Jean Price-Mars, *Ainsi Parle l'Oncle* (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de Compiègne, 1938); Rómulo Lachatañere, *¡Oh mío, Yemayá* (Manzanillo, Cuba: Editorial El Arte, 1938); *El Sistema Religioso de los Lucumis e otras Influencias Africanas em Cuba* (Havana, 1940); Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La Población Negra de México* (Mexico: Ediciones Fuente Cultural, 1946); Lorenzo D. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973 [1949]); Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (New York: McPherson & Co., 1970 [1953]).

4 See, for example, Maurice Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, 3 vols. (Paris: Elarose, 1912); Charles Monteil, "Les empires du Mali: Étude d'histoire et de sociologie soudanais," B.C.E.H.S.A.O.F., XII, (1929): 291–447; Adolphe Ihle, *Das alte Königreich Kongo* (Leipzig: Verlag der Werkgemeinschaft, 1929); W. E. B. Du Bois, "The suppression of the African slave trade in the United States," in *Harvard Historical Studies*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1896); Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro In Our History*, 8th ed. (Washington, DC: The Associated Press [1945]).

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the economic impact of the trade in Africa, Europe, and the Americas.<sup>5</sup> The best of the studies provided elaborate tables and graphs that estimated the number of enslaved Africans who came into the Americas, debated the profitability (or absence thereof) of the trade, and provided a range of demographic tables portraying the degradation and death connected with the Middle Passage and the plantation systems in the Americas. Other studies covering various aspects of plantation organization and management that focused on social rather than cultural history also appeared during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>6</sup>

The emphasis on the demography of the slave trade continued into the 1990s with works by David Eltis, Martin Klein, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database CD-Rom, and the Databases for the Study of Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy. In addition, the score of scholars that Paul Lovejoy has brought together for his Nigeria Hinterland Slave Trade Project (York University, Canada), and the ongoing UNESCO-sponsored Slave Trade Project, promised to provide an even more richly textured profile of the demographic make-up of the Africans involved in the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>7</sup> Although these works have brought the study of the Atlantic Slave Trade and the African Diaspora into the academic mainstream, the emphasis on demography moved the field away from the earlier ethnographic and anthropological studies. Thus the opportunities of dealing with the cultural dimension, with themes such as resistance, contestation, creolization,<sup>8</sup> and

5 Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944); Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); Joseph Inikori and Stanley Engerman, eds., *Forced Migration: The Impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies* (London: Hutchinson, 1981); Joseph Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

6 See, for example, Richard Sheridan, *The Development of the Plantations to 1750: An Era of West Indian Prosperity 1750–1775, Chapters in Caribbean History*, 1 (Barbados: Caribbean University Press, 1970).

7 David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein, eds. *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-Rom Set and Guidebook* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Gwendolyn Midlow-Hall, ed., *Databases for the Study of Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy: A Compact Disk Publication* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1999); David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

8 The term *Creole* has a variety of meanings. In English, Creole refers to both a descendant of European settlers in the West Indies or Central America as well as a person of mixed European and African descent. In Portuguese, the term “*Crioulo (Creole)*” refers to a person of European descent born in the Americas, an African born in Brazil, and a Portuguese dialect spoken in America and in some regions in Africa, for example, Cape Verde. For a thorough discussion of the term *Creole*, see Philip Baker and Adrienne Bruyn, *St. Kitts and the Atlantic Creoles* (Westminster: University of Westminster Press, 1998).

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the transformation of African beliefs and cultural practices in the Americas, received relatively little attention.

Not all the studies that appeared from the 1960s to the 1980s concentrated on economic issues, as some works did wrestle with issues of politics and culture. Among the themes highlighted were African Maroon communities, African returnees to Africa, African elements in African Diasporic religions, anthologies and regional surveys of African cultural continuities in the Atlantic world, Afro-Americans in the antebellum South, and concepts of creolization. The research on slave cultures and their African antecedents that appeared during these two decades relied mainly on American-derived sources (in the case of North America, most of this came from the records of the Works Project Administration, or WPA), while works on Caribbean slave culture came mainly from nineteenth century sources. Brazilian researchers also relied mainly on nineteenth century sources or on fieldwork undertaken in the early twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> These research strategies tended to highlight the more visible West African cultural practices than the hidden Central African ones.

New studies with a cultural emphasis appearing in the past decade have been much more thorough, and they have paid much more attention to the African background of Afro-Diasporic cultures. Indeed, they have given the appearance of a virtual “gold rush” in the field of African Diasporic History. These studies have signaled a crucial shift of the pendulum, from an overemphasis on slave trade and plantation studies to an interest in the comparative linguistic, religious, political, archaeological, and music and performance arts traditions that are the legacy of African Diasporic communities in Africa and the Americas.<sup>10</sup> Among the most important concepts

9 R. K. Kent, “Palmares: an African state in Brazil,” *Journal of African History*, 6:2 (1965): 161–175; Richard Price, *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973); Pierre Verger, *Flux e Refluxo de Tráfico de Escravos entre o Golfo de Benin e a Bahia de Todos os Santos dos Séculos XVII a XIX* (São Paulo: Currupio, 1987 [1968]); Roger Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil*, trans. Helen Sebba (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1978 [1960]); Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past: A Caribbean Perspective* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976), Michael L. Conniff and Thomas J. Davis, eds. *Africans in the Americas: A History of the Black Diaspora* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

10 See, among others, Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736–1831* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Gwendolyn Midlow-Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Luiz Mott, *Rosa Egípcaca: Uma Santa Africana no Brasil* (Brazil: Editora Batrand, 1993); João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, eds. *Liberdade por um Fio: História dos Quilombos no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996); Robert Slenes, *Na Senzala, uma Flor: Esperanças e Recordações na Formação da Família Escrava Brasil Sudeste, Século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Nova Fronteira, 1999); Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Trinidad Yoruba: From Mother Tongue to Memory* (Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press, 1997); Jay Havisser, ed., *African Archaeological Sites in the Caribbean* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 1999); Sylviane A.

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emerging from these studies are the notions of a “South Atlantic system,”<sup>11</sup> the idea of the “Black Atlantic” (African American contribution to the development of the modern industrial world and the appearance of many of the ideas associated with westernization and modernity).<sup>12</sup> In all of these studies, however, Africa remained on the fringes.

The most exciting of the contributions do focus on Africa and the dynamic role of African-born slaves in the creation and development of Afro-Diasporic cultures in the Americas. Some of the scholarship, such as that of John Thornton, for example, that deal with the manifestations of African political ideology and cultural institutions in the making of the “Atlantic World” have gone so far as to link key events involving enslaved Africans and their descendants in the Americas with particular ethnic groups and events in Africa. In particular, what these studies all suggest is a revamping of existing modes of analysis of African Diaspora studies, especially the cultural dimensions.<sup>13</sup>

Other studies, such as Michael Gomez’s portrayal of how Africans became Afro-Americans (an approach inspired by the earlier work of Sterling Stuckey), and J. Lorand Matory’s penetrating analysis of the transculturalization process in Brazil and West Africa, have provided us with the first sustained examination of how various cultural dynamics coalesced to influence identity formation and cultural traditions among Afro-Diasporic populations in the Americas and Africa. Matory, in particular, argues that Black Atlantic travelers, traders, and priests played a crucial role in the construction of national identities in both Africa and Brazil. By situating his research on Afro-Brazilians in a larger Atlantic context, he has gone a long way to address the issue that Paul Gilroy articulated concerning the role of Africans in the formation and transformation of Atlantic culture. His research offers a model for anyone attempting to understand the process of culture formation and adaptation in the Atlantic world during the era of the slave trade.<sup>14</sup>

Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); William S. Pollitzer, *The Gullah People and their African Heritage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999).

11 Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

12 Here Darity’s and Bailey’s work extended the role of the slave trade in contributing to the industrialization of Europe that Eric Williams first raised. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

13 See, for example, John Thornton, “I Am the subject of the King of Congo”: African political ideology and the Haitian Revolution,” *Journal of World History*, 4:2 (1993): 181–213.

14 See, for example, “The English Professors of Brazil: On the diasporic roots of the Yoruba nation,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41:1 (1999): 72–103.



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Although the interest in the West African background is still evident, several scholarly works highlight the Central African dimension. Among these are those by Mary C. Karasch (1987), Winnifred Vass and Joseph Holloway (1979), Robert Farris Thompson (1983), and John K. Thornton.<sup>15</sup>

## CENTRAL AFRICA AND THE ATLANTIC DIASPORA

General interest and knowledge of the history and cultural impact of Central Africans in the Atlantic Diaspora lag far behind that of West Africa. The main problem that faces anyone trying to identify the Central African input is the fact that during the course of the slave trade, different regions had different percentages of African ethnic groups, and as yet, no one has attempted the time-consuming and difficult task of identifying the different ethnic mixes for the whole trade. In any case, as the research on the demographics of the slave trade had demonstrated, Central Africans were ubiquitous in all regions. Indeed, they comprised nearly 45% or around 5 million of the 11 million Africans imported as slaves into the Americas from Africa between 1519 and 1867.<sup>16</sup> Some regions far exceeded others in the number of Central Africans they received. Brazil, for example, led the way in importation of enslaved Africans from Central Africa. During the period when the slave trade between Africa and Brazil was legal, Brazil imported between 3.5 and 3.6 million slaves from West and West Central Africa. Studies by David Eltis (1995) and Joseph Miller (1992) and rough estimates from the recently available Harvard Database suggest that more than half the number of slaves – 15,000 a year by the 1790s – who reached Brazil's southern region between 1595 and the early 1800s came from West Central Africa. The Harvard Database, however, is not an exhaustive source for the overall trade or for populations.

The demographic importance of enslaved Africans and their descendants from the Kongo–Angola region in Brazil was matched by their dominance in the emerging social, religious, and cultural practices among the African population in some parts of the colony. For example, before 1820, free and enslaved Africans and their descendants from Central Africa provided most of the leadership of the black and mulatto brotherhoods, the only legal organization that catered to this population, and one that served as the

15 Winnifred Vass and Joseph Holloway, *The Bantu-Speaking Heritage of the United States* (Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Afro-American Studies, 1979); Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1983); Mary C. Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1850* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); John K. Thornton, "I Am the subject of the King of Congo."

16 See Joseph Miller's article in this collection.



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incubator for several religious and other cultural traditions that came to be associated with Afro-Brazilians.

Despite such an overwhelming presence of Central Africans in colonial Brazil and the fact that early Afro-Brazilian culture was largely Central African, very few studies have thoroughly traced this process.<sup>17</sup> The works that deal specifically with culture highlight the West African contribution, as the attempt here is to account for the ability of West Africans to preserve African elements in the Creole culture of Brazil. Moreover, many of the anthropological studies focus almost exclusively on Afro-Brazilian religious practitioners who practice Yoruba Orisha religion in Bahia.<sup>18</sup>

The 1965 study of Raymond Kent on Palmares and the more recent studies of Mary C. Karasch (1987), Stuart B. Schwartz (1992), Robert W. Slenes (1995, 1999), and Robert Anderson (1996) were the first works in English that examined the crucial role of Angola–Kongo slaves in Brazil up to the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Kent, Schwartz, and Anderson specifically linked key political and religious features associated with Palmares, the largest and most successful Maroon (*quilombo*) settlement that thrived in northeast Brazil for most of the seventeenth century, to Central African antecedents.<sup>20</sup> Although stimulating, these are not comprehensive studies, and they fall short of accounting for the Central African contribution to Afro-Brazilian history and culture. The collaborative effort that is required to advance the field is still only now beginning. Such collaboration would allow us to account for the “continuity and elaboration of Central African cultural forms,” not only in the maroon settlements, but also in colonial society at large.

Gerhard Kubik, a cultural anthropologist who conducted fieldwork in both Brazil and Angola, is one of the few researchers with training in Central Africa who focused on Central African continuities in a range of Brazilian cultural institutions. He has identified several Central African and Angolan traits in contemporary Brazilian music, games, and dances.<sup>21</sup> Other works published in the 1980s and 1990s have pointed out the Central African

17 See, for example, Patricia Mulvey, “Black brothers and sisters: membership in the black brotherhoods of colonial Brazil,” *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 17:2 (1980): 253–279.

18 See Footnote 9.

19 Kent, “Palmares, an African State in Brazil”; Mary C. Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); Stewart B. Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants and Rebels: Reconstructing Brazilian Slavery* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Robert W. Slenes, “Malungu, Ngoma Vem!” Africa encoberto e descoberto no Brasil.” *Cadernos do Museu da Escravatura*, 1 (Luanda: Ministerio da Cultura, 1995); Robert W. Slenes, *Na senzala, uma Flor* (1999); Robert Nelson Anderson, “The Quilombo of Palmares: A New Overview of a Maroon State in Seventeenth Century Brazil,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 28:3 (1996): 546–566.

20 See Footnote 19.

21 Gerhard Kubik, “Extensionen afrikanischer kulturen in Brasilien,” in *Wiener Ethnohistorische Blätter*, Heft 21 und 22 (Wien: Institut für Völkerkunde, Universität Wien, 1981).

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influences on contemporary Brazilian music, urban art forms such as *capoeira*, theatre, carnival, language, folklore, and popular festivals such as the *congadas* (Schreiner, 1977 [1993]). Several of these studies, however, focus on the twentieth century, with more of an aim of responding to a growing consumer interest for Brazilian popular culture than a concern with the more serious issues of the roots of this culture transformation.

Recent studies of Central Africans in other areas of the Americas have highlighted several themes. Among the most important are ethnicity, identity, and the issue of the extent to which African culture shaped Afro-Diasporic and American cultures. In the Louisiana Slave Database and the Louisiana Free Database for 1719–1820 that Gwendolyn Midlow-Hall recently published, for example, the author noted that of the 8,840 Africans of identified ethnicities (of which there were 18 listed), the highest cluster was for Congo, which accounted for 3,035 or 34.3% of the ethnicities listed.<sup>22</sup> Data for the South Carolina Lowcountry for the period between 1730 and 1744 demonstrate that Central Africans accounted for 73.7% of the founding slave population in this region.<sup>23</sup> The fact that many of these slaves went on to form the founding generation for many areas of the Lower South suggest a significant Central African cultural presence. Despite this, however, as yet there is little work available that examines the Central African cultural impact in North America.<sup>24</sup>

The demographic importance of the enslaved Central Africans in the Spanish-speaking Americas was second only to their importance in Brazil. Enslaved Central Africans dominated imports to mainland Spanish America in the first part of the seventeenth century, and they comprised a significant percentage of enslaved Africans coming into Cuba in the period from 1817 to 1843.<sup>25</sup> Yet here again, studies of the African cultural contributions and the ways in which ethnicity and identity transformed are rare. Where such studies do exist, as in the case of the Afro-Cuban religions Santería, the emphasis has been on the more visible and popular Yoruba elements.<sup>26</sup>

22 Gwendolyn Midlow-Hall, *The Louisiana Slave Database and the Louisiana Free Database, 1719–1820* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

23 See the article by Ras Brown in this collection.

24 For some more focused studies see, for example, Robert Farris Thompson and Joseph Cornet, *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1981). This study went a long way in alerting popular and scholarly attention to this Central African presence, but it makes no pretense of being history; Margaret Washington Creel, *A Peculiar People: Slave Religion and Community Culture Among the Gullah* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), has made a persuasive case for the ties between Gullah culture and its Sierra Leone antecedents.

25 See Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, p. 113 and p. 247.

26 See for example, the relevant articles in Margaret Fernández Olmos and Lisabeth Paravisini-Gebert, eds., *Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería Obeah, and the Caribbean* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997).