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978-0-521-77922-7 - Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660

Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton

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Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660

This book establishes Central Africa as the origin of most Africans brought to the English and Dutch American colonies in North America, the Caribbean, and South America in their formative period before 1660. It reveals that Central Africans were frequently possessors of an Atlantic Creole culture that included adaptation of Christianity and elements of European language, especially names and material culture. It places the movement of slaves and creation of the colonies within an Atlantic historical framework, showing interactions among Africa, Europe, and all of the Americas. It explores the development of attitudes toward race, slavery, and freedom as they developed in the colonies of England and the Netherlands, and it revises earlier discussions on these issues. The book suggests ways in which this generation of Africans helped lay the foundations for subsequent development of African-American culture in all the colonies of these countries.

Linda M. Heywood is Professor of African American Studies and History at Boston University. She is also W.E.B. DuBois Fellow at Harvard University and formerly a Whiting Fellow at Columbia University as well as Professor of History at Howard University and Cleveland State University. She is the author of *Contested Power in Angola* (1999) and editor of *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (2001). Professor Heywood has published in the *Journal of African History*, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, and *Slavery and Abolition*.

John K. Thornton is Professor of African American Studies and History at Boston University. He is also W.E.B. DuBois Fellow at Harvard University and formerly Carter Woodson Fellow at the University of Virginia, as well as Professor of History at Millersville University and Allegheny College. He is a former lecturer at the University of Zambia. He is author of *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641–1718* (1983), *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800* (2nd edition, 1998), *The Kongoese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684–1706* (1998), and *Warfare in Atlantic Africa* (1999). He has published in, among other journals, the *Journal of African History*, *History in Africa*, *Cahiers d'études africaines*, *William and Mary Quarterly*, *American Historical Review*, *The Americas*, and the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*.

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*In memory of Alix Thornton Ehlers,
Mary Elizabeth Thornton, and
Robert L. Thornton*

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Preface

This book was conceived during a watershed conference held at Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1998 that was intended to explore the ways in which historians might use newly refined data on the slave trade made available by the DuBois Institute and a Cambridge University Press publication of a database of slave shipping records. The records made easier the task of linking patterns in the slave trade to the settlement of slaves in the Americas. One of the possibilities that occurred to us as we interacted with other scholars and reviewed the data was the possibility of linking specific events in Africa with their consequences in America. What stood out for us was the amazing wave of Angolans coming to the Americas at just the time that the English and Dutch were establishing their colonies.

This realization that there was what might be termed an “Angolan wave” dovetailed with a work that Thornton had just published on the Angolan background of the first shipload of Africans to arrive in Virginia. As our joint research would soon reveal, their background of enslavement in Angola, shipment to the Spanish Indies on a Portuguese vessel, and capture by English or Dutch privateers was not unique but in fact typical of the history of the entire first generation of Africans coming into the new colonies of the English and the Dutch. Heywood, for her part, was completing a study of the strongly Creole background of Angolans and the influence that this background had on the cultural connections among Portugal, Angola, and Brazil, which she subsequently followed up with a major conference on the Central African roots of American cultures in 1999, published by Cambridge University Press in 2001. We were also already jointly working as consultants for the African Burial Ground project in New York, where we were struck by the remarkably uniform

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and Angolan background of the first Africans to be enslaved in that early Dutch colony. Just as we began our project, we also became consultants to the Jamestown–Yorktown Foundation’s new exhibition to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the founding of the first permanent English colony in North America and especially its African component. Because we were both involved in teaching courses on the history of the Atlantic and the African diaspora, we saw the potential for uniting these disparate insights into a single project.

The circumstances of our initial interest in the project led us to explore English and Dutch colonization and our work at Jamestown and New York had started us off. After we had engaged the project for some time we realized that French colonization probably followed the same lines, and, where relevant, a few references to French activities are included. However, filling out the picture for the French would require much more time than we were prepared to spend. We hope that others will take up this challenge and see the degree to which our preliminary guess is correct.

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Our research has taken us to many archives and libraries; a first trip to England helped us locate materials on the English end of the colonization in the Public Record Office and British Library, and three more trips to English repositories extended this. However, one of the most important research collections that we visited was the Engel Sluiter collection at the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley. The Sluiter documents, collected from a wide range of archives in Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands in particular, were almost entirely relevant to our study, and we spent literally hours on end doing nothing but transcribing or summarizing documents. No one should approach this topic without stopping at this collection, which has filmed copies of the original texts, transcriptions, and often (for Spanish and Portuguese documents) summaries and translations.

A long stop in Portugal allowed us to work jointly on the massive collection of documents at the National Library and the Archives of Torre do Tombo, as well as the Overseas Historical Archive. In 2002 we spent three weeks in Angola working in archives and visiting Mbanza Kongo and Massangano, historic locations that were important sites in the story we were telling. In 2004 we returned and went back to Massangano and also to N'dalatando, giving us a visual sense of the areas we were writing about. We conducted interviews on both trips in Portuguese, Kikongo, and Kimbundu. In 2004 we visited Rome and did research in the Vatican archives, as well as in the Archives of the Propaganda Fide. Other trips took us to Bermuda and Barbados, as well as local archives in Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, and Massachusetts. We spent many

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hours at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, as did graduate students working with Heywood.

The professional staffs of a number of libraries and archives were of great assistance to us. In particular we thank the librarians and staff at Arquivo Nacional de Torre do Tombo, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, and Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa in Lisbon; the Public Record Office, Scottish Record Office (who held their offices open for us one day), and the British Library in the United Kingdom; the National Archives of Bermuda; and the National Archives of Barbados. The staff of the Secret Archives and Library in the Vatican were helpful and provided us with important microfilmed documents. We are similarly glad for the help of the archivists of the Royal Archives and Library in Stockholm and the National Archives (formerly the General Royal Archives) in the Hague. We are grateful to Rosa Cruz e Silva for her friendship and support in our research trips and our work at the Arquivo Histórico Nacional de Angola, of which she is director. In the United States we thank the staffs of the Virginia State Library and the Pennsylvania Historical Society, where the Amandus Johnson Papers opened up the entire Swedish archives; the New England Historical Genealogical Society; the New-York Historical Society; the New York Public Library; and the New York State Archives, especially Charles Gehring, whose knowledge of the Dutch documentation was very helpful. We consulted materials in a variety of other libraries, such as those at Howard University, Millersville University, Columbia University, Boston University, and Harvard University.

A number of colleagues were very supportive of our project. Thomas Davidson of the Jamestown–Yorktown Foundation was always a good intellectual sounding board, as well as a fine companion during our trip to Angola in 2004. We owe a special thanks to Tim Hashaw for generously sharing his own detailed research on the first generation of Africans and their descendants in Virginia in the exchange of long and numerous e-mails about it. Emily Rose also provided us interesting discussion and leads for the early history of the Virginia Company. Karen Kuperman shared her resources generously and was also a good source of intellectual stimulation. M. K. Thornton was very helpful with Latin documents, providing us with a complete translation of Antonio Franco's valuable chronicle as well as some lesser ecclesiastical documents. Allison Blakely kindly supplied us with copies of documents he had acquired at the United Amsterdam Archive, as did Jelmer Vos. Wim Kooster provided us with references and discussions on our project at an early stage, Douglass Deal generously shared his own notes and transcriptions of Virginia documents

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with us, and John Coombs provided us with a copy of his doctoral dissertation on colonial Virginia.

We have benefited from the assistance of a number of research assistants. At Millersville University and at Howard we received help from Gregory Brechenko and Wanda Porter. Special thanks go to Andrea Mosterman, who helped to locate Dutch documents and provided assistance in transcribing them and at times in translation.

We received quite a bit of financial assistance for our travels and research. Howard University funded Heywood's travel to London, Bermuda, Barbados, Lisbon, and Luanda from 1998 to 2002, whereas Thornton received funds from Millersville University for travels to Lisbon and Luanda. Boston University provided funding for both of us to purchase microfilm and to travel to Rome in 2004 and to Florence in 2005. The National Park Service generously funded Thornton's share of travel to Berkeley, whereas the Jamestown–Yorktown Foundation assisted our travel to Luanda in 2004. The Mariner's Museum of Newport, Virginia, funded some of our travel to London and Lisbon, as did the Gilder Lehman Foundation of Yale University.