

Likewise, one could point to C. A. Bayly's *The Birth of the Modern World*, which argued that European traders 'carefully maintained the cultural and bio-moral reputé' and 'preserved the rituals of sociability' of substances from Africa, the Americas, and Asia, even as other practices surrounding these substances were effaced or forgotten.<sup>14</sup>

These issues are open to debate, and Gómez's book is to be celebrated for its willingness to rethink scholarly orthodoxies. And, although the book's precision when dealing with the epistemologies of African-descended healers is belied by a certain vagueness when it ventures into the history of European science and medicine, Gómez is on much stronger ground when he moves into territory that may be of more interest to readers of this journal. *The Experiential Caribbean* offers several interesting points of connection with the histories of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century West and West Central Africa. In particular, Gómez's examination of the worldviews and practices of African-born healers like Mateo Arará (84) and Antonio Congo (176) makes the book a superb partner to Sweet's study of Álvares and the works of John Thornton and Linda Heywood.

*The Experiential Caribbean* will be of great value to anyone interested in the history of healing and ritual traditions in the early modern world, as well as scholars of the Spanish Inquisition, the slave trade, the Black Atlantic, and global histories of science and medicine. It also serves as a model for how to avoid shuttering ones' scholarship into overly restrictive categories. Part of the value of ambitious books like *The Experiential Caribbean* is that they provoke debate. I found myself vigorously agreeing with Gómez on virtually every point relating to his central themes of diasporic African ritual and medicinal practice in the Caribbean. But on certain occasions, as when the book gestures towards larger themes in the history of science and medicine or Atlantic history, it moves onto shakier ground. Notwithstanding these quibbles, *The Experiential Caribbean* is an astonishing performance of archival mastery. Drawing on over a dozen archives in seven countries, Gómez has produced what is sure to become the definitive study of African-descended healers in the early modern Caribbean.

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## MAPPING LIVES IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD

*Africans of the Old South: Mapping Exceptional Lives across the Atlantic World.*

By Randy J. Sparks

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016. Pp. ix + 204. \$26.95, hardback (ISBN 97800674495166).

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**Key Words:** Atlantic World, geography, microhistory, African diaspora.

The increased emphasis on microhistory in the study of the African diaspora continues to bring attention to remarkable individuals whose life stories were previously unknown or

<sup>14</sup> C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Hoboken, 2003), 45.

dismissed as apocrypha. In this carefully argued and well-researched book, Randy Sparks examines the biographies of African-born actors who came to the southern United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as free persons or as victims of the slave trade. He traces their complicated travel routes from Africa to North America, where some of them remained, while others returned to Africa or went elsewhere. These Africans also made intermediary stops in England, the Caribbean, or New England. Sparks not only describes where they went and when, but he locates their movements on maps.

Perhaps the most exceptional of these compelling 'life geographies' is that of Elizabeth and Catherine Cleveland, two mixed-race women whose family operated a successful slave trade business in the Sherbro River region of Sierra Leone. Educated in Liverpool, Elizabeth was the daughter of William Cleveland, an Englishman, and Kate, an Anglo-African. Catherine, Elizabeth's niece, was the daughter of John Cleveland, Elizabeth's brother, and an African mother. In 1764, after the death of William Cleveland, Elizabeth and Catherine headed to Charleston, South Carolina, aboard a slave ship carrying over 300 enslaved victims in the lower deck. In South Carolina, William Cleveland's wealthy relatives welcomed their mixed-race African relatives, and these family connections contributed to Elizabeth's privileged social position in the South Carolina Lowcountry. Elizabeth was socially accepted as white, although the state of South Carolina legally declared her mulatto when her race became an issue in the settlement of her estate. She purchased plantation properties, integrated into the planter community, and married a British Army surgeon. Catherine, however, was always considered a person of color, both legally and socially, and she associated with the free black community. Elizabeth protected Catherine's freedom and bequeathed her the Raccoon Hill plantation. After a lengthy court battle, Catherine finally obtained her inheritance from Elizabeth, which made her a plantation owner and an affluent member of South Carolina's free black community.

Like the Clevelands, the Holmans, an Anglo-African family engaged in the slave trade in the Rio Pongo area of modern Guinea (Conakry), came to the South Carolina Lowcountry to establish residence and invest in plantations. John Holman, the English progenitor of family, brought his African wife Elizabeth and their five Anglo-African children along with fifty enslaved Africans in 1789. When Holman died in 1792, his will dictated that his 'slave Elizabeth' and his children be manumitted, an action that indicates that his family had been legally enslaved in South Carolina until his death. It also speaks to the need he felt to protect his wife and children from enslavement and from losing the property he left to them. The Holman children affiliated with other mixed-race families in the free black community. John Holman's daughters married into prosperous free black families, and stayed in South Carolina. However, his sons eventually returned to Africa to re-establish themselves as slave traders.

For other life geographies, such as those of Robert Johnson, Dimmock Charlton, and Charles Smith, the documentary record is more fragmentary and partially derived from testimonies that these individuals provided of their own lives. Because the veracity of these narratives was questioned by some of their contemporaries, as well as by historians, Sparks expends considerable effort verifying these accounts, often by raising questions of specific events and posing alternative possibilities for their interpretation. As he notes, the difficulties associated with confirming these narratives is partially the result of the

ways in which archives are created and information is preserved. The well-documented life geographies of the Clevelands and Holmans is due to their class position, wealth, and power which made it possible 'for them to leave their mark in the historical record on both sides of the Atlantic' (161).

Singularly or taken together, these life geographies elucidate the malleability of identity, race, and class, while they also show how these actors negotiated varied sociopolitical terrains across the Atlantic World. These stories also capture the agency and resilience of individuals in ways that is often difficult to grasp in studies of slave communities. Although these biographies are atypical of the experience of the vast majority of Africans who came to the Americas, they nonetheless provide examples of the diverse experiences of Africans in the diaspora, as well as significant insights into the larger communities of which these actors were a part. This excellent publication should be on the must-read list for all students of the African diaspora.

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## A FEMALE PROPHET IN WEST AFRICA

*West Africa's Women of God: Alinesitoué and the Diola Prophetic Tradition.*

By Robert M. Baum.

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**Key Words:** West Africa, Senegambia, religion, gender.

This book is Robert Baum's second on Diola religious traditions. His first monograph, *Shrines of the Slave Trade*, published in 1999, demonstrates how the Diola people of the Senegambia have for centuries relied on shrines in their dealings with the fates and fortunes of their world. For instance, he shows the pivotal role that shrines played in the region for managing the effects of the slave trade. Studying the historicity of a set of practices previously categorized in evolutionary terms as 'animism', Baum helped elevate Diola faith and beliefs to the status of 'religion'. In the book presently under review, Baum devotes his attention to another aspect of Diola religion. Listening to the wise words of the elders seated at their shrines, Baum has gained further knowledge of Diola religious practice to demonstrate that there exists among them a prophetic tradition comparable to that of the Abrahamic tradition, but one that features a remarkable difference because it is open to female prophets. In this book, Baum documents a unique tradition of prophecy.

The book revolves around one important case study, that of Alinsitoué. While living in Dakar during the Second World War, this young female migrant had visions in which *Emitai*, or God, spoke to her. In these visions, she received instructions from God and was charged with their execution. After her return to the village of her birth in the