

of slavery to the footnotes and to ends of chapters. The same may be said for contemporary social analysis: thus, the program of the fourth conference on Women in Africa and the African Diaspora (WAAD – Abuja, August 2009) appears to include no reference to the heritage of slavery.

The difficulty of theorizing women and slavery is not to be underestimated, but the need for analysis will not go away. Studies of slavery have become a permanent part of historical studies because of the importance of slavery in the modern world. The recurrence of slavery today – and the enslavement of women in particular – make clear that studies of women and slavery will continue to be of interest and importance. Hopefully there will emerge, from those who prepare monographic studies, the articulation of a social theory that will facilitate a forceful analysis of this important topic.

*University of Pittsburgh*

PATRICK MANNING

## THE EMERGENCE OF AN ATLANTIC CREOLE CULTURE

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

By LINDA M. HEYWOOD and JOHN K. THORNTON. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xiii + 370. £40/\$75, hardback (ISBN 978-0-521-77065-1); £16.99/\$22.99, paperback (ISBN 978-0-521-77922-7).

KEY WORDS: Central Africa, African diaspora, culture/cultural, slavery, slave trade.

This is an important book, written by authors who are already well known for their extensive publications on Kongo-Angola and early slave populations in North America. Starting the story in West Central Africa, they follow the slaves on their ‘forced migrations’ to the other side of the Atlantic. At the same time, they consider the emergence of an ‘Atlantic Creole’ culture that helped shape the experience of early generations of captives in the Americas. Two-thirds of the book concerns West Central Africa, the sources displaying the prodigious documentary research that has been the hallmark of Thornton’s scholarship on Kongo. One-third of the book deals with the American side of the story, focusing on the Dutch and English colonies from Curaçao, Barbados, and Bermuda to Virginia, Chesapeake, and New Amsterdam, some given more in-depth treatment than others. Here, the evidence seems much thinner, perhaps surprising to those who might assume that early African history is devoid of historical records compared to the Americas. The book might have been more balanced with a lightening of the profuse detail on the military and political aspects of Central African history and an amplification of conditions in the New World. But perhaps what we have here is what the sources allow.

Three aspects of the work seem especially notable. The first concerns the origins and culture of slaves in early American settlements. The authors accept Ira Berlin’s denomination of this group as the ‘Charter Generation’ – the slaves who arrived in the New World before their influence was attenuated with the arrival of West Africans (the ‘Plantation Generation’) by the eighteenth century. Whereas Berlin proposed that the Charter slaves came from the Guinea coast, Heywood and Thornton make the case that they came from West Central Africa, products both

of civil wars that resulted from the competing dynastic ambitions of Kongo leaders and also of wars of conquest waged by the Portuguese and their allies in the interior of Luanda. While many of the Angolan slaves were transported to Brazil, privateers who attacked Portuguese shipping became the main suppliers of African labor to the English and Dutch North American colonies, thus replacing the Upper Guinea coast as the main African source of slaves.

Secondly, and following Berlin's thesis of a common Atlantic Creole culture, the authors discuss the substance and circumstances of its emergence in the Kongo-Angola region. Here they emphasize the 'intense engagement' of indigenous people with Europeans over a long period, even before the foundation of Luanda in 1575. Starting from a relatively homogenous indigenous culture based on similar linguistic, social, cultural, and political forms, the new Creole culture emerged through the appropriation of European cultural influences. Christianity, in its local manifestations, was the primary element in the 'cultural synthesis' that shaped the 'Atlantic creole' culture carried by slaves to the North American colonies.

While the sources for this historical reconstruction are impressive, the extent and depth of 'creolization' within some regions seems more open to question. When does borrowing from and familiarity with another culture become 'creolization'? The authors deal with this by arranging 'the degree of Atlantic Creole culture in Central Africa during the period along a continuum based on how much Africans had accepted European elements into their culture' (p. 170). Thus, they discuss 'core', 'intermediate', and 'outer' Atlantic Creole 'culture zones'. The Loango region north of the Congo river, for example, is designated as a region of 'least creolization' (map, p. 227), which may be true on the authors' scale but one wonders if the term is even appropriate for a region where people resisted European traders' attempts to settle ashore, showed an erratic and tepid interest in Christianity, and appropriated foreign products such as cloth for burial practices probably more than for clothing.

Thirdly, the book considers settlement patterns, social interactions, and cultural practices among Central Africans in the North American colonies. The authors contrast the Charter Generation, who lived alongside whites, with the later Plantation Generation, who were forced into separate quarters and culturally isolated from Europeans. Scattered among slave masters, the Atlantic Creoles were able, nevertheless, to maintain wide social interaction among themselves – a situation, the authors maintain, that enhanced their ability to retain and develop their hybrid culture, which in turn aided acceptance from their owners, affected rates of manumission favorably, and provided opportunities for social mobility. In this view, also, the Christian background of Atlantic Creoles was critical in making these opportunities more attainable before economic changes, an influx of West Africans, and a hardening of laws 'closed the door' for their descendants.

In several ways, this is a fascinating work for its conceptualization, its substance, and the questions it raises. This reviewer very much regrets the lack of a bibliography in an otherwise finely produced book.

*Indiana University*

PHYLLIS M. MARTIN