

Green, Chabal, and this volume's contributors have produced a frank, insightful, and poignant must-read analysis of Guinea-Bissau's recent political and economic crises. What the volume says most powerfully is that this micro-state is not on the minds enough of the world's scholarly community and policy makers. To be sure, Green is correct that 'Guinea-Bissau is still currently a country that "works"' (234). It works despite the fact that people in the region have long coped with the devastating consequences of the West's demands — centuries ago for sugar and tobacco and now for cocaine. It works because folk in Guinea-Bissau — those people whom political elites have failed to serve — have to make it work as they seek to care for their families and chart their own course.

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AFRICAN KINGS AND BLACK SLAVES IN THE EARLY MODERN ATLANTIC

African Kings and Black Slaves: Sovereignty and Dispossession in the Early Modern Atlantic.

By Herman L. Bennett.

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Key Words: kingdoms and states, slave trade, slavery, precolonial.

In this brief but compact book, *African Kings and Black Slaves: Sovereignty and Dispossession in the Early Modern Atlantic*, Herman Bennett makes a series of important claims on behalf of the study of Africa and African-European relations in the early years of contact (up to about 1560). Contending that much of our understanding of the African background to the history of the Americas, and particularly the slave trade and slavery, draws disproportionately on Northern Europe in the period of the Enlightenment, Bennett maintains that the two centuries of Iberian dominance in relations with Africa and with the slave trade in Africa and slavery in Americas has been neglected. This neglect has come at a cost to understanding the larger-scale dynamic that underlies the more recent and more discussed periods.

While the book deals in a wide range of topics, including the relationship between slavery and sovereignty in which the early period is characterized by the predominance of the rights of the state over individual rights — allowing kings to exert checks on the owners of slaves in matters touching on sovereignty — to the significance of performance of power as a piece of evidence, one of its most important foci is a sustained critique of some parts of postcolonial theory.

Notably, Bennett contends, Europeans did not consider Africa as a place with no sovereignty where Europeans were free, in fact, and enjoined to do as they pleased. Taking specific aim at charter statements and canon law, he carefully contextualizes the famous Papal Bull *Romanus Pontifex* of 1455, which is widely regarded as giving Europeans (but specifically identified as Christians) full range to do whatever suited them in Africa, or in non-Christian lands.

Bennett anchors this Bull and other related documents to the complexities of the early Spanish-Portuguese rivalry in the Atlantic, ranging from the Canary Islands to the contact with slave- and gold-producing regions on the African mainland, as well as the imminent threat of the Ottoman Empire. After probing some clear-cut examples of Europeans seizing people from the African coast, illustrated in Gil Eannes de Zurara's famous *Chronicle of the Conquest of Guinea*, he also points out that in actual relationships, Europeans recognized African sovereignty and participated in performances of this sovereignty, as revealed by the meeting between early Portuguese visitors and rulers on the coast of modern-day Ghana, and by the reception in Lisbon of Bemoim, an overthrown king of Great Jolof in Senegal in 1488, as a potentially sovereign ruler.

Bennett also notes that European opinion on these questions was not uniform, there being theorists who contended that a non-Christian country could be sovereign and thus needed to be treated as such, as opposed to those who maintained that non-Christian countries held no particular rights to sovereignty. It seems clear that these various and sometimes contradictory theories could be differentially applied depending on the circumstances of the encounter.

A secondary but important argument concerns the role of commerce outside the role of sovereignty in the development of the slave trade. While early critics of the slave trade had qualms with the ultimate fate of slaves and the relationship between Christianity and slavery, they were prepared to accept that a person, duly enslaved within African law, was fully acceptable as a slave by Christian countries and they need not be concerned about the specifics of the law under which the person was enslaved. Here too, however, Bennett carefully qualifies the statement by noting that just war theorists were uncomfortable both with slaves obtained through trickery and through wars that Africans fought that did not meet the criteria of just war.

Bennett reads the documents in question carefully and contextualizes them thoroughly, and for the cases he considers, provides a convincing case. He did miss, in this reviewer's opinion, one important experience of contact that would both test and extend the argument, that being the encounter with the Kingdom of Kongo. Kongo gets barely a mention in the text, yet in 1488 it sent a fully accredited state-to-state embassy to Lisbon that was received and treated exactly as it would be if it were from a European country. Kongo became Christian in 1491 and sent its formal obedience to the Pope in 1513; by 1518 it had its own bishop. Not only that, but the correspondence between Afonso I Mvemba Nzinga and the kings of Portugal, which ran from 1509 to 1540, engages all the issues of sovereignty that Bennett addresses, but in this case with an African voice and written by a man who had studiously read both the lives of the saints and the Portuguese legal code of 1516.

Similarly, although the African side of the picture — that is, how Africans viewed sovereignty and the role of the state with regard to slavery — is not the author's central concern, it seems that mention should be made of Muslim involvement. The early Portuguese in Senegambia were meeting African Muslims, who were even then beginning to conduct serious discussions about slavery, which were opened in the mid-sixteenth century by Islamic lawyers in Fez and crossed the desert to West Africa; such an analysis might have provided nuance, given the double engagement by the Portuguese with two rather different faces of Islam, in Europe and in Africa.

African Kings and Black Slaves is deeply historiographical and written with passion; it is a work that is likely to spark discussion. It is a worthwhile beginning for anyone interested in understanding the origins of the slave trade, racism, or the status and nature of slavery in Europe and the Americas.

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A WEST AFRICAN BRIDE OF CHRIST IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SPAIN

Black Bride of Christ: Chicaba, an African Nun in Eighteenth-Century Spain.

Edited by Sue E. Houchins and Baltasar Fra-Molinero.

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Key Words: sources, women, religion, slavery, diaspora.

Baltasar Fra-Molinero and Sue E. Houchins have produced, with *Black Bride of Christ: Chicaba, an African Nun in Eighteenth-Century Spain*, the first English translation of the 1764 edition of the *Compendio de la vida ejemplar de la Venerable Madre Sor Teresa Juliana de Santo Domingo*. This is a spiritual biography, or *vida*, of Sor Teresa Chicaba. Chicaba was an African (probably Ewe) woman who professed as a nun of the white veil, a lower-status member of the Dominican convent *La Penitencia*, in Salamanca in 1704. Chicaba (called Teresa in Spain) was born in La Mina Baja de Oro in the Bight of Benin. She was captured, enslaved, brought to Spain, and eventually sold to the Marquesa de Mancera, who was the second wife of the former viceroy of New Spain. Just before the marquesa died, she freed the exceptionally pious Chicaba and left money for her to enter a convent, although finding one willing to admit a black woman was difficult. At *La Penitencia*, Chicaba performed manual labor and lived in the infirmary, separate from other nuns. Despite being marginalized, she was renowned for her piety, healing abilities, and relationship with God. When Chicaba died in 1748 a Theatine priest, Juan Carlos Miguel de Paniagua, wrote a funeral oration and a hagiographic *vida* to promote her for canonization, an effort that continues today. Paniagua claimed to have drawn on Chicaba's writings and conversations he had with her in the months before her death, meaning that she had a role in constructing the *vida*. *Black Bride of Christ* includes the translated *vida* and other materials that provide context.

The volume has three major sections: the first consists of a two-part Introduction by Fra-Molinero and Houchins explaining the genre of spiritual biography and literary influences on Chicaba's *vida*. They explore methods of gleaning information about religious women's thoughts and experiences from biographical texts authored by male clerics. Fra-Molinero and Houchins argue convincingly that the *vida* reveals Chicaba's voice. First, they show that Chicaba was literate; her writings could have thus provided material for the *vida*. Second, they examine places where Chicaba's critiques of slavery and racial discrimination appear in the narrative. For example, a statement about how slavery brought Chicaba