PREFACE

The contents of The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550–1664, had their origin in an international conference of the same title, held in Williamsburg, Virginia, March 4–7, 2004. The intention of the conference and this resulting volume is to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of the Jamestown settlement by approaching it from current historical perspectives on the encounters, collisions, and collaborations of peoples and political entities in North and South America, Africa, and Europe in the period surrounding contact between the inhabitants of Tsenacommacah and Englishmen.

The Osmohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture organized the program. Recognizing the importance of adding an intellectual component to the mix of Jamestown commemorative events, Gillian Cell, then provost of the College of William and Mary, endorsed the undertaking and authorized the College's financial backing. In addition, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, the Reed Foundation, and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities sponsored the conference, along with the Institute. The support of these organizations made possible the convening of Native American tribal representatives from the Chesapeake region and scholars from Africa, Australia, Europe, and the Americas. The sponsors' generous underwriting enabled the convocation of more than seventy participants and facilitated the attendance of about five hundred people at the public four-day event.

In conceptualizing the conference, I envisioned a mosaic of groups, regions, individuals, and influences in play around the Atlantic that formed the backdrop for the establishment of Jamestown in 1607 and the years following to 1664 (at which point the Virginia Company lost the political struggle to retain its outpost on the James, inaugurating royal control over the colony). Published here is a collection of essays developed from the original presentations. The Atlantic World and Virginia's premise is that reaching for a transnational vantage point can augment comprehension of the contacts between peoples from different continents and cultures and the resulting formations of new societies. Shifting forces and internal contexts for political, economic, and cultural domination around the Atlantic littoral in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shaped the context in which the events at Jamestown occurred. The timing of the settlement came at a
Central African appropriation of European forms of diplomacy, religion, and a range of European material culture represented an early African reaction to globalization. Their willingness to be part of the community formed by European expansion differed sharply from the reactions of their counterparts in West Africa, in spite of the notable attempts by the Portuguese to spread their culture there as well. Kongo's receptivity to Europe contrasts strongly with that of Benin, for example, especially with regard to literacy and religion. Although much of this appropriation took place among the elite, who led the process, even common people participated, particularly in the adoption of Barian names, most notably among the Kongoese. Those who might not have owned European clothing were likely to have seen it at festivals or other public gatherings where nobles met commoners and to have associated it with their own, rather than a foreign, culture.

Kongoese and Angolans who came to the Americas were therefore likely to be familiar with aspects of European culture in Virginia. This familiarity might engender both accommodation and resistance: they willingly participated in Christianity, had their children baptized and used their Christian background as a means to gain freedom; alternatively, they resisted as their counterparts in northern Brazil did when they created the runaway republic of Palmares, or as later arrivals in South Carolina did during the Stono Rebellion. In contrast, West Africans who followed them to the Chesapeake, who came from areas whose leaders were less accepting of European culture, were more likely to develop autonomous communities in the newly developing slave quarters. As slavery took root, the two strategies merged in the world of eighteenth-century slave society.49


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IN THE PORTUGUESE ATLANTIC

Every good historian of early English North America is familiar with the story of the "50 and odd Negroes" that arrived in Jamestown in 1619, purchased from a Dutch "man of Warre" by English settlers who themselves arrived in the Chesapeake only some twelve years earlier. We now know that this Dutch ship arrived at Point Comfort from the Caribbean, where it teamed up with the English corsair Treasurer to commandeer the Portuguese slave ship São João Baptista. The São João Baptista was on its way to Vera Cruz, Mexico, directly from the Angolan port of Luanda, where it collected a cargo of enslaved Africans, most likely from the Kingdom of Ndongo, about two hundred miles into Central Africa.5

Despite the almost certain Central African provenance of the piloted "50 and odd Negroes," some scholars have embraced the idea that these Africans, along with the hundreds who followed them over the next generation, were "Atlantic Creoles." Atlantic Creoles originated in coastal Africa and were intimate with European sociocultural norms. They were multilingual, culturally flexible, and socially agile. According to at least one proponent of this argument, these enslaved Africans "found the settlements around

I would like to thank John Coons, Neil Kodeh, and Jessica Krug for commenting on early drafts of this essay. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful suggestions.

Chesapeake Bay little different from those they had left along the Atlantic rim... land very much at home in the new environment.8

Several distinguished American historians have criticized the exaggeration of the Atlantic Creoles argument; yet the idea remains salient, not only in university classrooms but also in the realm of public history, through PBS documentaries like Slavery and the Making of Americans.9 Debates over the character of North America’s “charter generation” of African slaves likely will not cease anytime soon. Nevertheless, everyone seems to agree that the identities of the enslaved were forged through various cultural dialogues that encompass the breadth of the Atlantic world. Nowhere is this more suggestive than in the case of those enslaved Central Africans who passed from Imbangala, to Portuguese, to Dutch, and, finally, to English settlers’ hands in Jamestown in 1619.4

This essay attempts to contextualize the “Creole” identities of Virginia’s charter generation of African slaves, especially those “so, and odd” who arrived in the Americas on board a Portuguese vessel. Comparing and contrasting three different Portuguese Atlantic settings between 1550 and 1644 will demonstrate the historical contingencies of identity formation and suggest some of the variables that shaped the identities of runaway Africans in the early Portuguese Atlantic world. In Portugal, “Jolo” slaves used their Islamic identity to forge connections with “Turks” and “Moors,” with whom they plotted to run away to North Africa. Kinship ties between ethnic Jolos remained important, but the conditions of enslavement necessitated newer, broader alliances. In São Tomé and Brazil, enslaved Africans did not have the option of escaping back to their homelands; thus, they formed runaway communities in their new environments. Throughout history, these


runaway communities have been characterized as essentially “Angolan.” Closer examination reveals the complex and mixed ethnic heritage of runaway communities in both São Tomé and Brazil, particularly in their early years.

In the end, this examination may also shed light on the continuing debates over the complexities of identity formation in early British North America. Like the Jolos in Portugal, the Central Africans who arrived in the Chesapeake in 1619 carried with them ideas and understandings that were deeply etched in their African past. Some of these ideas cohered with those that existed in the lands of their enslavement, and Africans capitalized on this confluence as a means to improve their condition. Still, as the São Tomé and Brazil cases will demonstrate, we must be careful not to generalize the early processes of identity formation in the Chesapeake. Enslaved Africans in early-seventeenth-century Virginia did not forge themselves as Atlantic Creoles, but neither were they able to create Ndongo, Angola, or even Central African communities. Indeed, unlike the situation in other parts of the Atlantic world, the atomization of Africans in early Virginia precluded the creation of slave communities until at least the middle of the seventeenth century.

Portuguese Beginnings

The Atlantic slave trade began, not with the trade to the Americas, but rather with a substantial trade to Portugal and the Atlantic islands. As early as the second decade of the sixteenth century, Portuguese ships carried one thousand African slaves per year to various destinations in Africa, the Atlantic islands, and Portugal itself, making the enslaved the most commonly offered commodity on the African side of the Portuguese-African trade.5 Such a start to the Atlantic slave trade was a clear expression of the potential for African supply and European demand. By the 1540s, more than 150,000 African slaves had been transported to Portugal and its Atlantic island colonies, roughly a third of the number that would be delivered during the entire 450-year history of the slave trade to the territories that would eventua


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The African response to slave life in Portugal was rather predictable. Petty theft was probably the most common form of resistance. Slaves stole fish, grapes, clothes, and much—all items to improve their daily living conditions. Others defied Portuguese law and the Catholic Church, gathering to socialize and gamble on Sundays and holy days. Still others took out their frustrations on their fellow slaves, violently lashing out with fists, clubs, and knives. For those who found their lives particularly intolerable, flight was an option. Unlike most places in the Americas, no runaway slave communities existed in Portugal; there simply were not enough slaves to sustain such communities, and isolated runaways were easily identified. Those who made it across the Castillian border were frequently extirpated to their Portuguese masters. The only sure way to effect successful flight was to land in North Africa, or terra dos mouros (land of the Moors), as it was more commonly known, some three hundred miles from the southern coast of Portugal. Such a trip required a boat and navigational skills or the financial means to pay a boat captain. Although the majority of slaves had none of these resources, some still tried to escape.

African slaves in Portugal attempted to steal boats and return to Africa from as early as the fifteenth century, but not until the 1550s do we see a rash of these attempts, almost always by Senegambian slaves. Indeed, among the slaves imported into Lisbon (and parts of the Americas) in the mid-sixteenth century were large numbers of Islamic Jolofs. The majority of these slaves were captured through warfare in Senegambia, as the coastal provinces of Kajoor, Walal, and Bao broke away from the centralized rule of the Jolof interior. As the Jolof confederation disintegrated in the middle of the sixteenth century, Portuguese traders took advantage of deep political divisions, purchasing slaves from all sides. Whether the political divisions of Senegambia continued to manifest themselves in the slave communities of Europe and the Americas is unclear. The Portuguese identified all en-

6. A. C. de C. M. Saunders, A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen in Por-


7. Saunders, Social History, 50-58, 63-74. On southern Portugal, see Jorge Fon-

sca, Escravos no sul de Portugal, séculos XVI-XVII, Rota do escravo, no. 4 (Lisbon, 2004).


9. Ibid., 124-125. See, for instance, the case of the slave Manoel, who was arrested

for playing dice games "only on Sundays" (Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo here-

after cited as ANTT), Chanceler D. Filipe III, Perdidos e Legados, livro 14, fol. 308-

508v (Oct. 15, 1614). On slaves kidnapping other slaves, see ibid., fol. 201v-211 (Nov. 6, 1613), and livro 12, fol. 51 (July 23, 1652).


11. Ibid., 8, 43-44. On the earliest attempts to steal boats and return to Africa, see Saunders, So-

cial History, 137-148. James Lockhart found 45 "Jolofs" in a sample of 407 Africans in

Peru between 1548 and 1550. These Jolofs constituted the largest group of Africans in

his sample. See Lockhart, Spanish Peru, 1526-1570: A Social History (Madison, Wis.,

1968), 175.
slaved peoples from the region as Jolofs, regardless of their former political affiliations. For slave traders and slaveowners, Jolofs came from the same broad region, spoke the same language, and had at least a marginal belief in Islam. The Portuguese were thus responsible for creating a homogenizing Jolof identity that ignored obvious divisions in northern Senegambian. At the same time, former enemies in Senegambia now had common cause in opposing their enslavement and Portuguese sociocultural hegemony. Many, if not most, of the enslaved quickly recast their identities to adhere to their new condition and context. Ironically, some had to embrace the very Jolof identity they had fought to shed in Senegambia.

Perhaps nowhere is the transformation and expansion of identity in the diaspora clearer than in the realm of religion. As slaves funneled out of Senegambia, they carried their Islamic beliefs with them. This Islamic identity allowed them to forge alliances with fellow slaves in Portugal, not only among fellow Jolofs but also among their Moorish and Turkish religious brethren. Indeed, one of the most striking features of Portuguese slavery for Jolof, Fula, and other Islamic Africans must have been the realization that many slaves shared Islamic faith, regardless of their race or place of birth. Thus, Islam became a central node of identity for many enslaved West Africans in Portugal.

The emergence of an enslaved Muslim community that included significant numbers of Jolofs facilitated the organization of plots to return to Islamic Africa. The majority of these escape attempts failed, but an examination of the individuals involved reveals a great deal about slave identity. Between 1533 and 1566, at least eight Jolof slaves were accused of attempting to return to North Africa. In some of these cases, religious affiliations among diverse Muslims were the inspiration for collective action. In 1561, for instance, an Islamic African named Antônio joined six white Moriscos in a flight attempt. The seven men had already approached an East Indian boatman to carry them to North Africa, but the plot fell apart when one of the ringleaders was arrested and confessed to the Inquisition. Similarly, in 1564, a Jolof slave, also named Antônio, allied himself with two Turks in his attempt to flee to North Africa. Antônio claimed that, despite his baptism in the Catholic Church, he remained a Muslim and never truly became a Christian. The three men procured a boat and were prepared to depart when their plot was uncovered.12

In spite of zealous attempts by some Jolofs to escape, others determined that the risks of flight were too great. In 1554, two Turkish slaves asked a

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12. ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, nos. 10845, 10869.


12. Ibid., 7565. This association of the celebration of Nossa Senhora do Rosário with "the party of the negroes" is significant in that Africans and their descendants were the most prominent devotees of Our Lady of Rosary. Saunders notes that the majority of black religious brotherhoods were dedicated to Our Lady of Rosary because of the "semi-magical, almost talismanic nature of the rosary itself." See Saunders, Social History, 152.

13. ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, no. 7565.

arranged a day and time for their departure and agreed to meet at the boatman's house. In the interim, Zambo met an older Jołof man named Pedro, who asked if he could come along with them. Zambo agreed and also persuaded a thirteen-year-old Jołof girl, Antónia, to make the journey. Zambo, Antónia, and Pedro arrived at the boatman's house at the appointed time. After waiting several hours for Antónia, the three Jołofs departed without their comrade. Just as they were leaving their boat, they were captured by the police.13

In his defense before the Inquisition, Zambo claimed that Antónia had tricked him, forcing him to make the trip against his will. He noted that Antónia was an old man and had been in Portugal for many years. Explaining his own naivety and that of the other Jołofs, Zambo told inquisitors that he had been in Portugal for only five years; Antónia had arrived the same year he had; and Pedro was "very bony," having arrived only within the year. Zambo attempted to further protect the young girl, Antónia, by telling inquisitors that he had forced her to join them. Ultimately, Zambo was sentenced to march in the Auto da Fé of 1567 and to undergo instruction in the faith.14

In the course of his interrogation, Zambo confessed that, even after being baptized in the Catholic Church, he remained committed to Mohammed and continued to recite Islamic orations. Nevertheless, his involvement in the plot to escape seemed to have far more to do with kinship than religion. The kinlike relationship that was forged between him and the older man, Antónia, was cemented at the moment Zambo told him, "Brother, let's go." Moreover, Zambo took responsibility for a young Jołof girl who was particularly vulnerable. Finally, the recently arrived Pedro also was taken under Zambo's wing. Given Pedro's neophyte status in Portugal, he probably could communicate only in the Wolof language. Indeed, the first language of all the conspirators was likely the language of their common homeland.

Several lessons can be learned from the escape attempts of Jołofs slaves in sixteenth-century Portugal. Even though Jołofs formed only a small group in Portugal, they found a much larger community of enslaved Muslims who could serve as potential allies. From as early as 1455, European travelers in Africa noted that the Jołofs were "not . . . very resolute" in their practice of Islam, "especially the common people." 17 Islam in Senegambia remained intertwined with beliefs in ancestral spirits and spirits from the natural world. Nevertheless, in Portugal, religious solidarity between enslaved Jołofs, Turks, and Moors served as a basis for resistance to slavery. For some Jołofs, religious identity probably took on far greater importance in Portugal than it had in their homeland, strengthening the Islamic presence that Portuguese Catholics sought to eradicate.

Moreover, even as Islamic religious identity took on new importance, kinship and kinlike networks remained paramount. Where they could, Jołofs sought out one another, engaged one another in conversation, and sought solutions to their collective condition. As Zambo's case illustrates, runaway attempts were not conspiracies by random slaves. They were built on affinities that began in Africa through a shared language, a shared understanding of age and kinship obligations, and so on. In the end, Jołof identity in Portugal was simultaneously shaped by the Portuguese present and the African past, as the various cultural strands fused to create a new culture of resistance to slavery in Portugal.

Developing Communities of Runaway: São Tomé and Brasil

During roughly the same period that Jołofs slaves were banding together to run away from their masters in Portugal, similar groups of slaves formed the Portuguese Atlantic's first runaway communities in São Tomé and Brazil. The history of runaway slave communities is intimately tied to some of the most important foundational myths of each of these countries. In São Tomé, the communities of Angolares have been held up as a bastion of Angolan-derived resistance to Portuguese colonialism. Similarly, in Brazil, the communities of Palmares have served to demonstrate the rejection of the colonial slave regime and the creation of an independent, Angolan-inspired "republic" in Pernambuco (present-day Alagoas). Although there is some degree of truth in each of these myths, the history of these societies is often collapsed into a timeless composite. In fact, it often seems that these runaway communities have no history at all. As rendered in much of the scholarly literature, these communities attained their essential characters almost from their inception and carried them forward into subsequent centuries. Following is an attempt to unravel the earliest histories of these famous runaway communities and to add some historical specificity to the foundational myths.

In the sixteenth century, São Tomé became the Atlantic's first true "sugar 15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Afric da Cunmun, The Voyages of Cunmun and Other Documents on West-
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honestead. By this time, the communities were self-replicating. During one entry in 1547, a planter and his armed slaves captured 40 fugitives, including women and children.28 The cycle of runaways, assaults on the island's city, and the responses of armed militias continued throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, culminating in the 1590s in a series of bold attacks by the runaways on the island’s major city, led by a man named Ama-
dor. The city of São Tomé was nearly overthrown in 1595. Though Amandor was arrested and executed in 1597, runaways continued to plague the island well into the seventeenth century.

Despite the clear narrative of events leading to the buildup of São Tomé’s runaway slave communities, described above, the dominant historiography of the island reveals a very different account. Indeed, the early history of runaway communities is practically erased in favor of a more dramatic story emanating from eighteenth-century oral history.29 A group of enslaved Afri-
cans, known as Angolares, were shipwrecked off the coast of São Tomé in 1554. Supposedly, they were on their way from Angola to Brazil. The survivors of the wreck swam ashore and settled in the southern hinter-
lands of the island, building several small quilombos (runaway communities) on Mount Camumbú. There, they continued to speak the Kinkundu language and to live according to Angolan customs. The first contacts be-
tween the Angolares and the island’s other inhabitants allegedly came when runaways from the island’s sugar plantations were welcomed into the An-
golares community. Not until 1774 did the Portuguese learn of the Ango-
lares, when the residents of the quilombo made their first raids on the city of São Tomé. Throughout the latter part of the sixteenth century, the Por-
tuguese attempted to eradicate the Angolares, conducting military expedi-
tions against the villages, but the Angolares were never vanquished.30 Sup-
posedly, the Angolar communities maintained their ethnic integrity well into the nineteenth century, as the inhabitants remained "kikishits and au-
niales, XXXIX (1956), 154-155 (report of Bishop Ulhoa, ca. 1550). For the treatment of slaves in Bahia in the 1650s, see Father Antônio Rodrigues’s report that an overseer knew "how to treat the blacks better than the Negroes" (ANTT, Cartório dos Jesuítas, map. 69, fol. 73).

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References
28. This version of events can be found in Francisco Torelhe, A Ílha de São Tomé (Lisbon, 1971), 63-73; and Garfield, History of São Tomé Island, 76-79.
perilous like the Negro from Angola. They also purportedly held property in common, elected kings and chiefs, and spoke a language that was a mix of São Tomé dialect and Kimbundu.56

Several historians have questioned the veracity of the Angola legend, noting that the mention of shipwrecks and the term "Angolas" do not appear in the documents until the eighteenth century. Moreover, until the middle of the sixteenth century, the majority of São Tomé's slaves were imported from Congo, not Angola. Others came from the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra.57 The early runaway communities of São Tomé were thus a peculiarly Slavonense phenomenon, reflecting the mixture of various African and Portuguese cultural influences. The later emphasis on Angolas may be explained by the increased presence of Angolaans in São Tomé beginning in the last decades of the sixteenth century, or it may be an error of the eighteenth-century oral sources, since the ethnic signifier "Angola" had come to mean any area along the West Central African coast, including Konga. Certainly, São Tomé's "bush wars" of the late sixteenth century were not the direct legacy of a single shipwreck of Angolas; rather, they were the result of a mixed group of Africans who came together in the slave communities and forests of the island to assert their freedom.

Even as the city of São Tomé withered under Amador's siege in the mid-1590s, African slaves were creating the first significant runaway communities in Brazil. The connection between the two situations was not lost on the Portuguese. In 1597, the Jesuit priest, Pedro Rodrigues, noted that among the enemies of the Portuguese in Brazil were "the runaway negroes from Guinea who are in some of the mountains of Brazil from whence they come to make raids, and there could come a time when they will dare to destroy the fazendas [cane farms], as their relatives do on the island of São Tomé." Of course, Father Rodrigues's prediction soon came to pass. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, runaway plagues plagued Portuguese settlements from Bahia to Pernambuco. In a report describing the Jesuit mission to the Bahian Recôncavo in 1617, an anonymous priest wrote:

The people from Angola who come to these parts... have the custom of fleeing to the woods, joining together in small groups and living from the assaults that they make on the residents, stealing livestock and destroying their crops and cattle fields, which results in much damage and many losses, beyond those losses that come from the lack of their daily services. And many of them live for many years in the woods, and some never return because they go to the Mocambos, which are some small villages... where they live many leagues inside the forest. And from there, they make their assaults, robbing and attacking and often times killing many. And in these assaults they try to carry away their male and female kinsemen to live with them as pagans.58

Little detail is known about these first African runaways, but Brazil's most famous runaway slave community, Palmares, also allegedly emerged during this early period in the southern part of Pernambuco. Like the history of the Angolares in São Tomé, the long history of Palmares has been distorted to reflect a dominant Angolan presence, albeit with influences from Brazilian-born blacks, Indians, and even whites. Based largely on documentation from the late seventeenth century, scholars have focused on the characterization of Palmares as an Angolan-derived quilombo. They also have emphasized important symbolic connections to Angola; members of the community called it "Angola jangá" (little Angola), its leader was known as Ganga Zumba, and so on.59 Robert Anderson has raised questions about the extent to which Palmares was Angolan in the late

57. See Jan Vanuiva, "Quilombos na Sáo Tomé: or, In Search of Original Sources," History in Africa, XXIII (1996), 422-431; and Gerhard Siberti, "A Questão da origem dos Angolares na Sáo Tomé," Breve Depoimento, no. 5/98, Centro de Estudos Africanos, Lisbon, 1998. John Thornton notes that imports from Mânda to São Tomé rose from 5,000-3,000 in the 1520s to 6,000-7,000 in the 1530s, to as many as 6,000-7,000 in 1548 (Thornton, Early Congo-Portuguese Relations: A New Interpretation, History in Africa, VIII (1971), 185-204. Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census (Madison, Wis., 1969), 299-310, estimates that roughly 40 percent of São Tomé's slaves came from the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra.

58. Archivos Romanos Societas Iesu (hereafter cited as ARS), Brasilia 46, fol. 24v, Brasilia 8, 1, fols. 45-47. The report is also quoted in Stuart B. Schwartz, slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery (Urbana, Ill., 1998), 125.

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seventeenth century. He notes that the population of Palmares was, by that
time, largely Brazilian-born. Moreover, recent archaeological evidence sug-
gests that there was a strong indigenous presence at Palmares in its later
years. These findings clearly demonstrate that Palmares underwent im-
portant transformations over the course of its history, but they reveal very
little about the earliest years of the famous runaway community. When
did Palmares take on its Angolan qualities? Were the Angolans influences
a result of the first generations of slaves in Pernambuco, or did they come
later?

Though we may never be able to answer these questions completely, one
thing is clear: there is little evidence to suggest a preponderance of An-
golan influences in the earliest manifestations of Palmares. Some scholars
claim that the first runaway communities of Palmares emerged in the late
sixteenth century.16 If so, we can be almost certain that Palmares began
as a mixed community of Indians and Africans of various backgrounds.
Until the last decades of the sixteenth century, Brazil’s slave population was
made up largely of indigenous peoples. Africans began arriving in signifi-
cant numbers around the middle of the sixteenth century from a variety of
destinations, although Central Africa became the dominant source for the
slave trade by the 1550s. Evidence suggests that the first groups of run-
aways were a reflection of this mixed slave population. In particular, run-
away Africans joined so-called saindades, renegade communities that have
long been associated with indigenous millenarianism. The saindade cult of
Jaguaribe, Bahia, is perhaps the best known. There, Indian, African, and
mixed-race runaways formed a religious community that sought to over-
throw Portuguese slaveowners and to make themselves “lords of the white
people.” Adherents engaged in prayer, baptism, speaking in tongues, and
trances induced by alcohol and tobacco. Believers claimed that, once God
freed them from the yoke of white supremacy, crops would grow abundantly
without any attendance, hunters’ arrows would travel through the woods in
search of prey while the hunters rested, and so on.17

Whether Africans understood the full implications of the Christian mes-
sage elicited by saindades is impossible to know; the message of free-
edom was one that would have appealed to all slaves, however, regardless
of background. The prospect of freedom in the saindades thus might have
facilitated a redemptionist form of Christianity in some Africans. This
message would have been particularly resonant with those handfuls of
Central Africans who already had some contact with Christianity in Africa, a
Christianity that was itself endowed with a healthy dose of redemptionist
magic.18

Regardless of whether religion was part of what drew Africans to sain-
dades, across Brazil during the sixteenth century the formula held that
Africans joined Indians in their communities. For example, in 1588, Philip I
took to the government of Brazil, Francisco Giraldes: “I am informed that . . .
between the caciques of Bahia and Pernambuco, along the coast, there are
more than three thousand Indians that have made fortifications, and they
make . . . great damage on the farms of my vassals in those parts, drawing
to their sides all the Guinean negroes that have run away, and they impede
the ability to travel from one cacique to another.”19 Given the preponderance
of Indian slaves in the sixteenth century, runaway and renegade communi-
ties were usually characterized as Indiam. The earliest Africans found them-
"selves more isolated from their African brethren than would later cohorts.

a Maroon State in Seventeenth-Century Brazil,” Journal of Latin American
Studies, XXVIII (1996), 541-576. Anderson uncovers a number of problems with Kent’s re-
search, including errors in Portuguese translation and faulty historical interpretations.

17. Pedro Paulo de Abreu Pimentel, “A Arqueologia de Palmares—Sua contribuição para o
conhecimento da história da cultura afro-americana,” in João José Reis and Flávio dos
Santos Gomes, eds., Liberdro por um fio: História das quilombolas no Brasil (São Paulo,
1991), 46-51. More recently, see Fonari, “Conflict and the Interpretation of Palmares,
a Brazilian Runaway Paty,” Historical Archaeology, XXVII (2003), 81-95.

18. Freitas, Palmares, 15. See also Ronaldo Vilela, “Deus contra Palmares: Repre-
sentações anarcasílicas e idéias jesuíticas,” in Reis and Santos Gomes, eds., Liberdro por um fio,
of African American Culture and History: The Black Experience in the Americas, 2d
ed. (New York, 2003), 1713-1716.

19. See, for example, Stuart B. Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Soci-
ty: Bahia, 1520-1735 (Cambridge, 1983), 47-50; and, more recently, Alida C. Met-
call, “Millenarian Slaves? The Saindade de Jaguaribe and Slave Resistance in the

20. For Christianity in Central Africa, see the various works of John K. Thornton, es-
specially “The Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Kongolo,
1481-1700,” Journal of African History, XXV (1984), 147-167; “Perspectives on Afi-
can Christianity,” in Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Tisa Nettelford, eds., Race, Disease,
and the Making of the Americas: A New World View (Washington, D.C., 1995), 169-
191; and “Religion and Cultural Life in the Kongolo and Mbundu Areas, 1500-1800,”
in Linda Heywood, ed., Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the Ameri-
can Diaspora (Cambridge, 2004), 71-90.

21. Instituto do Arquivo e do Acervo, Documentos para a história do apique (Rio de
Janeiro, 1965), 1, 239-350.

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As such, they allied themselves with Indians in a variety of settings, usually known as sanitades, as a way of escaping their servitude.

Over time, as more and more Africans began to arrive in Brazil, the Portuguese conflated the meanings of "santidade" and "mocambos" (the Kimbundu word for "slaves"). On the one hand, this was a logical shift in the perception of the residents, as prototypical runaway communities shifted from Indian to African. On the other hand, this conflation was an expression of continued alliances between Indians and Central Africans. In 1612, for example, Diogo de Campos Moreno claimed, "Indians run away to the forest...where they create...abominable rituals and behaviors, joining the negroes from Guiné, who have also run away, which results in deaths, thefts, scandals, and violence, so that nobody is able to cross the backlands safely from one part to the other, nor are they able to expand the settlements further into the interior." Moreno noted that these were "mocambos among the negroes, or gatherings of runaways that are called Santidades." 32

Not only did Moreno use the terms "mocambos" and "santidades" synonymously, but also his statements demonstrate that, by the second decade of the seventeenth century, Indians were beginning to join well-established African communities, rather than the other way around. Slowly but surely, santidades were giving way to mocambos, as Central Africans supplanted other Africans and Indians in Brazil's slave population.

The use of the Kimbundu term "mocambos" as early as 1612 is a watershed in the history of Brazilian runaway communities. Distinctly Central African ideas were already becoming salient enough to penetrate into the Portuguese vernacular, as the Kimbundu "hídeous" became the preferred way of describing runaway slave communities. Yet there is no evidence that these communities were quilombos, the lineageless warrior groups of Angola that were allegedly the inspiration for the social organization of Palmares. The first known use of the term "quilombo" in Brazilian documents does not occur until 1651. Indeed, the first use of the term in the entire Portuguese-speaking world appears as late as 1670 in Angola. 33 That Palmares, or any of the early runaway communities in Brazil, were called quilombos by their inhabitants, or by the Portuguese, is thus highly unlikely.

32. Other scholars have noted this same trend. See, for instance, Irmã Alves Félix, Memoriai dos Palmares (Rio de Janeiro, 1988), 10-11; and Metcalf, "The Santidade of Jangarípea," AHR, CV (1999), 1023-1059.

33. Diogo de Campos Moreno, Livro do Brasil do estado do Brasil—1612 (Recife, 1953), 159, 175.

34. Schwarze, Slave, Peasant, and Rebel, 183; Vasina, "Quilombos on São Tomé," History in Africa, XXIII (1996), 425.

So how and when did Palmares shift from "mocambos" to "quilombos"? Events on both sides of the Atlantic probably contributed to this shift. Marauding bands of warriors, who called themselves Imbangala, emerged in Central Africa from as early as the 1560s, organizing themselves into quilombo, merit-based, male warrior societies that cut across lineage boundaries, erasing ties based on maternal descent. These lineageless warrior societies were a pragmatic solution to the fracturing of kinal leadership caused by drought, famine, war, and forced migration that plagued Central Africa from the 1700s to the 1950s. By the 1690s, Portuguese governors in Angola employed quilombos as mercenaries to capture hundreds of slaves in the regions around Luanda. These slaves, large numbers of whom were funneled into Brazil, came from diverse backgrounds, but generally they were from the Kikongo-speaking regions to the north of Luanda and the Kimbundu-speaking regions south of the Kwanza River. In the ensuing chaos created by Imbangala assaults, many people were forced to abandon their ancestral homes and regroup in the rugged highlands, often with unrelated strangers. The military-corporate organization of these refugee communities was not at all unlike the maroon communities that would later emerge in the Americas. 34

Nar was the social hierarchy of these refugee communities far removed from the organization of the Imbangala. For those who would arrive in Brazil from diffuse Central African refugee communities, the quilombo provided a unifying template for lineageless social organization, despite the associations with their own enslavement. 35

On the Brazilian side, the Dutch invasion of Pernambuco in the early 1640s provided slaves with ripe opportunities to abandon the plantations and flee for the forests. The Dutch probably imported small numbers of slaves through the 1640s, but the conflict and disruption caused by the power struggles in Pernambuco and Luanda almost certainly inhibited the flow of slaves to the region. 36


35. The inhabitants of Palmares allegedly enslaved some of the people that they captured in their raids. From this perspective, maladjustment is simply a potential outcome of warfare.

36. The Dutch invaded Pernambuco in 1649 and were not expelled until 1654. They

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campaigns against the runaway communities of southern Pernambuco, indicating the growing strength and unity of these communities. During this period, the social organization of the quilombos likely began to take shape.

Thus, there were no quilombos in Brazil before 1644. Historians continue to cast the earliest runaway communities as quilombos, however, particularly owing to the nature of the source materials on Palmares. Since almost all of our knowledge about the Palmares comes from documents written in the 1660s and 1670s, historians tend to collapse the first ninety years of its history into the final ten years, distilling the community's long history into a snapshot of the quilombo. Moreover, the term "quilombo" has come to mean any runaway slave community in Brazil, significantly broadening the narrower, seventeenth-century definition of the term, thus casting a more unified, militant, African light on slave resistance and black power in Brazil. To the extent that the term "quilombo" homogenizes a much more complicated early history of Palmares, it is not unlike the foundational myth of São Tomé's Angola communities.

The three cases of slave resistance presented here—Portugal, São Tomé, and northeast Brazil—demonstrate the complex interplay between history, politics, and identity. In particular, they reveal how early histories are subject to constraining, transformation, and even erasure. In sixteenth-century Portugal, African slavery was not uncommon; yet there is a fairly widely held belief among educated Portuguese that there were never slaves in Portugal. Others believe slaves arrived in Portugal only as appendages of their Brazilian masters. In other words, African slavery in Portugal was incidental to the colonial and, especially, the Brazilian experience. The early history of Africans in Portugal is often forgotten as a result, because slavery is tied to colonial exploits in the Atlantic world outside Portugal. This erasure of slavery in Portugal is particularly unfortunate, since so many facets of it tie directly to the burgeoning Atlantic world.

Also seized Launda in 1541, only to be removed in 1548. On the slave trade, see David Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment," WRIQ, 56 Ser., LVIII (2001), 17-46.


52. An example of the Portuguese apology for slavery can be found in no less a figure than the Duke of Bragança, who in August 1600 wrote that works by foreign scholars, emphasizing Portugal's slave past, are examples of the "falseification of hist-

São Tomé and northeast Brazil demonstrate different, but no less problematic, trends. The combination of sloppy methodology and the influences of presentist politics can significantly alter the ways we interpret the past. The early histories of the most famous runaway slave communities in São Tomé and Brazil, as shown above, are more complicated than the foundational myths allow. Though the romanticism and political power of revisionist histories might be transformed when we dig deeply into these myths, we more clearly reveal the complex historical processes of an Afro-Atlantic world in formation.

In Portugal, African identity was a determining factor in who attempted to escape from slavery in the middle of the sixteenth century, but this identity was far more nuanced than simple ethnicity. Jofoa shared cultural traits with other Jofoas, but they were also marginally Islamic. As such, Jofoas forged alliances with other non-Jofoa Turks and Moors to mitigate the effects of their shared slavery. For some Jofoas, their Muslim identity likely became dominant in Portugal. For others, however, the ethnic past took precedence, as atomized Jofoas sought out one another in urban settings like Lisbon. The bottom line was much the same: the recasting or reassertion of identities in Portugal was aimed, in part, at liberation from enslavement.

For Central Africans in São Tomé and Brazil, the possibility of escape to an ethnic or religious homeland was not possible in the same way that it was for Jofoas in Portugal. The alternative was the formation of runaway communities in the countries of their enslavement. All evidence suggests that the earliest runaways went in small groups of two or three, only constituting larger communities as these small groups came together over time. In São Tomé, these runaways included slaves from the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra as well as those from Central Africa. In Brazil, the first small groups of runaways ran to settlements that had already been established by Indians. Thus, identity was shaped largely by conditions of the particular slave society. Only under the influence of increasing numbers of Central Africans did these dispersed groups come together to form what would later be characterized as African-derived quilombos.

Ultimately, the identities of runaway slaves in the Atlantic world shifted in accordance with transformations in Africa and the diaspora. Joseph Miller's conclusion that "the transatlantic connection lies less in the transfer of..." prompted by a "war which some countries launched against Portugal" (Letters to the Editor, Anglo-Portuguese News [Lisbon], Aug. 17, 1900). See Howard B. Johnson, "Storm over Sagres: or, How a Book Review Caused a Duke to Lose His Cool," http://www.people.virginia.edu/~bbjln/storm.pdf.

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an integral set of practices than in ad hoc strategies of assembling new communities out of refugees of the most disparate backgrounds" is to a large extent correct.49 Beliefs and practices evolved and were cast anew in the environments of the diaspora, but no more so than they were under similar shifts in the social, political, or economic conditions of Africa itself. Indeed, it is very difficult even to talk about "Integral" (that is, ethnic) practices in early-seventeenth-century Angola, where thousands of people were already dislocated refugees and runaways before their entry into the Atlantic slave trade. Nevertheless, many of these Central Africans shared the refugee experience and equipped themselves with commonly understood ways of reconstituting their identities. Assembling new communities often went hand in hand with the creation of new sets of social and cultural practices that could be understood by all. The development of shared languages, religious beliefs, and social structures resulted in integrally Central African forms that were transferred to places like Brazil through a Kimbundu lingua franca, a broadly shared belief in the power of ancestral spirits (bilibanda), and lineage hierarchies like the Kibondo. The peculiarities of various American slave settings no doubt led to alterations in the function of Central African practices, but the forms often remained the same. Thus, the cultural flexibility and adaptability that have so often been associated with slave communities in the Americas were already institutionalized in various Central African social and cultural forms, forms that were also essential to cultural survival and transformation in the diaspora. These integrally Central African forms were especially evident in places like seventeenth-century Brazil, where Central Africans made up more than 90 percent of the enslaved population.

The dynamic interplay between the history of Africa and the history of the diaspora transcends the three cases discussed here, bearing strongly on the history of the entire Atlantic world. Research on the slave trade increasingly enables us to trace the origins of groups of enslaved Africans, if not by particular ethnicity, then certainly by "provenance."50 By reading the history of enslaved African peoples, moving forward in time we are able to gain a much better insight into historical change among Africans in various diasporic destinations. Moreover, we can begin to compare the experiences of common sets of Africans, noting how their identities diverged from one another in the diaspora.

During roughly the same period that Jolofs tried to flee from Portugal to North Africa, for example, runaway Jolof slaves in Santo Domingo stole horses from their Spanish masters, attacking colonial settlements on the island. In this way, they capitalized on cavalry skills learned in their homelands.44 The toolbox from which these Jolofs drew their weapons of resistance was the same one that was used by Jolofs in Lisbon; however, their tool of choice was dictated by the context of their enslavement. Whereas Jolofs in Lisbon drew on their Islamic identity and their knowledge of nearby North Africa, Jolofs in Santo Domingo capitalized on their knowledge of Spanish horses. Ironically, the tools of resistance that were used by these widely scattered, enslaved Jolofs were the result of knowledge gained in earlier cultural exchanges with Arab Muslims and Portuguese in Africa. To that end, what was integrally Jolof was already integrally Atlantic, even in the sixteenth century.

These same lessons regarding continuity, change, and disjunctures in the diaspora can be seen in the experiences of the first African slaves in English-speaking North America. If the "so and odd" Africans arriving in Virginia in 1619 were Central Africans from the Kingdom of Ndongo, how might they have been the same or different from those from Ndongo in northeastern Brazil who would contribute to the early manifestations of Palmares? How might they have compared to others from Ndongo who were arriving in Cartagena, New Granada (Colombia)?

Among other things, many of these Central Africans likely shared a rudimentary understanding of Catholicism. In the 1630s, Jesuit Father Alonso de Sandeval commented at length on the instruction needed to prepare African slaves for baptism in Cartagena. In discussing Central Africans, he noted, "If they are from Angola, Bengala, Conga, and Maxemba, etc., they ordinarily bring enough knowledge to be validly baptized."44 This prior knowledge of Catholicism was only one of the possible tools that could be used by Central Africans to help ameliorate their condition as slaves. In Brazil, as already noted, a certain form of redemptionist Christianity

42. Alonso P. de Sandeval, De instauranda ethnicae salutis: El mundo de la esclavitud negra en America (Bogotá, 1955), 310 (emphasis added).

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might have animated the first Africans who fled to the saintedales. During this period, the idiom of resistance was a shared Indian-African millenarism that included elements of Christianity. But, over the course of the seventeenth century, as Central Africans came to dominate the slave population, they were able to re-create core cultural expressions from their African pasts, calling upon their ancestors in a variety of healing and divination rituals aimed at curing physical ailments and contesting their enslavement. In places where Central Africans constituted the majority of the population, as in much of northeastern Brazil, these beliefs and rituals had far greater resonance than the elemental, Africanized Catholicism that some might have learned in their homelands. Moreover, Catholicism in Brazilian slave society often came with Bible in one hand and whip in the other. Ultimately, Central African healing and divination were viewed as more powerful weapons against the institution of slavery than the Catholicism that was most closely associated with the raw power of masters.44

In places like early Virginia, the possibilities of re-creating distinctly Central African beliefs were far more remote than in seventeenth-century Brazil. Isolated and atomized from their countrymen, the “2o. and odd” Central Africans were more likely to find an outlet for their Christian beliefs than for any other forms of Ndongo or even broadly conceived Central African beliefs. Their proximity to their masters and, particularly, to white indentured servants meant that these earliest Central Africans, and those that followed them in the seventeenth century, were more fully integrated into the day-to-day affairs of English colonial life, including the practice of Christianity. Here, Central Africans quickly came to understand that Christian practices (however Catholicized or Africanized) were a potential passageway to an improved condition, perhaps even freedom. Indeed, this nascent African-Christian identity, combined with integration into communities of British indentured laborers, some of whom were Irish Catholics, probably gave further to explain the development of cultural expressions in early Virginia than the presence of so-called Atlantic Creoles among the first

44. During the seventeenth century, several Irish women were known to have had relationships with black slaves in the Chesapeake. The most famous of these, “Irish Neal” Butler, married the “saltouer” slave, Charles, in a Catholic wedding in 1681. Similarly, in 1719, an “Irish woman named Grace [was] married to a Negro man” (Martha Fouris, White Women, Black Men: interracial marriages in the Southern frontier, 1670-1860). The extent of Irish-African alliances and Catholic resistance in early Virginia can only remain speculation. By 1700, however, the rising numbers of Irish servants alarmed some English colonists, who feared the growth of Catholicism. See Margaret M. R. Kellow, “Indentured Servitude in Eighteenth-Century Maryland,” Historical Society of Maryland, XXV (1967), 456-457. For Irish-African alliances in the British Caribbean, see Hilary McConkie Boki, “A ‘Ratsone and Lusty Lad’: Irish Indentured Servants and Piracy in the English West Indies, 1644-1713,” WMQ, 3d Ser., XLVII (1990), 203-216. For a fine recontextualization of the cultural exchanges between white servants and blacks slaves, see John C. Combs, “Building the Machine: the Development of Slavery and Slave Society in Early Colonial Virginia” (Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 2000).

45. Perhaps the most obvious case of Christian expression is that of Anthony Johnson, who almost immediately after arriving in the colony in 1619 married a woman named Mary. Their four children were also baptized in the Anglican Church.

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