

*Studies in Comparative World History*

*Editors*

Michael Adas, Rutgers University  
Edmund Burke III, University of California, Santa Cruz  
Philip D. Curtin, The Johns Hopkins University

*Other books in the series*

- Michael Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order* (1979)  
Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (1984)  
Leo Spitzer, *Lives in Between: Assimilation and Marginality in Austria, Brazil, and West Africa, 1780–1945* (1989)  
John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1680* (1992)  
Marshall G. S. Hodgson and Edmund Burke III (eds.), *Rethinking World History* (1993)  
David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834–1922* (1995)

Africa and Africans in  
the making of the  
Atlantic world, 1400–1800

*Second edition*

JOHN THORNTON

 CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK <http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk>  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA <http://www.cup.org>  
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© John Thornton 1992, 1998

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without  
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First edition published 1992  
Second edition published 1998

Printed in the United States of America

Typeset in Palatino 10/12

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Thornton, John Kelly, 1949–  
Africa and Africans in the making of the Atlantic world, 1400–1800  
– 2nd [expanded] ed.

p. cm.

Rev. ed. of: Africa and Africans in the making of the Atlantic  
world, 1400–1680. 1992.

Includes bibliographical references (p. ) and index.

ISBN 0-521-62217-4. – ISBN 0-521-62724-9 (pbk.)

1. Africa – Relations – Europe. 2. Europe – Relations – Africa.  
3. Africa – Relations – America. 4. America – Relations – Africa.

5. Slavery. 6. Europe – History – 1492–1648. I. Thornton, John  
Kelly, 1949– Africa and Africans in the making of the Atlantic

world, 1400–1680. II. Title.

DT31.T516 1997

303.48'2604 – dc21

97-39728

*A catalog record for this book is available from  
the British Library.*

ISBN 0-521-62217-4 hardback

ISBN 0-521-62724-9 paperback

## Contents

Preface to the second edition	page vii
Abbreviations	ix
Maps	x
Source notes for Maps 1–3	xv
Introduction	1
<i>Part I Africans in Africa</i>	
1 The birth of an Atlantic world	13
2 The development of commerce between Europeans and Africans	43
3 Slavery and African social structure	72
4 The process of enslavement and the slave trade	98
<i>Part II Africans in the New World</i>	
5 Africans in colonial Atlantic societies	129
6 Africans and Afro-Americans in the Atlantic world: life and labor	152
7 African cultural groups in the Atlantic world	183
8 Transformations of African culture in the Atlantic world	206
9 African religions and Christianity in the Atlantic world	235
10 Resistance, runaways, and rebels	272
11 Africans in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world	304
Index	335

interracial love or marriage.<sup>160</sup> Cases of rape cannot be documented particularly well, although the Inquisition records in Brazil give us some insight into homosexual liaisons. Because any homosexual contact was considered a crime and a sin, the Inquisition recorded details that might be overlooked in heterosexual relations. On some occasions slaves appear to have been raped by their masters; in others it was apparently a voluntary participation.<sup>161</sup>

Clearly, however, these household slaves had the opportunity to socialize, develop friendships, and be involved in cultural activities. Some, such as the mistresses or lovers of their masters, may have been almost totally acculturated, which seems to have been the case of the Brazilian slaves Juliana and Ines, slaves who were "*ladinas* and raised among the whites." However, sometimes masters may have preferred what they considered exotic and encouraged African norms of conduct. It is clear that no matter how exploitative the institution of slavery was, or how traumatic the Middle Passage and subsequent enslavement were, the condition itself was unlikely to result in a permanent state of psychological shock. Furthermore, even in the most brutal of slave systems, slave communities formed, children were raised, and culture was maintained, altered, and transmitted. Clearly, the condition of slavery, by itself, did not necessarily prevent the development of an African-oriented culture.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, pp. 154-9.

<sup>161</sup> Luiz R. B. Mott, "Escravidão e homossexualidade," in Ronaldo Vainfas, ed., *História e Sexualidade no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1986), pp. 33-40.

## 7

## African cultural groups in the Atlantic world

Clearly the condition of slavery, however bad it was, was not sufficiently bad to prevent the development of a reasonably self-sustaining slave community. This community, though often demographically unbalanced, nevertheless managed to create a creole generation and thus had the potential to maintain and transmit its own culture. But what type of culture developed among the slave societies of the Atlantic basin?

Historians have traditionally been divided on this issue, some arguing that the slaves maintained an African culture and that African influence was significant in the resulting Afro-Atlantic culture, others maintaining that the cultural disorganization of slave society made them much more dependent upon the culture of the Europeans or Euro-Americans.<sup>1</sup> Modern research has dispensed with the original dichotomous positions of the 1940s. Current thinking, while hardly reaching a consensus, can be well represented by the work of Mintz and Price, anthropologists who have sought to understand the dynamics of the formation of Afro-American, and specifically Afro-Caribbean, culture.<sup>2</sup> They begin by arguing that the conditions of the slave trade and slavery prevented the direct transmission of African culture to the Americas. In the first case, African culture was not homogeneous enough to constitute a single cultural block; instead, dozens, if not more, independent cultures were involved (Map 5). Second, the slave trade tended to randomize slaves, grouping those of disparate cultures together, unlike European migration, which tended to occur in blocks of people from the same area traveling and settling in the Americas together. African immigrants were not a group (homogeneous culture) but a "crowd" (disparate cultures with no prior contact), and an entirely new social structure and organiza-

<sup>1</sup> Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston, 1941); Frazier, *Negro Family*; Frazier, *Negro Church*.

<sup>2</sup> Mintz and Price, *Afro-American Past*.

tion had to be created, starting with the "dyad" of two slaves sharing the same space on the slave ship.<sup>3</sup>

Lacking the ethnic and cultural specificity necessary to maintain or recreate their African culture in the Americas, the slaves necessarily had to form a new culture. To be sure, this new culture had African roots, from a sort of least common denominator of the many and varied African cultures that served as its building blocks, but it was built in a context in which elements of the European culture served as linking materials. Moreover, not only was European culture pervasive in the slave society, but it was much more homogeneous than the various African cultures, giving it a coherence that the Africans lacked. The resulting mixture was distinctly European and Euro-American oriented, with the African elements giving it flavor rather than substance.<sup>4</sup>

An evaluation of the role of African slaves in forming American culture must consider all these issues. First, how culturally heterogeneous were the slaves who came to America? Second, how successful were Africans in interacting with other Africans who shared their culture (in a culturally heterogeneous situation) in the American setting of plantation, mine, or town? Finally, what were the dynamics of cultural development and change that transformed the various African cultures into Afro-Atlantic cultures? This chapter examines the first two questions; the issue of cultural transformation and change will be discussed in the two chapters that follow.

### *Cultures and cultural interactions in Africa*

In the early development of the history of African culture in the Atlantic, scholars divided on the degree to which African culture was homogeneous. Herskovits, for example, tended to see many broad similarities among the disparate cultures of Atlantic Africa, whereas his opponents stressed the numerous differences. On the whole, modern research has tended to side with Mintz and Price, who argue that there were major differences among the cultures of the Atlantic coast of Africa.<sup>5</sup>

Seventeenth-century Europeans recognized the ethnic diversity of Africans, just as modern scholars do. To them, especially those who encountered the Africans as slaves in the Americas, Africans were divided into so many "nations" or "countries."<sup>6</sup> In its primary form, the nation

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-6, 9-10, 21-4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 24-6.

<sup>5</sup> Mintz and Price, *Afro-American Past*, pp. 5-8.

<sup>6</sup> Spanish and Portuguese used terms such as *nación* (*nação*) and *generación* (*geração*) or *casta*. In French-speaking areas the most common term was *terre* ("land"), and English-speaking countries employed "country."

was recognized by language, as is clear from Alonso de Sandoval's lengthy inventory of the linguistic situation on the Atlantic coast of Africa, but it also included other marks of group identity, such as scarifications.<sup>7</sup> In all, de Sandoval identified over thirty nations in Atlantic Africa, and surveys of inventories of estates, especially in Spanish America, show that his list was a bit more complete than can be compiled by consulting these notarial classifications.<sup>8</sup> The number of distinct languages might be somewhat less, for Pierre Pelleprat, a French Jesuit working in the Caribbean some twenty-five years later, complained of thirteen distinct African languages.<sup>9</sup>

The term "nation" in Europe at the time was also essentially an ethnolinguistic one, and not a political one, and de Sandoval, aware of this, often points out that for his informants, some nations or castes were divided into multiple states, while other states contained members of more than one nation.<sup>10</sup> A missionary could catechize to all Brans in the same language, but if asked to what nation they belonged such people would give smaller groups: Cacheo, Baberral, Bojola, Papel, and Pesis. This too was similar to the ideas of seventeenth-century Europeans, who recognized the concept of a German nation when Germany was divided into many different states, or that boundaries were indistinct but might include loosely related ethnolinguistic units, just as seventeenth-century Dutch sometimes called their nation "Duytsen" (and not "Nederlanders," as today), which linked them with the "Deutschen," their German neighbors.<sup>11</sup>

Like the seventeenth-century observers, one can use linguistic diversity as a measure of cultural diversity but doing so may exaggerate the importance of these differences. One can use language or nation as a first-line indicator of culture, where every language represents a new

<sup>7</sup> De Sandoval, *Instauranda*, pp. 90-7. De Sandoval's discussion of African nations is also an excellent guide to American concepts, for in the end, it was the American identity that concerned him. His guide can equally serve to analyze the ethnonyms found in thousands of Spanish documents, wills, estate records, bills of sale, and court records that govern most modern research on slave ethnicity in the Spanish Indies.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-17 and 91-6; the precise number of distinct "castas" or "naciones" identified by de Sandoval is not easy to ascertain, for his text makes it evident that both his informants and he were uncertain of exactly what made for a homogeneous nation. For a good survey of mid-seventeenth-century national names found in inventories and notarial documents and estate records, see Bowser, *African Slave*, pp. 42-4. De Sandoval's book was widely read and owned in America, and the Jesuit's ethnography may well have influenced notarial determinations.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Pelleprat, *Relation des missions des PP. de la Compagnie de Jesus dans les Isles, et dans la terre ferme de l'Amerique Meridionale* (Paris, 1655), p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., de Sandoval, *Instauranda*, p. 92.

<sup>11</sup> See the usage in Ruyters, *Toortse*, p. 329, "Duytsche natien" in reference to Dutch ships in Kongo (modern Dutch and some seventeenth-century writers use "Nederland" to describe this nation), among others.

culture. In this case, western and central Africa was a very diverse area, having as many as fifty languages according to modern classification. But few scholars would argue that every linguistic or national unit on the West African coast possessed a culture entirely different from its neighbors, and there was fundamental similarity over a fairly wide area.

Moreover, as every linguist knows, the usual definition of a language is a speech community in which all members can understand each other. Thus, when people cannot understand each other, they are speaking different languages. Yet in closely related languages there is a variation in the degree of difference. Multilingual people can understand a wider variety of speech than monolingual people can; some people can understand different dialects better than their friends and neighbors can. Thus, linguistic boundaries are always a bit flexible and confused, particularly in the days before national educational programs defined standard languages.

In addition to this objection, one could also add that language is not the sole mediator of culture. In many parts of western and central Africa people of diverse language groups interacted with each other from day to day as a result of residential proximity or commerce. In the course of these interactions they might exchange many cultural ideas even if they did not exchange languages. Thus, they might share religious ideas or aesthetic principles to such a degree that they possessed a common religious or artistic heritage despite their linguistic diversity.

Viewing culture from aspects other than language shows how important proximity and economic systems can be for creating cultural similarities in diverse zones. This is seen clearly in the field of aesthetics. The aesthetics of ceramics has sometimes been used as an indicator of a culture as much as language (sometimes the two are incorrectly used as substitutes for each other). But Posnansky notes that West Africa has vastly diverse pottery traditions; sometimes quite different traditions coexisted within a few miles of each other. Just as the production of pottery often showed variety, so did its consumption, in that items produced in one area often traveled some distance to other areas, and potting villages sometimes produced several "ethnic" styles for export.<sup>12</sup> Jan Vansina, using modern data, shows that the same sort of cultural mixing took place freely in other artistic production, so that the idea of an ethnolinguistic unit with its own unique culture tends to break down.<sup>13</sup>

Using language, we can divide the parts of Atlantic Africa that participated in the slave trade into three culturally distinct zones, which can be

<sup>12</sup> Posnansky, "West African Reflections," pp. 9-10.

<sup>13</sup> Jan Vansina, *Art History in Africa: An Introduction to Method* (London and New York, 1983), pp. 29-33, 44-7, 50-2.

further divided into seven subzones. From this analysis one can then say that although Africans may have been linguistically diverse, there were only three different cultures that contributed to the New World, and among them only seven distinct subcultures. Although this is not Herskovitts's uniformity, it is not nearly so diverse as to create the kind of cultural confusion posited by those who see African diversity as a barrier to the development of an African-based American culture.

The first of these cultural zones can be called, following European geographical practice, Upper Guinea. It covered the area reaching from the Senegal River down to the area just south of Cape Mount in modern Liberia.<sup>14</sup> It was the most linguistically diverse of the zones, two completely different language families being represented: the West Atlantic family and the Mande family. Of the two language families, West Atlantic had the greatest variation. It included Wolof (and closely related Serer) and Harpulaar (the language of the Fula) in the north and the Mel language of Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau in the south. These languages had split off from each other in the very ancient past and were quite different. Mande, on the other hand, was extremely homogeneous; the forms spoken in Gambia, along the Niger, and even in Sierra Leone and Liberia were almost mutually intelligible, at least in the seventeenth century. On strictly linguistic lines, therefore, the Upper Guinea region contained three distinct groups of quite different languages: Mande, which dominated the interior and the coast in Gambia and Sierra Leone; the northern West Atlantic languages (Wolof and Harpulaar) along the Senegal River; and the southern West Atlantic languages along the coast from the Gambia River to Cape Mount.

In fact, American observers like de Sandoval recognized that some nations were ethnically and linguistically closer to each other than were other nations, an important point to this Jesuit who was interested in catechizing slaves in languages they could understand.<sup>15</sup> One can see this clearly in de Sandoval's description of the linguistic situation of the "Rivers of Guinea" (modern Guinea-Bissau), the area of greatest diversity in his opinion of the whole Atlantic coast, where all the languages are from the West Atlantic group. He noted, for example, that Banhuns could easily understand the languages of Fulupos and Bañons, because

<sup>14</sup> In discussing linguistic items, I have relied on Joseph Greenberg's classic linguistic study, *Languages of Africa* (New York, 1963). More detailed study has outdated Greenberg's work for some areas, however. Greenberg's classification relies on simple vocabulary comparisons of representative languages to build a family tree that appreciates the degree of linguistic similarity between languages. Whatever its value as a tool for historical linguistics, it is especially valuable in that it gives a rough indicator of mutual intelligibility, ideal for our purposes here.

<sup>15</sup> This is why he compiled his linguistic data in *Instauranda* (pp. 91-6). The information was also to guide other missionaries.

their kingdom was between the two, whereas all Bañons (because they were bilingual) could understand Cazangas, who served as kings among them. Sometimes, these languages were indistinct linguistically. According to de Sandoval, Balantas, for example, sometimes could not understand other Balantas from remote areas; clearly, though, all could understand Balanta well enough to understand the catechism, whereas Biafaras, though speaking a different language, could usually understand Nalus, because the two were so closely related.<sup>16</sup>

Even where linguistic differences tended to separate the zone into culturally different societies, economic factors tended to unite it. The rivers and coasts of the area in particular gave the zone a strong set of commercial interconnections, and Mande commercial and political dominance helped to lessen cultural distance in other ways. For example, the "Rivers of Guinea" in modern Guinea-Bissau was a complex series of creeks and lagoons that connected not only the various parts of the country but also allowed frequent communication with the Gambia farther north and Sierra Leone to the south.<sup>17</sup> The fact that water transportation is cheap made the movement of bulk commodities possible and contributed to the extensive market networks that brought together people from linguistically diverse regions on a routine basis to exchange not only luxury goods but agricultural surpluses, salt, fish products, and the like.<sup>18</sup>

The frequency of the contacts and the numbers of people from all walks of life participating meant that cultural sharing and multilingualism would be widespread. De Sandoval shows this clearly: Brans, located in this aquatic crossroads region, could generally understand many languages – specifically, Bañons, Fulupos, Balantas, Mandingas, and Biafaras. Although most of these are closely related West Atlantic languages, Mandinga is not linguistically similar; however, it was a commercial and political lingua franca. Bañons located near the Fulupos could speak with Fulupos much more often than they could with other, more remote Bañons because they had much more contact with the Fulupos, by reason of their commercial relations. As noted, Bañons could also understand Cazangas, who in turn often spoke Mandinga and Bran among themselves.<sup>19</sup>

It was not just in language that commerce resulted in convergence; de

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>17</sup> These points were first noted by Fernandes, "Descriçã," in the early sixteenth century, but repeated by most of the later writers, such as Alvares de Almada, Donelha, and Lemos Coelho.

<sup>18</sup> On the markets and specialized division of labor, see Rodney, *Upper Guinea Coast*, pp. 16–22, and sources cited.

<sup>19</sup> De Sandoval, *Instauranda*, pp. 91–2.

Sandoval believed that the Mandingas, Jolofs, and Fulas, though of "diverse castes" could "understand each other because of the great communication they have through having received together the cursed sect of Muhammed."<sup>20</sup> Even in religion beyond the pale of Islam, the people of the region shared broad philosophic concepts with each other, and even with the Moslems, who still accepted much of the local world view.<sup>21</sup> These factors converged to give the zone a homogeneity that might be otherwise unexpected from linguistic study alone.

In addition to its commercial integration, Upper Guinea was also politically integrated by the Mande group, especially speakers of Mandinga. The Mande group was linguistically quite distinct from both of the West Atlantic groups, but Mandinga conquests under the Mali Empire and the Mane (who spoke a closely related language and who claimed connections to Mali as well)<sup>22</sup> invasion of Sierra Leone in 1560 had given them great political dominance. In some places Mande officials ruled over subjects who spoke different languages, while everywhere Mande merchants plied their trade.

The second great zone was what European geographers called Lower Guinea. It stretched from the lagoons of western Ivory Coast roughly over to Cameroon. On the west it was separated from Upper Guinea by a long stretch of coast, the so-called Kwakwa Coast of older geography (mostly modern Liberia and Ivory Coast), where there was only intermittent trade and few slaves were ever obtained.<sup>23</sup> On the east, it was separated from the Angola region by another stretch of coast reaching from modern Cameroon down to northern Gabon, which was so rarely visited that there are virtually no seventeenth-century descriptions, and like the northern part of the Angola coast (as far south as Loango) it exported few slaves.

Linguistically, the Lower Guinea region was more homogeneous than Upper Guinea, for all the people spoke languages of the Kwa family. But the Kwa family is an ancient one, and its westernmost branch, Akan, is quite distinct from its easternmost one, Igbo. It can be subdivided on this account into two groups: the Akan group on the west and the Aja group (including Fon, Yoruba, Edo, and Igbos on the east). De Sandoval believed there was even less diversity: "Minas (Akan), Popoos, Fulaos, Ardas, Arares [all Aja] are all one." Although they spoke several differ-

<sup>20</sup> Sandoval, *Instauranda*, p. 91.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., BSGI, Manuel Alvares, "Etiopa Menor," passim, for descriptions of religion and interactions (including, in his day, Christianity and Islam).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 76–90; Donelha, *Descrição da Serra Leoa*, fols. 11v–12; Alvares de Almada, "Tratado breve," *MMA* 3:360.

<sup>23</sup> E.g., see Pacheco Pereira, *Esmeraldo*, bk. 2, chap. 4, (ed. Silva Dias, pp. 109–10); de Marees, *Beschrijvinge*, pp. 6b–7b.

ent languages, many were so similar in grammar and vocabulary that multilingualism was not particularly difficult. This fact was duly noted by de Sandoval, who clearly felt that work in this area was easier. He noted that sometimes Ardas (Fon speakers from the Aja group) could understand catechism for "Caravales puros" (Kalabari), from opposite ends of the zone.<sup>24</sup>

As in the case of Upper Guinea, good transportation networks brought the linguistically diverse people into close economic and cultural contact and tended to force linguistic accommodations. Water transport was the key here, as in Upper Guinea, especially the complex coastal lagoon system that made the towns along the Gold Coast and eastward as far as the Niger delta specialized producers of fish, salt, and agricultural products. This extended inland waterway was linked to the interior by a series of rivers that prolonged it inland.<sup>25</sup> A gap in the waterways between the Volta and Allada hampered transportation and created what was probably the most significant internal division in the zone, between the Gold Coast and the area east of Allada.

These numerous commercial interactions tended to promote cultural intercommunication. By the 1630s, for example, Yoruba had emerged as a lingua franca along the coast from the Volta to Benin, though other lingua francas functioned both east and west of this.<sup>26</sup> Yoruba traditions and even deities were worshiped on the coast, even in the absence of Yoruba political domination.<sup>27</sup> In the east of the zone, Benin domination performed a similar integrating role: In fact, Benin's expansion westward had carried its soldiers and administrators as far as Allada and created a cultural unity like that created by the Mande in Upper Guinea. Benin and Yoruba traditions merged as well, perhaps because so many Yoruba served in the Benin court, and art styles were freely exchanged in the entire zone.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, there was the Angola coast. By 1680 this zone stretched inland

<sup>24</sup> De Sandoval, *Instauranda*, p. 94. He also pointed out that not all Lucumies (Yoruba) could understand each other, but his Lucumie group included Baribas, who are indeed of a distinct, non-Kwa, language family. Their inclusion in the Lucumie family might reflect their political situation relative to Yoruba-speaking states.

<sup>25</sup> See Law, "Land behind Lagos," and Kea, *Settlements*, pp. 11-96, passim. An excellent near-contemporary source on the economic specialization along the whole coast can be found in Bosman, *Description of Guinea*. On boat traffic going inland along the rivers, see Biblioteca Provincial de Toledo, MSS Bourbón-Lorenzana 244, de Zamora, "Cosmographia," fol. 53.

<sup>26</sup> De Sandoval, *Instauranda*, pp. 94-5; Colombino de Nantes to Prefect of Propaganda Fide, 26 December 1640, MMA 8:465 (information collected from Piersec, who visited there in the 1630s).

<sup>27</sup> John Thornton, "Traditions, Documents and the Ife-Benin Relationship," *History in Africa* 15 (1988): 357-9.

<sup>28</sup> On the Yoruba Benin connections in ideology, see *ibid.*

at least as far as the Lunda Empire of Shaba province in modern Zaire, although Lunda had only recently become involved in the Atlantic world. The linguistic diversity of this zone was much less pronounced than in Upper Guinea, and even less than in Lower Guinea. Not only did all the people speak languages of the Bantu group (itself more homogeneous than the Kwa group), but all were drawn from the Western Bantu subgroup, in fact from only two sections within that group.<sup>29</sup> Kikongo and Kimbundu, the two languages spoken in the zone by the vast majority of the slaves, were as linguistically similar as Spanish and Portuguese, according to Duarte Lopes in the late sixteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Most of the people from the more linguistically diverse interior (Malembas, Monxiolos, Angicos) could also speak, according to de Sandoval, "Angola" (probably Kimbundu, but perhaps Kikongo), which served as a lingua franca far into the interior.<sup>31</sup> It was probably possible for a speaker of one language in the region to learn another without much special instruction in about three to five weeks, and even from the beginning they possessed numerous items of vocabulary in common.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, they possessed many common items of religion, artistic canons, and the like.

It was only in politics that the Angolan zone was genuinely diverse. Two kingdoms, Kongo and Ndongo, were preeminent, each playing a role in the other's traditions and in the traditions of the smaller states that formed a band between them. But in the seventeenth century, politics created far more a feeling of rivalry among the elites than among the ordinary persons who were likely to be sold as slaves, in Angola and elsewhere. For most of them, they cared little what their kings or rulers thought of nearby kingdoms and would trade and interact in wartime as readily as in peace.

To sum up then, we must conclude that the degree of diversity in Africa can easily be exaggerated. The older anthropological tendency to see each ethnolinguistic group as a separate "tribe" and to ignore such factors as multilingualism or nonlinguistic cultural sharing have tended to force the real diversity beyond its true limits. At most we have three truly culturally diverse areas, and the seven subgroups are themselves

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of linguistic relations within this group, see Jan Vansina, "Western Bantu Expansion," *Journal of African History* 25 (1984): 129-45.

<sup>30</sup> Filippo Pigafetta, *Relazione del Reame di Congo* (ed. Giorgio Cardona; Milan, 1978) (French trans., Willy Bal, *Description du royaume de Congo et des contrees environnantes* [Louvain, 1965]), both editions with original (1591) pagination.

<sup>31</sup> De Sandoval, *Instauranda*, p. 96.

<sup>32</sup> This is true for Bantu languages in general. Zambians often informed me (in 1979-81) from their own experience that they could learn another Zambian language in about this time period, though they would not obtain fluency so quickly. I am assuming that the task was no more difficult in the seventeenth century.



often quite homogeneous. In addition, as we shall see, the slave trade took some groups far more frequently than others and often had the effect of bringing people of similar backgrounds together more than a maximum-diversity hypothesis will allow.

### *African cultural groups and the slave trade*

The issue of the cultural homogeneity of Africa has often been debated, but many scholars now side with Mintz and Price in arguing that whatever the African cultural situation might have been, the process of acquiring slaves and placing them in various economic establishments had the effect of randomizing them.<sup>33</sup> The results of this randomizing might still be serious even if we reduce the number of distinct African cultures involved to three or a maximum of seven.

Randomization did not occur with the Middle Passage. Slave ships drew their entire cargo from only one or perhaps two ports in Africa and unloaded them in large lots of as many as 200–1,000 in their new Atlantic homes. It was in the interests of slave-ship captains to gather as many slaves as quickly as possible to reduce expenses and to keep down mortality. Once slaves were on board in one location, the captain had little choice but to keep them on board, even if he went to other points of the coast. But if the slaves were gathered in one place, he could keep them on shore until he had to depart. Not only would this improve the health of the cargo, but it might allow him to shuffle some of the loss due to death onto the sellers.

Early slave voyages generally confirm this. For example, the *Santiago*, a Portuguese ship visiting virtually the entire Upper Guinea coast in 1526, nevertheless obtained all its slaves (as opposed to other elements of the cargo) at one point – Sierra Leone.<sup>34</sup> The several Benin–Forcados rivers voyages by Portuguese ships in the 1520s that have left records confirm the same thing – slaves bought at one point and at one time.<sup>35</sup> Finally, all four of the voyages to Kongo in the 1520s and 1530s for which we have records also show the entire cargo taken in at one point.<sup>36</sup>

The same pattern is confirmed for slaving voyages in the seventeenth century. In only one area, Lower Guinea, was it fairly routine for ships from Britain, France, or the Netherlands to draw slaves from two points on the same coast, but this situation was created by the peculiarity of trading there. Many captains and the companies that sent them wished

<sup>33</sup> Mintz and Price, *Afro-American Past*, pp. 8–10.

<sup>34</sup> Ship's book of *Santiago* (ed. Teixeira da Mota).

<sup>35</sup> Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans*, pp. 62–8; and idem, "Trading Voyage."

<sup>36</sup> Kongo ships' books: *Conceição* (1525), ANTT, CC II/128/3; *Santo Espírito* (1535), MMA 15:98–102; *Urbano* (1535), MMA 15:115–18; and *Conceição* (1535), MMA 15:124–30.

the ships to visit the Gold Coast to buy gold. But since an entire ship could scarcely be filled with gold, captains rounded out their cargo space by taking on slaves. When the Gold Coast did not supply enough slaves, captains would typically go on to Allada (soon the center of what was to be called the Slave Coast) to finish filling the ship.

Thus, it was possible that even though most visitors to Lower Guinea drew their slaves from only one point, many others drew them from two (though both in Lower Guinea). When Jean Barbot visited Africa in the *Soleil d'Afrique* in 1678–9, for example, his captain purchased most slaves at a single point on the Gold Coast, although some of the cargo was drawn from Allada.<sup>37</sup> Given the fairly strong cultural difference between the Gold Coast and the areas east of the Volta, these might have been slaves of two distinct cultural subgroupings (Akan and Aja). Other French ships seem to have done the same when dealing with this part of Africa, and Goupy des Marets, whose experience on the matter stretched from 1675 to 1688, confirmed that this was a general procedure for French captains on that coast.<sup>38</sup> English ships seem to have proceeded the same way at times, for the Royal African Company's ledgers and ships' books (as well as instructions to captains) all show that the usual procedure was to visit the Gold Coast and then to "round out" the cargo by visiting Allada.<sup>39</sup>

But it was also common, even in voyages to Lower Guinea, for ships to proceed directly to the Slave Coast (Allada) and skip taking on gold. This strategy was suggested to the Royal African Company by one of its agents, John Mildmay, in 1680.<sup>40</sup> For example, John Philips, a Royal African Company captain, got his cargo only at Allada in 1694, and apparently French practice was often the same, for as early as 1671, the Sieur d'Elbée obtained his entire cargo at Allada.<sup>41</sup> Ships that called further east, in the Niger delta region (usually Kalabar), typically acquired all their slaves there.<sup>42</sup>

However, this two-stop strategy, often called "coasting," was largely restricted to the Lower Guinea region. In the other two regions, the one-stop approach was far more common (though not without its occasional

<sup>37</sup> Gabriel Debien, Maracel Delafosse, and Guy Thilmans, eds., "Journal d'un voyage de traite en Guinée, à Cayenne et aux Antilles fait par Jean Barbot en 1678–9," *Bulletin, Institute Fondamentale d'Afrique Noire* B, 40 (1978): 25–35 (pagination of the original MS).

<sup>38</sup> BM Rouen, MS Montbret 125, Goupy des Marets, "Voyage," fols. 151–4.

<sup>39</sup> Davies, *Royal African Company*, p. 227.

<sup>40</sup> John Mildmay to Royal African Company, 13 October 1680, PRO T/70, vol. 1134.

<sup>41</sup> D'Elbée, "Journal du voyage," in Clodré, *Relation*, p. 383; Philips, "Voyage," in Churchill, *voyages*, p. 230.

<sup>42</sup> See, e.g., the log of the *Arthur*, visiting New Calabar in 1667, in Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1930–5), 1:226–7.



exceptions, of course). In Senegambia, for example, on-shore factors ensured that slaves could be acquired in one-stop visits by gathering slaves over a period of time, tapping trade routes that led into the interior. Factors were located near the Senegal and Gambia rivers and along the coast of Sierra Leone down to Cape Mount. Thus, the Sierra Leone and Gambian posts provided the Royal African Company's ships that visited their areas with their entire cargoes,<sup>43</sup> as did the French post at Gorée near the Senegal.

On the Angola coast, northern countries typically made the single stop at the ports of the kingdom of Loango or the ports of Malemba, Kabinda, or Mpinda (in the kingdom of Kongo). Here the trading was not normally handled by an on-shore factor, but African merchants ensured a steady supply, because the slaves normally came from other parts of the zone; before 1680 they usually came from Angola or Kongo.<sup>44</sup> Further south, the Portuguese colony of Angola, with its ports of Luanda and Benguela, served as a factory for the Portuguese trade with the Atlantic. Ships typically made single stops in this area as well.

In short, with the exception of the Lower Guinea voyages that followed the two-stop pattern, virtually all slaves were taken from a single point. The slaves actually boarding at that point would be drawn from whatever slaves merchants based there had acquired, and this would not necessarily be just the immediate hinterland of the port. But it was probably from a restricted and culturally quite homogeneous zone nevertheless.

These ports were served by trade routes that reached various distances into the interior. However, the same trade routes that served the ports also served local trade. As we have already seen, commercial interaction was an important element creating homogeneity, and hence virtually all slaves exported from a port would be from the cultural zone that was already united by commerce in other goods. Ships reaching Upper Guinea, for example, might stop at the Senegal, Gambia, Rivers of Guinea, or Sierra Leone ports. Each of these ports, in turn, served a distinct hinterland: the Senegal basin, the Gambia basin, the creek and lagoon network of the "Rivers," or the coastal waterways and river routes of Sierra Leone. Jula merchants might send slaves from the interior out any one of these ports, using various routes, as Curtin shows they surely did, but they were all from the quite homogeneous Mande interior.<sup>45</sup> Otherwise, the slaves were drawn from the commercial circuit that served both the port and the region.

<sup>43</sup> See ample documentation in Letters from Agents of the Royal African Company in Africa and America, 1680-3, PRO T/70, vol. 1134.

<sup>44</sup> The supply and purchasing situation on the coast is discussed and detailed at length in Martin, *External Trade*.

<sup>45</sup> Curtin, *Economic Change*, pp. 168-82.

Likewise, although Capuchin visitors to Allada noted that many of the slaves exported from that port in the 1660s were from inland and brought down by rivers,<sup>46</sup> their usual source, according to Barbot, was still the kingdom of Lucumie (Oyo) or other Aja-speaking groups of the near interior.<sup>47</sup> These states were already commercially and culturally linked to Allada in the same zone. Not only would all the people in this port's interior have cultural interaction, but slaves from the same groups that were exported were also likely to be retained by those in Allada society who held slaves, and their integration into Allada society would increase the people of Allada's familiarity with them. This last point might hold true for every part of the zone but can be clearly shown for the Gold Coast, where, for example, one could meet many slaves acquired in Allada in private hands.<sup>48</sup>

Other circumstances of enslavement might well make the slaves placed in individual ships extremely homogeneous. For example, slaves captured in wars were extremely likely to be from the army of the defeated country, recruited from a very restricted group of people. In 1678, the French captain Barbot noted that they were sure to find slaves at Coremantyn because the king of that region had just won a war over his enemies.<sup>49</sup> The point is often confirmed in records of the English Royal African Company.<sup>50</sup> An entire ship might be filled, not just with people possessing the same culture, but with people who grew up together.

Obviously, then, the slave trade itself did little to break up cultural groupings. The breaking up of cultural groupings was likely to occur in the process of sale and subsequent employment in American estates. Slaves were rarely sold all in one block once they reached America, and hence one might reasonably expect plantations and estates to mix up slaves from many different ships and cargoes. In some cases, masters tried deliberately to mix slaves from different origins in the belief that this would hinder attempts at rebellion, a tactic that was common enough in mid-seventeenth-century Barbados that Ligon commented on it.<sup>51</sup> This might then have served to hinder the direct establishment of an African culture in the Americas.

<sup>46</sup> Biblioteca Provincial de Toledo, MSS Bourbon-Lorenzana 244, de Zamora, "Cosmographia," fols. 62-62v.

<sup>47</sup> Barbot, "Voyage," p. 356 (probably based on notes of his 1682 visit). De Sandoval, who knew the ethnic makeup of the coast very well from his work in catechisms, was unaware of any nation lying inland of the Lucumies, though of course modern historians do. Presumably, de Sandoval's ignorance was due to very few, if any, such slaves coming to Cartagena.

<sup>48</sup> Examples cited in Kea, *Settlements*, pp. 105-6.

<sup>49</sup> Barbot, "Journal," p. 29.

<sup>50</sup> Davies, *Royal African Company*, pp. 226-8, 278.

<sup>51</sup> Ligon, *History*, p. 46.

But not every master shared these sentiments. French masters in the Lesser Antilles, for example, sought to get as many slaves as possible from the same nation (*terre* in French sources) and to encourage them to marry each other, in the hopes that the stability of the community thus developed would improve efficiency and limit rebellion.<sup>52</sup> Other masters may well have seen the value of such an approach as well, even in Barbados, for sugar estates on seventeenth-century Barbados, like the French colonies at the same time, were managed on the idea of building a self-sustaining community among their slaves. Other regions where the slave economy was characterized by the so-called peasant breach (see Chap. 6) might also have sought to unify nations rather than to diversify them.

Even if owners really did hope to randomize slaves, however, it might prove impossible to do this effectively. Of course, such a strategy would be immediately limited by the relative lack of diversity among arriving Africans, so that at best one might have seven different groups – perhaps an effective deterrent to rebellion with the side effect of limiting the growth of an African culture.

But patterns of the slave trade might well hinder such an attempt at maximizing diversity. How could Brazilian masters in the seventeenth century mix their slaves if, as Dutch accounts tell us, over 15,000 slaves a year came only from Angola between 1620 and 1623?<sup>53</sup> Indeed, given that Angolans made up some 50–60 percent of the slaves exported from Africa throughout the period, how could any master expect to avoid having a concentration of Angolans on his estate?

English and French masters might face similar problems simply because conditions in Africa and the politics of the slave-trading companies dictated that the bulk of their operations would be centered on one or two points in Africa. The English and French Africa Companies drew most of their slaves in the late seventeenth century from the Gold Coast and Allada because that is where they had their factors and most of their ships went. They might draw on Senegambia or the whole Upper Guinea coast as well, through factors in Senegal or Sierra Leone, but in the end, that coast did not supply nearly as many slaves as the Lower Guinea region, and thus many a master would have to choose between buying no slaves at all or buying from the many Coromantis (Akans) or Alladas arriving in ship after ship.

Thus there were limits on the ability to achieve a random linguistic distribution of slaves, and what this meant was that most of the slaves on any sizable estate were probably from only a few national groupings.

<sup>52</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire* 2:504–5.

<sup>53</sup> De Laet, *Jaerlick verhael*, Portuguese edition, p. 239.

These circumstances operated to ensure that most slaves would have no shortage of people from their own nation with whom to communicate and perhaps to share elements of common culture. These groupings of slaves served as a base from which many elements of African culture could be shared, continued, and developed in America and perhaps even transmitted into the next generation.

Take, for example, the Remire estate in Cayenne (French Guiana) at the end of the seventeenth century. The estate is exceptionally well documented, perhaps unique among sixteenth- and seventeenth-century estates because of the very detailed inventory of it left by Jean Goupy des Marets, its manager from 1688 to 1690. He recorded the exact provenance of each slave (often including the name of the village in Africa where they were born) and some biographical details on marriages, time of arrival, age, name of ship that brought the slave and other occasional information. It is difficult to generalize from the details of this inventory to other regions where different national policies, management schemes, or estate structure functioned, but at least it gives us a rich source of data on cultural groupings.

Supplied by both French and Dutch shipping, Remire probably had a better “mix” than most estates in other areas, and indeed slaves came from all three of the coasts and six of the seven subgroups. But the core of the labor force was composed of twenty-eight slaves from the region right around Allada, complemented by an additional nine slaves from Lower Guinea (three Gold Coast and six Kalabari). Moreover, eleven slaves came from the Angola coast region, all certainly from the kingdom of Kongo, because the inventory records that all had been baptized in Africa.<sup>54</sup> Finally, nine slaves derived from the Upper Guinea region, but all from its northern part (Senegal) and not from either the Rivers area further south or Sierra Leone.<sup>55</sup> There were probably few estates in the New World that had greater diversity.

Thanks to Goupy des Marets’s detailed knowledge of African geography, acquired in several visits to Lower Guinea before coming to supervise the Remire estate in 1688,<sup>56</sup> and his willingness to give biographical details, we can get some idea of the interaction of nations in an American setting. Certainly slaves tended to cluster around members of their own nation, as is seen in the six Kalabari slaves, who formed a tight group,

<sup>54</sup> One might add that these slaves were all acquired in the 1680s, at the height of the Kongo civil wars, and were thus in all probability the victims of the frequent small-scale wars and raids of the time. See Thornton, *Kingdom of Kongo*, pp. 95–106.

<sup>55</sup> Data from BM Rouen, MS Montbret 125, Goupy des Marets, “Voyage,” analyzed in Debien and Houdaille, “Origines,” p. 181.

<sup>56</sup> BM Rouen, MS Montbret 125, Goupy des Marets, “Voyage,” fols. 151–5.

went around together, and intermarried.<sup>57</sup> The same closeness was exhibited by the group from Allada and its neighbors (Whydah, Grand Popo, Little Popo, Fon, and Oyo), probably as a result of the way the ships were supplied. Two of this group were from Allada town itself, two more from the village of Weme (in Fon), and two more from the village of Saito. It is quite likely that these people either knew each other before their sale in America or at the very least had common friends and family. The Whydah slaves, five in all, came from towns within fifteen kilometers of each other in this tiny ministate, and unless they spent all their time at home may well have had much knowledge of each other's background and family in Africa. Of course, they also spoke the same language as Allada, Little and Grand Popo, and Fon slaves, even though the slaves from this part of Africa came at different times on no less than five different ships.

Records and inventories that give ethnonyms of slaves for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are fairly rare, so it is not always possible to determine the degree to which the situation in Remire is duplicated elsewhere. But the distributions on surviving inventories show how patterns of the slave trade and the distribution of slaves over time tended to produce sizable blocs of slaves on one estate from the same nation, and even larger groups from a fairly small region like the Rivers of Guinea, the Senegal valley, or the like. Sixteenth-century Spanish inventories show how the connection to Upper Guinea produced concentrations of slaves from there on their estates. Of slaves in the estate of Gorjón (1547 on Hispaniola) for which there are identifiable ethnonyms, one can find several blocs: 4 Zapes from Sierra Leone; 5 Brans, a Bañon, and a Biafara from the Rivers of Guinea; 2 Jolofs and 2 Mandingas from the Senegal valley; making a total of 15 slaves from the Upper Guinea region. The remaining group was from Lower Guinea: 2 Kalabaris and 2 Lucumies (Yorubas).<sup>58</sup> Slaves on the Cortés estate in 1549 showed a similar grouping: The Senegal valley produced 30 slaves (Jolof, Mandinga, Siine, and Tukolor), and the Rivers produced no less than 47 (Bañon, Zape, Bran, Biafara, and Cazanga); the estate had no Lower Guinea slaves and only 2 from Angola. Two were from Mozambique.<sup>59</sup> A similar grouping is evident on another Hispaniola inventory from 1606. Here 10 were Zapes from Sierra Leone, and the Rivers region was represented by 8 Beafadas, 9 Brans, 1 Bioho, and 1 Cazanga, forming a single bloc of 29 members. There were also 1 Fula, 6 Mandingas, and 1 Jolof from the Senegal basin, a total of 37 Upper Guinea slaves. Lower Guinea

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 85 and 89.

<sup>58</sup> *Escritura de Licenciado Cerrato*, 17 December 1547, Incháustegui Cabral, *Reales cédulas* 1:236-9.

<sup>59</sup> Published in Aguirre Beltrán, *Población negra*, pp. 244-5.

had few representatives (1 Yoruba and 1 Benin), and Angola had only 2 Angolas and 1 Kongo.

On large estates, therefore, slaves would typically have no trouble finding members of their own nation with whom to communicate, and they would have even less trouble finding those of other nations with whom they were linked through commerce and other interaction in Africa. This was true even if the estate was small or if slaves were scattered on several small estates. For example, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the slaves around Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela were distributed on *estancias* of 2-3 slaves each intermixed with larger estates with 6-10 (17 being the largest number on any one estate). Lists of these slaves who received religious instruction in 1656 give ethnonyms revealing their origins. The largest *estancia*, that of Arraez de Mendoza (17 slaves), had 9 Angolan slaves and 4 from the Rivers (2 Brans, 1 Bañon, and 1 Fulupo), and the rest were listed as "creoles." Of the Angolans, 3 were from Matamba and 1 was from the province of Malemba (then under Matamba's sovereignty). A fifth, Melchior Enbuya, was from Mbwila in the "Dembos" region some distance away.<sup>60</sup> The Matamba and Malemba slaves were probably born within fifty kilometers of each other and could no doubt share much in common, even if perhaps less than the Allada group on Remire.

Big plantations concentrated slaves in the hundreds, but on small estates in areas such as Venezuela, Virginia, or Central America, the lack of numbers did not mean that slaves from adjacent estates had no communication with each other, as long as plantation management did not inhibit occasional travel or visiting. Thus, in the Maracaibo area, the small group of Angolans on Arraez de Mendoza's estate might have been able to visit Pascal Enbuya (from the same small state as Melchior Enbuya) and Juan Andala (from Ndala, which was close to Matamba and Malemba), who lived on the adjacent estate of Pedro Fernández. Or, if Francisco Narara, the only Allada slave on the *estancia* of Ana de Quiroz, wanted to meet people from his nation, he could visit Hernando and Juan Arara on the *estancia* of Diego de Cuervo de Valdez, nearby.<sup>61</sup>

The documents do not tell us if these slaves in Venezuela visited (or were allowed to visit) each other, however. But French documents do suggest that slaves often visited others from the same nation, and this pattern was probably true everywhere that off-estate visiting was permitted. According to Charles de Rochefort, writing about the Lesser Antilles in the middle of the seventeenth century, people often visited others

<sup>60</sup> *Padrón de negros del Valle de los Borbuces*, 22 November 1656, in Trochis Veracochea, ed., *Documentos*, p. 205.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 205-6.

from the same "terre" (nation), specifically for cultural activities, such as celebrations or funerals.<sup>62</sup> This seems to have been the case in Jamaica as well, in spite of the policy of some English masters to mix slaves on their estates. Hans Sloane, visiting Jamaica in 1688, noted that "when they die their country people [people from their nation] make lamentations and mourning."<sup>63</sup>

National loyalty might be reinforced by marriages as well, if circumstances permitted. French masters in the Lesser Antilles, as part of their strategy of allowing family formation, encouraged slaves to marry within their own nation, going so far as allowing the slave to pick a bride or husband from the cargo of an incoming ship. This preference is revealed in the records from Remire. Twelve of the twenty-four married couples on Remire were from the same nation, and two were from the same village (Weme), though they had arrived on different ships. Three more slave couples came from nations in the same national grouping, such as a Bambara married to a Fula.<sup>64</sup>

Some were married before they arrived in America and may well have been married before their enslavement. A Kalabari slave named Ouanbom came on the same ship with a Kalabari woman named Aunon. They were both forty-two years old in 1690. As Goupy des Marets described their relationship, "she came, was bought and sold with her husband, and has never left him up to the present day." Another slave, Aguinon, in 1690 a seventy-year-old man from Fon, had another type of relationship with Bassi, aged seventy-three in 1690, who although she came on the same ship with him was from Grand Popo and probably did not know him in Africa. He had relations with other women, however, for he was said to be like a husband to sixty-two-year-old Ouapay, from Saito (a town in Fon), and was actually married to Sanon, from Allada.<sup>65</sup> All these slaves spoke the same language, and perhaps the original relationships had been formed on board ship, although the possibility that the Kalabaris had been married before they left Africa cannot be ruled out in the manuscript as it reads.

We do not possess information of equivalent detail for the seventeenth century, but some research on Brazil in the mid-eighteenth century suggests that marriages between people of the same nation were common there, or at least had become common at some earlier point. Schwartz's analysis of several sources suggests that there was a very high rate of

<sup>62</sup> Rochefort, *Histoire naturelle*, pp. 321–2.

<sup>63</sup> Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Neives, S. Christopher and Jamaica*, 2 vols. (London, 1707–25), 1:xlvi.

<sup>64</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire* 2:504–5; BM Rouen, MS Montbret 125, Goupy des Marets, "Voyage," fol. 84.

<sup>65</sup> BM Rouen, MS Montbret 125, Goupy des Marets, "Voyage," fol. 85, 87, 88, 89.

intermarriage among the same nation in general, but interestingly enough, as at Remire, it was those from Lower Guinea (Yorubas and Kalibaris) who were most prone to this type of marriage, whereas central Africans seemed indifferent to it (more than half of Remire's Kongos were not married to other Kongos).<sup>66</sup>

These marriages that linked people of the same nation obviously had cultural implications. Not only could they communicate with each other in the same language and share the same religious and aesthetic concepts, thus continuing their African culture in America, but they could even develop a national culture in the next generation. For example, in the late 1680s Guiaon, from the village of Alamba in Whydah (of the Fon nation), married an eighteen-year-old named Marie Doré, who was listed as "creole" (born in America) in the estate records. But Marie Doré was both creole and a member of the Fon nation, for both her parents, Agouya and Phillipe, were from Fon.<sup>67</sup> Her marriage to a man from Whydah would continue that tradition, as they were both of the same language and nation.

The formation of national blocks on estates, intermarriage, and visiting undoubtedly helped to foster an idea of national identity in most American areas, which is not surprising considering that people would naturally prefer interaction with others who shared their heritage. The idea of national identity was sufficiently strong among slaves in rural America that it even affected them when they decided to rebel or run away. The slave plot on Guadeloupe in 1656 involved Angolans and Senegambians (called Cape Verdians in the sources), and they were sufficiently conscious of their differences that the Senegambians pulled out when the Angolans insisted that leadership in the resulting society should be held by Angolans.<sup>68</sup> Slaves plotting on Barbados in 1675 conceived of a "Coromanti" (Akan) state.<sup>69</sup> Runaways often segregated their communities by nations. Among the runaway communities around Cartagena in the late seventeenth century the Akan slaves had a separate community,<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*, pp. 391–3. A similar analysis by Francisco Vidal Luna and Iraci del Nero da Costa of marriages in Minas Gerais from 1727 to 1826 showed that 77% of all females and 64% of all males in the group he called "Sudanese" (Upper and Lower Guinea combined) were married within the same group; but the rates for "Bantus" (Angola) were somewhat lower, 67% for females and 44% for males. Tight groupings were also partially explored: Among Minas (probably the Allada group) 56% of the men and 68% of the women were married to someone of the same nation; among Angolas the proportions were 34% for men and 51% for women ("Vila Rica: Nota sobre casamentos de escravos [1727–1826]," *Africa [São Paulo]* 4 [1981]: 108–9).

<sup>67</sup> BM Rouen, MS Montbret 125, Goupy des Marets, "Voyage," fols. 83, 85.

<sup>68</sup> Du Tertre, *Histoire* 1:500.

<sup>69</sup> See the plot discussed in Craton, *Testing the Chains*, pp. 108–14.

<sup>70</sup> Memorial de Gobernador de Nueva Granada, 1693, summarized and quoted in Arranzola, *Palenque*, p. 195.

as did the Angolan slaves in the Brazilian runaway community of Palmares, who had their own leader.<sup>71</sup>

The development of African nations in America was not just the result of concentrations of slaves from one area on individual estates or patterns of visiting in rural areas. Patterns of shipping and residence clearly put slaves of the same nation together: This process was reinforced by marriage and the natural association based on common language and heritage. But it was not long before more formal national organizations developed. Girolamo Benzoni, writing about Hispaniola in the early 1540s, noted the African nations of that island each had "its own king or governor" and were somewhat jealous of each other. He specifically mentioned the Kongo, Wolof, Sape, and Berbesi nations.<sup>72</sup>

National organization was especially strong in urban America, where the lower levels of day-to-day supervision and greater freedom of movement allowed nations to create semiformal and formal organizations. One of the earliest references to such national organizations in urban areas comes from de Sandoval's description of early seventeenth-century Cartagena. He complained that masters in Cartagena had the unconscionable practice of freeing their slaves on the point of death, leaving it to their "nation" to see to their burial, implying a sort of self-help organization that took care of funerals, at least.<sup>73</sup> Other Jesuits provide more details. Nicolás González, a Jesuit companion of Pedro Claver, testified at the inquest of 1658 that such funerals were social occasions, where "certain assemblies of Moors of the same nation [*stripe*] meet when someone of their nation dies." These were not just informal assemblies, for they had *capitoli*, or "chapters," as if they formed a brotherhood, such as was common in Latin countries.<sup>74</sup>

These institutions sometimes frightened authorities, who thought they might be conspiratorial. It was probably the celebrations of one such assembly that prompted a panic among government officials in Mexico in 1609 and again in 1612, for they elected a "king" and "queen" as well as distributing other mock offices in those years.<sup>75</sup> From what little information is available in seventeenth-century sources, it seems probable that the institutions did have some sort of formal organization, in which annual festivals, recognition of certain feast days, the election

<sup>71</sup> "Relação das guerras feitas aos Palmares de Pernambuco no tempo do Governador D. Pedro de Almeida de 1675 a 1678," *Revista do Instituto Archaeologico e Geographico Pernambucano* 10, no. 56 (1859): 303.

<sup>72</sup> Benzoni, *History of the New World* (trans. Smyth), p. 92.

<sup>73</sup> De Sandoval, *Instauranda*, p. 195.

<sup>74</sup> BN Colombia, Claver Inquest, fol. 40.

<sup>75</sup> Juan de Torquemada, *Monarchia Indiana*, 3 vols. (Mexico City, 1943), 1: bk. 5, chaps. 70, 74.

of kings and queens, and various mutual aid functions (such as funerals) figured prominently.

When officials in Cartagena feared a slave plot in 1693, they interrogated a certain mulatto named Francisco de Veas for days about life in the city's Afro-Colombian community. Among their questions to him were "if he knew that the Negroes of the Arará, Mina, and other newly arrived [*bozales*] nations [*castas*] have their kings, governors, and captains, and if they meet in their councils [*cabildos*] to deal with the problems of their nation or caste, and have their parties and festivities in which they join together." De Veas expressed surprise at the question, for he thought it was common knowledge that the nations had "coronations" annually at which officials were appointed.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, it was; nations had taken out licenses to dance in the streets and play their drums since 1573,<sup>77</sup> and the city's European and Euro-American population enjoyed the festivities as well.

Brazilian sources noted that the Kongo nation had elected a king and queen since the early seventeenth century, a time when central African slaves dominated the Brazilian trade.<sup>78</sup> By 1674 nations were playing a significant role in the social life of Brazilian slaves, with annual elections of a king and queen over the entire slave community as well as governors for each nation and numerous other positions forming a whole administration.<sup>79</sup> Although the government of Brazil paid little formal attention to these organizations, as was the case elsewhere in the Americas, they probably exercised considerable informal power.

These national organizations probably preexisted the better-known lay brotherhoods, such as the Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary, to which so many Afro-Americans belonged, and which probably gradually emerged as the formal leadership of the nation, whether they were members of the brotherhood or not. The brotherhoods were organized by the clergy to attempt to regularize the slaves' social life and attracted mostly the more fortunate and free among the Afro-American community; they were often organized along national lines, being only for Minas or Angolas or Alladas, and so on.<sup>80</sup> In Brazil, at least, the first elections of kings and queens for the Kongo nation were conducted by

<sup>76</sup> "Testimonio de la culpa," in Arranzola, *Palenque*, p. 163.

<sup>77</sup> Act of Cabildo of Cartagena, 9 January 1573 in *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>78</sup> R. C. Smith, "Manuscritos da Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Pretos do Recife," *Arquivos* 4/10 (1945-51): 55, footnote.

<sup>79</sup> René Riberio, *Cultos afro-brasileiros de Recife: Um estudo de ajustamento social* (Recife, 1952), pp. 29-32.

<sup>80</sup> Bowser, *African Slave*, pp. 247-50; for Brazil, see Patricia A. Mulvey, "Slave Confraternities in Brazil: Their Role in Colonial Society," *The Americas* 39 (1982): 39-68.

the brotherhood of Nossa Senhora do Rosário,<sup>81</sup> and the brotherhoods played a role in other elections as well. Some scholars have seen the membership along national lines as an attempt on the part of the clergy to "divide and conquer" the African population,<sup>82</sup> and perhaps it did contribute to preventing plots or maintaining control, but it more likely simply co-opted a larger, preexisting organization. It is probably more correct to say that the missionaries' interest in national organizations was a way of controlling the alleged sexual immorality of the slaves. Certainly Claver believed that funerals often involved immoral dancing and sought to break them up.<sup>83</sup>

Although brotherhoods were characteristic of large Iberian towns, some were organized in rural areas, among the slaves on estates as well. Jesuit sources mention the organization of lay fraternities in rural Brazil as early as 1587,<sup>84</sup> although the sources do not reveal whether they were organized along national lines as in the cities.

Thus, wherever more than a few slaves from the same nation were concentrated, in towns or on estates, the possibility of cultural transfer was possible. Presumably the several dozen Fon-speaking Allada slaves on Remire could maintain many of the cultural traditions of their homelands. Although some slaves might well find themselves in a relative minority, such as Kongos on the estate of Cortés in 1549 (there were only two), on most estates one or more nations had sufficient numbers to create a community. This community could transmit, develop, or maintain the African culture they brought with them. If they married among themselves they stood a chance of transmitting it on to the next generation.

Even if the numbers from a single nation were small, larger groups composed of nations from the same general vicinity in Africa, nations that certainly had considerable intercommunication before their enslavement, could continue that communication in America. No doubt in all American situations, communication between nations was more intense than in Africa, with interesting results for the African culture in the Atlantic world.

The slave trade and subsequent transfer to New World plantations was not, therefore, quite as randomizing a process as posited by those who argue that Africans had to start from scratch culturally upon their arrival in the New World. Quite the contrary, though the process of enslavement, sale, transfer, shipment, and relocation on a plantation was certainly disruptive to the personal and family lives of those people who endured it, its effect on culture may have been much less than

many suggest. Slaves, although no longer surrounded by their familiar home environment, village, and family, were nevertheless not in a cultural wilderness when they arrived in America. They could easily find others who spoke their language and shared their norms in the new environment, especially if they were on a large estate or in an urban area. The Remire data even show that they might even meet relatives, friends, and associates whom they had known in Africa, thanks to patterns of enslavement and the slave trade that served to concentrate, rather than disperse, people, though such cases might be rare and were probably not typical.

<sup>81</sup> Smith, "Manuscritos," p. 55, footnote.

<sup>82</sup> E.g., see Bowser, *African Slave*, p. 249.

<sup>83</sup> BN Colombia, Claver Inquest, fol. 180v.

<sup>84</sup> Serafim Leite, *História* 2:234.