

'ReCapricorning' the Atlantic

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The lead section of this *LBR* volume brings together four articles on the Lusophone South Atlantic by historians of Africa and Brazil originally presented to the Michigan State University and University of Michigan's Atlantic History workshop "ReCapricorning the Atlantic: Luso-Brazilian and Luso-African Perspectives on the Atlantic World."¹ The workshop and this special volume's title is a twist on Andre Gunder Frank's *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) in which the renowned economic historian argued that Asia had been the hub of the global economy through the early modern period and that a Johnny-come-lately Europe "used its American money to buy itself a ticket on the Asian train" after 1800 to "temporarily" become the new hub of global trade (p. xxv). Frank's interest in Asia's role in the global economy was a significant departure from his earlier work which had focused on exploring Portuguese and Spanish America's underdevelopment within the frameworks of dependency and world systems theory. "ReCapricorning the Atlantic" returns to the site of Frank's earlier work to consider a similar reorientation based on perspectives centered around the Tropic of Capricorn within a body of scholarship that has come to be known as "Atlantic History." The South Atlantic was the economic hub and arguably the most significant formative matrix of the early modern European colonial enterprise in Africa and the Americas. Yet to date, most Atlantic history has focused on the British and to a somewhat lesser extent, French Empires and their remnants in the Americas and Africa. This "North Atlantic-centrism" is reflected in many classic titles in Atlantic History that conceal their much more limited geographic emphases in terms of primary research (e.g., David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, or David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*). With these legacies in mind, workshop participants set out to "ReCapricorn the Atlantic" by assessing how new research on the Lusophone South Atlantic modifies, challenges, or confirms major

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trends and paradigms in the expanding scholarship on Atlantic History. Their approaches broaden the discussion of Atlantic History's meanings and utility as a category of analysis and body of scholarship across imperial, geographic, chronological, and disciplinary boundaries. The four articles published here are indicative of the potential of South Atlantic research to shape broader debates in Atlantic History and other significant areas of historical inquiry.

Professor Hebe Mattos (Universidade Federal Fluminense) analyzes the petitions of black officers for royal commendations and titles of nobility in the exclusive Military Orders of the Lusophone Empire to determine when and why they became ineligible for these honors. She argues that Portuguese authorities began to equate color with "racial" exclusions that had previously only applied to Jews and their descendents up to the early eighteenth century. Before then, a small number of African and black Brazilian military officers had been granted royal dispensations to join these august bastions of Portuguese nobility in the seventeenth century. As Professor Mattos argues, this narrow avenue of social mobility closed after the Portuguese gained the upper hand in their transatlantic struggles with Dutch, African, Maroon, and Amerindian opponents in the eighteenth century. As the crown's dependence on its black Brazilian regiments and African allies diminished, it became possible to exclude these men from exclusive orders that required purity of blood. This case study can be profitably read for parallels to a vanishing "middle ground" in works of Richard White or, more recently, James F. Brooks where no one group could impose its predominance and thus each group negotiated and made significant concessions to subordinate groups to win the support needed to stave off competitors. It can also bring added comparative insights to Ann Twinam's work on royal dispensations (*gracias al sacar*) for race and illegitimacy in the Spanish Empire. That Henrique Dias' "very noble" and white son-in-law could inherit titles of nobility that his father-in-law earned but could not be approved to hold because he was a former slave indicates that the race of his daughter was of little consequence. This supports Elizabeth Kuznesof's observation that gender often trumped race in the case of indigenous women who married prominent Spaniards in the sixteenth and seventeenth century Spanish American empire.² In short, Professor Mattos' case study will provide food for thought in a number of areas fundamental to a more integrated understanding of Atlantic History for some time to come.

Professor Juliana Beatriz Almeida de Souza (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro) analyzes two ubiquitous cults to the Holy Mother Mary in Portugal and its seaborne Empire: Nossa Senhora da Conceição (Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception) and Nossa Senhora do Rosário (Our Lady of the Rosary). She examines in broad terms the rise of the cult of Mary Mother

of God as part of the expansion of Portuguese imperial power and identity and as part of the Catholic world's response to the wars of Reformation in the early modern period. By surveying the spread of these two cults and the symbolic significance attributed to each, she raises a number of intriguing questions that though beyond the scope of her essay should stimulate future research. One issue is to explore how, why, and to what extent subordinate groups embraced these cults of the Virgin Mary across the Portuguese Empire. Did the spread of the cult of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, as Professor Almeida de Souza speculates, indicate a more profound penetration of Portuguese culture in Brazil compared to Africa and Asia? Why did Nossa Senhora do Rosário, long associated with Portuguese martial struggles against heretics and infidels, become the cult most warmly embraced by those of African descent in Brazil and Africa? The appeal of these cults of Nossa Senhora calls out for a deeper gendered analysis of identity and community in the Portuguese empire.

Professor Walter Hawthorne (Michigan State University) offers a refreshing reappraisal of Orlando Patterson's thesis that slavery represented a "social death" for those swept up in the Atlantic trade in humans. To do so, he focuses on the importance survivors of the middle passage gave to their relationships with shipmates or *malungos*. While the horrors of the middle passage may give credence to Patterson's conception of a "social death," Hawthorne argues that it was also a site of "social reincarnation." Relying on their African cultural practices shipmates from different ethnicities formed lasting bonds of kinship on the voyage that shaped in significant ways their decisions and collective strategies in Brazil and other parts of the Americas. His research focuses on the ties between African shipmates of different ethnicities aboard the slave ship *Emilia* which carried 391 slaves intended for the markets of Brazil. The British navy impounded this illegal shipment from Lagos at sea in 1821, and brought the captives to Brazil where a bi-national court decided to treat these one-time slaves as *africanos livres*: free Africans required by an Anglo-Brazilian treaty to serve a fourteen year apprenticeship with a Brazilian employer. Like slave owners, the employers of *africanos livres* were charged with maintaining, training their charges in a trade, and teaching them the Christian faith and European habits. Hawthorne argues, however, that to survive the rigors of this apprenticeship, these *malungos* from the *Emilia* relied on their African cultural practices and values. Unlike Henrique Dias who became part of an elite military cast in the Portuguese empire, a group of 60 of these *malungos* ostensibly rejected the more individualistic values of European Brazilians. Instead, they banded together to return to an uncertain future in Africa in 1836.

Professor Paulina Alberto (University of Michigan) examines the flurry of publicity and public interest surrounding the return of *Romana da Con-*

ceição, a woman born in Pernambuco in 1889 who left Brazil at age ten to live in Lagos over the next sixty years. Powerful businessmen and politicians sought to use Romana's homecoming in 1963 as a means to court good relationships with newly independent African nations. These powerful actors sought to position Brazilians as friendly and non-racist interlocutors for new African nations grappling with a turbulent and largely racist international environment. Brazilian leaders saw Lusitanian Africa as a natural sphere of Brazilian international influence as decolonization gripped the continent after World War II. Professor Alberto insightfully untangles how less powerful groups and individuals used Romana's visit to manipulate memories of Africa and Africans in Brazil for their own purposes that many times coincided but sometimes clashed with the efforts of Brazilian economic and political elites. These actors include Romana herself, Brazilian and international intellectuals, and prominent Afro-Brazilian Spiritist figures like Mãe Senhora. She concludes that narratives about Brazilians in Africa and Africans in Brazil came together at different levels in the early 1960s to serve different ends. Her work on the twentieth century South Atlantic stimulates us to ponder the utility of Atlantic history's early modern chronological focus when contacts between Africa and Brazil, and memories of their shared history continued to evolve into the twenty-first century.

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Notes

1. The workshop met on May 11 and 12, 2006 at both Michigan State University and the University of Michigan. It brought together six historians who presented new research as pre-circulated papers on Lusophone Atlantic history. Six invited commentators led discussions of the papers. In addition to the four articles published here, John Monteiro (UNICAMP) and Roquinaldo A. Ferreira (University of Virginia) also presented research, but they were unable to commit manuscripts to this volume. The commentators included: Barbara Weinstein (New York University), Paul Lovejoy (York University), Mary Karasch (Oakland University), Erica Windler (Michigan State University), Rebecca Scott (University of Michigan), and Julius Scott (University of Michigan). Numerous faculty members and units from Michigan State University and the University of Michigan cosponsored, organized, and hosted this workshop.

2. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1991); James F. Brooks,

Captives and Cousins : Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2002); Ann Twinam, *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999); Elizabeth Anne Kuznesof, "Ethnic and Gender Influences on "Spanish" Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America" *Colonial Latin American Review* 30:1 (summer 1993):119–132.