Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World
People, Products, and Practices on the Move

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## Contents

### List of Figures
vii

### Notes on Contributors
ix

### Preface
xiii

### Introduction Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World
1

#### Caroline A. Williams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Codfish, Consumption, and Colonization: The Creation of the French</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atlantic World During the Sixteenth Century</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laurier Turgeon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Negotiating Fortune: English Merchants in Early Sixteenth-Century</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seville</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heather Dalton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interlopers in an Intercultural Zone? Early Scots Ventures in the</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atlantic World, 1630–1660</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Douglas Catterall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>‘A People So Subtle’: Sephardic Jewish Pioneers of the English West</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natalie Zacek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Subjects or Allies: The Contentious Status of the Tupi Indians in</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dutch Brazil, 1625–1654</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark Meuvese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>‘To Transmit to Posterity the Virtue, Lustre and Glory of their</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ancestors’: Scottish Pioneers in Darien, Panama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark Horton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Controlling Traders: Slave Coast Strategies at Savi and Ouidah</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kenneth G. Kelly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Walking the Tightrope: Female Agency, Religious Practice, and the</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Portuguese Inquisition on the Upper Guinea Coast (Seventeenth Century)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philip J. Havik</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

6.1 General plan of the Scottish colony, located in Puerto Escocés, Kuna Yala, Panama
6.2 Archaeological excavation of the communal oven located on the south side of Fort St. Andrew, showing external granite wall and internal coral filling. The oven was domed by bricks probably carried from the nearby former Spanish site of Acla (photo Mark Horton)
6.3 Plan of Fort St Andrew constructed by the Scots between 1698–1700, as revealed by excavation and survey
7.1 Map of Gold and Slave coasts showing the Huda and Dahomey states
7.2 Map of central region of Savi depicting excavated areas
7.3 Map of Ouidah depicting excavated areas
Chapter 9
Slaves, Convicts, and Exiles:
African Travellers in the Portuguese Atlantic World, 1720–1750
James H. Sweet

In 1728 in the city of Porto, Portugal, an African slave named Pedro José fixed a sword on the ground with the sharpened end of the blade facing toward the sky. Aligning his body with the sabre, he took a running leap and dived on top of it. Miraculously, the sword did not penetrate his body or do him any other harm; it merely bent under his weight. What might have seemed like an act of suicidal desperation was actually the culmination of a business transaction that occurred with some frequency throughout the Portuguese Atlantic world. All over the Portuguese Atlantic, and especially in the public plazas of Portugal’s major cities, Africans and their clients tested the efficacy of various charms and talismans against knives, swords, and even guns. Prior to his leap of faith, Pedro donned around his neck a cloth bag filled with unknown substances, tied with a cord. Well satisfied that these substances would protect him should he be stabbed in a street fight, Pedro paid one cruzado (480 réis) to the manufacturer of this amazing shield, another African slave named José da Costa. In exchange for this cash payment, José gave Pedro one of the most powerful protective talismans known in the Atlantic world—the bolsa de mandinga.¹

By the early 1700s, the bolsa de mandinga was the most widely used talisman in the Portuguese-African diaspora and could be found in such far-flung places as Bahia, Madeira, Luanda, Mazagão, and Goa. Like the one acquired by Pedro José, most bolsas consisted of a piece of leather or cloth filled with various substances—herbs, roots, sticks, rocks, hairs, feathers, animal skins, powders, and relics from the Catholic Church. These pouches were then tied with a string or cord, usually around the neck, but also around the wrist, waist, ankle, forearm, or other parts of the body. Depending on the combination of substances in the pouch, bolsas could protect from masters’ beatings. Others could assure success in gambling or games of chance. Still others could aid slaves in their attempts to flee their masters. But

¹ Arquivo Nacional de Torre do Tombo (ANTT), Inquisição de Coimbra, Processos, No. 7840.
by far the most common form of bolsa was one that protected the wearer from fists, knives, and gunshot.

The case involving Pedro José and José da Costa was merely one link in a vast network of bolsa producers and consumers in Portugal during the early decades of the eighteenth century. Over a period of three years between 1728 and 1731 the Portuguese Inquisition tried at least five Africans for producing bolsas. Dozens more were implicated in the trials. This chapter aims to unravel this web of mandingueiros, and to demonstrate how enslaved Africans forged communities that permeated the Portuguese Atlantic world, from Ouidah, to Pernambuco, to Rio de Janeiro, to Cape Verde, to Porto, and beyond. Perhaps more importantly, it shows how certain ideas that were constructed in the Atlantic World came to be associated with deviance, evil, and colonial resistance, none of which could be tolerated in the metropole. The eighteenth-century purge of mandingueiros, however, proved to be a futile and contradictory attempt to eradicate from Portugal those ideological ‘evils’ that emanated from the very colonial world the Portuguese created.

When José da Costa sold his bolsa to Pedro José in 1728, he added yet another strand to a web of African men who traded mandingas in the Portuguese Atlantic World. Indeed, two years before, in 1726, José da Costa had himself purchased a bolsa de mandinga from a slave named Luís de Lima. In turn, Luís de Lima, born in Ouidah (present-day Benin), originally purchased his bolsa more than seven years earlier in Pernambuco from a slave named Francisco. The bolsa, made of green velvet cloth, contained a small altar stone (pedra d'ara), three Catholic prayers, and the bone of a deceased person. In his confession in October 1729, Luís de Lima admitted that he took pieces of each of the objects in this bolsa in order to construct the one that he sold to José da Costa, charging him one cruzado for his services. Whether José da Costa split these items further to make the bolsa for Pedro José is unclear. Nevertheless, the four-person link from Francisco, to Luís de Lima, to José da Costa, to Pedro José, as the bolsas passed from Pernambuco to Porto, emerges clearly from the testimony, demonstrating the proliferation of bolsa knowledge across the Atlantic World. Indeed, this network of mandingueiros was even more extensive than Luís de Lima's confession suggests. In addition to José da Costa, Luís de Lima named 25 other slaves with whom he conspired to manufacture and/or distribute mandingas in and around Brazil. Of these 25, at least 18 had once lived in Brazil. Two were the slaves of Englishmen; two more worked on board merchant ships. In short, nearly all of the slaves named in these cases were products of an overlapping, interconnected, and 'entangled' Atlantic World.

If the Brazil-Porto mandinga nexus was as vibrant as Luís de Lima describes it, we can be assured that the Brazil-Lisbon one was even more so. It was in Lisbon, in fact, where the first mandingas were publicly demonstrated as early as 1672. Moreover, Lisbon was the primary destination of merchants and colonial officials returning to Portugal, often with their slaves in tow. Among those who were named as Luís de Lima's co-conspirators in Porto was one Manuel da Piedade. The slave of a ship captain who had previously lived in Bahia, Pernambuco, and various Portuguese villages, Piedade ran away from his master in Porto and fled to Lisbon, where he continued to manufacture and sell mandingas until his arrest in March 1730.

While in Lisbon, Piedade may have encountered two other well-known mandingueiros, José Francisco Pereira and José Francisco Pedroso, both of whom were also arrested in the city that same year. Pereira and Pedroso were born in Ouidah and enslaved in Brazil before being carried to Lisbon. The slaves of two brothers, there they worked together closely in the manufacture and sale of bolsas. Like Luís de Lima in Porto, they apparently formed part of a much broader network in the city: between them, Pereira and Pedroso named more than half a dozen accomplices in Lisbon, all of whom had ties to Brazil. Moreover, Pedroso

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3 The pedra d'ara was a piece of marble with an internal compartment filled with the relics of martyred Catholic saints. It was believed to hold magical powers necessary for the transubstantiation of bread and wine during Holy Communion.

4 ANT, Inquisição de Coimbra, Processos, No. 1630 (Luís de Lima). On the entangled worlds of the Atlantic, see Eliga H. Gould, 'Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery', *American Historical Review*, 112/3 (2007): 764-86. The episodes outlined in this chapter build on Gould's idea of colonial and imperial entanglements; however, they go one step further in emphasizing the African impetus for these entanglements. In the same edition of the *American Historical Review* where the Gould article appears, there is another by Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, in which he laments: 'If the category of Atlantic is to mean anything, it ought to include Africa, but there seems to be no room for this often overlooked fourth continent in most new versions of the Atlantic'. In a small way, this article builds on both Gould and Cañizares-Esguerra. See Cañizares-Esguerra, 'Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?', *American Historical Review*, 112/3 (2007): 787-99. The quote is on p. 794.


6 ANT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 9972 (Manuel de Piedade).

7 Other cases of slaves being accused of carrying mandingas in Lisbon during this period include: ANT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 4260 (Processo of Joseph, single slave of Antonio Marques Gomes, jailed September 23, 1730); ANT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 15572 (Denunciation of Francisco, slave of João Ruiz do Valle, May 2, 1735); ANT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Novos Maços, Maço 27, No. 41 (Denunciation of Antonio de Sousa, slave of João de Freitas, January 6, 1733); ANT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 16722 (Denunciation of Matheus, slave, August 7, 1731).
claimed that there were many other mandingueiros in Lisbon whose names he could not remember.\(^8\)

While the sheer number of slaves working together as *mandingueiros* in Portugal might seem intriguing enough, it becomes all the more so when we consider how ideas were shared across the Atlantic. *Mandingas* flowed back and forth across the Atlantic in an uninterrupted stream—bought and sold, borrowed and shared. Portuguese slaves, in particular, hungered for the magical powers of Brazil, a space where the social and cultural terrains were often occupied by the enslaved and heavily influenced by Africa. Accordingly, it was believed that Afro-Brazilian remedies were the most effective in addressing the difficulties of enslavement. The most obvious conduits to the powers of Brazil and Africa were those who actually hailed from those places. Thus, when José Francisco Pereira first arrived in Lisbon from Rio, he was immediately set upon by black men who 'harassed him ... so that he would give them mandingas', believing that 'he must have brought some from [Brazil]'\(^9\). If Portuguese slaves could not access directly the sources of Brazilian magic, then they had to be satisfied with the prescriptions and remedies that emanated from there. Luís de Lima claimed that he taught two slaves in Porto a ritual to protect them from their masters' beatings. As proof of the ritual's authenticity, Luís announced that a slave in Alagoas, Brazil, taught him the ritual, which consisted of chewing on a particular root in the master's presence after committing some dereliction of duty.\(^10\)

If Brazil was seen as a crucial node in the world of magical talismans, then Africa was understood to be the original source of these objects. On one occasion, a slave named Ignácio arrived in Porto from Pernambuco. Shortly after, he shared with Luís de Lima a mandingo that he brought with him. Luís was particularly impressed by the blue and white bead, which he described as 'truly Cape Verdean Mandinga'.\(^11\) Though a cryptic reference, Luís seemed to be making a distinction between *mandingas* coming from Brazil and those more 'true' or authentic ones which came from the Upper Guinea coast and its associated islands. Indeed, the very name 'mandingo' gives us some clue as to the alleged origin of the most authentic of these powerful talismans.

While Europeans, Native Americans, and other peoples used similar pouches far back in their early histories, the proliferation of *bolas* in the eighteenth-century Portuguese Atlantic was attributed primarily to Africans from the so-called Guinea and Mina coasts. The Portuguese term 'bolsa de mandinga' probably emerged in the first decades of the seventeenth century to describe the pouches offered by Islamic teachers in West Africa, especially in the territories of the ethnic Mandinga on the Upper Guinea coast. As early as 1606, Jesuit Father Balthazar Barreira noted that the Mandinga used pouches containing scripts from the Koran to entice people to convert to Islam.\(^12\) Similarly, in 1656, it was reported that the 'Negro Mandingas' were accustomed to tying cords around various parts of their bodies for good luck, 'and they have them for their relics'.\(^13\) The first report of *mandinga*-like *bolas* outside of Africa dates to the early 1670s. In 1672, a slave named Manuel was accused of tying a pouch around his wrist to protect himself from knives and daggers in Lisbon. Manuel publicly challenged soldiers to stab him, and he even attempted to involve a priest in laying a wager as to the effectiveness of his talisman. Reportedly, Manuel performed similar stunts when he was earlier enslaved on the island of Madeira.\(^14\)

By the early eighteenth century, these pouches were commonly known as *bolas de mandinga*, or simply *mandingas*, in the Portuguese colonial world, and they were understood to be the peculiar domain of Africans and their descendants. The 'diabolical nature' of these *mandingas* was inherent in the name, which associated them directly with Africa. This is not to say, however, that *bolas* emanated from a homogenous cultural tradition. On the contrary, in addition to the Islamic-influenced *bolas* from Upper Guinea, there were *gbo* (empowered objects) from the Fon/Gbe-speaking regions of Benin that also took the form of substances from the natural world tied in bundles around the neck, wrists, or arms.\(^15\) Similarly, Portuguese Catholics continued to wear ritually empowered objects, including scapulars and Agnus Dei around their necks.\(^16\) However, the distinctions between these varied traditions collapsed along racial and ethnic lines so that *bolas de mandinga* represented a peculiar form of diabolical African superstition. When in 1700, a Cape Verdean slave was accused of selling *bolas* in Lisbon, the denouncing priest noted that, 'One presumes the likelihood of a pact with the Devil [since] the said bolsas come to him from his homeland ... and it is quite safe to presume the frequency of fetishism that there is among that caste of people'.\(^17\) In short, *bolas* were a well-known magical medium, but the *bolas* manufactured and used by Africans were a particularly evil form, created in alliance with the Devil himself. As such, they were more appropriately labelled 'mandingas', clearly indicating their African provenance and their danger. The Portuguese Inquisition reacted decisively against this perceived threat; between 1701 and 1730 *mandinga* cases

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\(^8\) ANTT, *Inquérito de Lisboa, Processos*, No. 11767 (José Francisco Pereira) and Processos, No. 11774 (José Francisco Pedroso).


\(^11\) Ibid.


\(^16\) ANTT, *Inquérito de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor*, No. 72, Livro 266, fols 77–91.
represented 57 per cent of all denunciations and criminal trials against African-descended defendants accused of ‘magical’ practices.\textsuperscript{18}

While we could easily conclude that these were just the racist machinations of the Catholic Church, the purge of African mandinguiros had much deeper social and political implications. If we consider the ends to which bolsas were put, it becomes clear that they were used in the broadest sense for ‘good luck’. But ‘luck’ is a subjective concept, determined by social and cultural contexts. What Portuguese used bolsas to prevent pregnancies, to win at gambling and other games of chance, to attract members of the opposite sex, and so on. Africans also used bolsas for these purposes, but the real ‘evil’ of mandingas lay in the fact that ‘luck’ might aid Africans in all manner of ways to thwart slavery and the slave trade.

As we have seen, mandingas were most commonly used for protecting against weapons, especially knives. The public spectacle of enslaved Africans balancing their bodies on the business ends of swords might undermine the authority of slave masters, in the sense that a slave who believed that knives could not penetrate his body was unlikely to fear anything his master could unleash upon him. Enslaved Africans, moreover, believed that mandingas had other virtues more directly related to undermining their enslavement. In Porto, for example, an African named Joseph, the slave of an Englishman, requested that Luís de Lima and José Luís prepare him a mandinga that would allow him to run away from his master.\textsuperscript{19} When this mandinga failed, he returned to Luís de Lima and requested a different mandinga that would compel his master to sell him. This one apparently succeeded, as Joseph was sold to a more compassionate master. Similarly, in the mines of Brazil in the 1730s, an African slave named Manuel dos Anjos was shackled and chained, but because of the virtue of his mandinga, he was able to break the chains and run away with the shackles still attached. When he was captured and jailed in Rio de Janeiro, Manuel claimed that he was able to escape from jail because of the strength of his mandinga, which allowed him to break the bars of his cell.\textsuperscript{20}

Mandingas were also thought to protect slaves from punishment. In Porto, José da Costa used a mandinga to protect himself when he decided to return a piece of clothing that he had stolen from his master. On another occasion, José used a different mandinga to protect himself from punishment when he returned to his master’s home late at night. During the same time period, in Lisbon, the slave master João de Freitas bound his slave, Antonio de Sousa, and gave him many lashes with the whip. Because of the power of his mandinga, Antonio responded with animated contempt, taunting his master and claiming that he could not be hurt.\textsuperscript{21}

Finally, it was believed that mandingas had the power to control natural elements like the wind, crucial in the execution of the sail-driven slave trade. When in 1738, for example, the African Domingos Álvares was being transported from Pernambuco to Rio de Janeiro, the doldrums halted the ship’s progress down the coast; certain that Domingos was the source of this evil, the ship’s captain ordered him tied to the mast of the ship and whipped. Upon removing his clothing, the captain discovered a bolsa de mandinga; he ordered it immediately burned and the ashes thrown into the sea. Shortly thereafter, the winds resumed and the ship continued on its journey.\textsuperscript{22}

Clearly, Africans and their descendants utilized the magical power of mandingas in order to either escape enslavement or ameliorate their condition. But the fear of bolsas exhibited by ship captains, slave masters, and the Inquisition demonstrates just how deeply implicated the Portuguese were in the proliferation of these magical ideas. As noted, bolsas existed in early modern Europe prior to the slave trade. Although their use was banned by the Catholic Church from as early as the Middle Ages as ‘superstitious’, Europeans resisted such prohibitions. The use of amulets containing animal parts, herbs, stones, and coins persisted well into the period of the Enlightenment.\textsuperscript{23} By 1700, in the public plazas of Portugal, whites were just as likely to purchase bolsas from Africans as were other Africans. Some of these Portuguese carried their bolsas to Africa, where they passed them on to other Africans. In 1714, for instance, a Portuguese soldier, Antônio Dias, travelled from Portugal to Luanda and then on to Massangano, where he gave a bolsa to the Angolan freedman, Vicente de Moraes. Dias claimed that the bolsa could ‘free one from dangers’. Doubting the efficacy of the Portuguese man’s claims, Moraes put the bolsa around the neck of a stray dog before shooting it several times with his pistol. The dog was said to have remained unscathed throughout the incident, leading Moraes to conclude that ‘the bolsa was Mandinga’. Moraes later used the bolsa to protect himself when he was stabbed by a Portuguese man in an altercation. He claimed that when he opened the bolsa, it contained some orations in Latin, a small Agnus Dei, and ‘a green thing that he did not recognize’.\textsuperscript{24} Clearly, Moraes’ bolsa contained elements sanctioned by the Catholic Church, as well as ones that were not. Similar blending of traditions occurred in Brazil, where there were reports that Portuguese priests in Pernambuco distributed pieces of consecrated host to their parishioners so that they could place them in their bolsas.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{18} This period represented the high point in mandinga accusations against African-descended defendants. See Calainho, ‘Jambacouses and Gangazambes’: 149, Table 2.

\textsuperscript{19} Other cases that speak to the virtues of mandingas in helping slaves run away include: ANTT, Inquérito de Lisboa, Processos, No. 15628 (Lisbon, 1737, mandinga that had ‘the power to open doors’); ANTT, Inquérito de Lisboa, Processos, No. 502 (Bahia, early 1740s, bolsa de mandinga given to slave by runaway slave, claiming it was good for ‘freeing the pangan from the land’).

\textsuperscript{20} ANTT, Inquérito de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 99, Livro 292, fols 12-12v (1732).

\textsuperscript{21} ANTT, Inquérito de Lisboa, Novos Maços, Maçã 27, No. 41 (January 6, 1733).

\textsuperscript{22} ANTT, Inquérito de Coimbra, Processos, No. 7759.

\textsuperscript{23} For example, in 813 the Third Council of Tours prohibited carrying the bones of dead animals or empowered herbs to protect from illness and accidents. See Souza, The Devil and the Land of the Holy Cross, p. 131.

\textsuperscript{24} ANTT, Inquérito de Lisboa, Processos, No. 5477.

\textsuperscript{25} ANTT, Inquérito de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor, No. 79, Livro 272, fols 397–397v.
But it was this very belief in the power of *bolsas* to bring good luck that created difficulties for the Portuguese when African slaves utilized similar talismans for their own ends. By using magical talismans to challenge the social and economic order, Africans inspired a decisive transformation from ‘*bolsas*’ to ‘*mandingas*’, and from ‘superstition’ to ‘diabolical evil’. Thus, the purge of *mandingueiros* in eighteenth-century Portugal should be seen not so much as a response to rooting out heresies against the Church, but rather as an attempt to maintain the social and economic order, especially in the metropole, where colonial challenges, let alone Africans ones, were simply intolerable.

The turn from ‘*bolsas*’ as ‘superstition’ to ‘*mandingas*’ as ‘diabolical evil’ was rife with ideological contradictions that could only serve to reinforce the perceived power of African magical talismans. Moreover, by taking a widely recognized popular Portuguese form and reinventing it as ‘*Mandinga*’, the Inquisition affirmed the reality of overlapping African, Brazilian, and Portuguese cultures in the metropole. Colonialism had arrived on Portuguese shores and penetrated into the fabric of daily life. Ironically, the very institution whose goal it was to stamp out heresy probably reinforced its African variants in Portuguese villages and towns, not only at the ideological level, but also through its mechanisms of ‘justice’. The Inquisition brought accused Africans to trial in the cities of Lisbon, Coimbra, and Évora, sometimes remitting them all the way from Brazil (as indeed from the Guinea Coast, as Philip Havik shows in this volume). It also punished the guilty by exiling them to small, under-populated Portuguese villages like Faro, Castro Marim, Sylves, and Bragança.26 Thus, someone like Domingos Alves, who accused of controlling the wind with his *bolsa de mandinga*, was exiled to Castro Marim, from whence he proceeded to walk more than 300 miles across the Algarve, divining and healing along the way. He was prosecuted yet again by the Inquisition and exiled to Bragança, spreading his malevolent African ideas to yet another region of the metropole.

While the slave trade had the predictable outcome of turning Brazil into a colonial ‘purgatory’ where ‘syncretism was one of the faces of hell’, the Portuguese never imagined that the diabolical ideas of Africans could thrive in Portugal itself.27 By the eighteenth century, however, merchants and traders working in the Atlantic ensured that Brazilian, and even African, ideas would reach Europe’s shores. But the proliferation of these African ideas was never a foregone conclusion in the metropole: after all, nowhere were Africans more than ten per cent of the Portuguese population.28 That Africans sought one another out and formed networks is testimony not only to the desire of Africans to free themselves from enslavement, but also to the tenacity of trans-Atlantic relationships. The contradictions of Portugal’s colonial enterprise also facilitated African resistance. Predictably, Africans adopted those elements of Portuguese popular culture that were useful for them, especially where these overlapped with their own understandings. As Africans naturalized popular ‘superstitions’ like the *bolsa*, the Portuguese had little choice but to render *bolsas* ‘diabolical’, especially when they publicly undermined the power upon which slavery and colonialism rested. However, there was a price to pay. Ultimately, by redefining *bolsas* as ‘heresy’ and ‘witchcraft’, the Portuguese infused Africa into their own popular beliefs, affirming the power of *mandingas* and linking the cultures of Africa and Brazil to those of the metropole.

Indeed, by the middle decades of the eighteenth century, the word ‘*mandinga*’ had so thoroughly penetrated Portuguese metropolitan thought that the actual presence of Africans, as principal instigators, was no longer required to invoke the *mandinga*’s ‘diabolical’ meaning. In 1750, for example, in the Portuguese village of Gaia, across the Douro River from Porto, a 16-year-old boy named João Luís Pedreira denounced the sailor, João de Santiago. One day during the Easter holidays, Santiago appeared at the house of Pedreira’s father, where he asked the teenage boy to stab him in the chest with a sword. Amazed that the sword did not penetrate, the young man asked Santiago how this was possible. Santiago pulled up his shirtsleeve and revealed a black bead ‘shaped like a small lemon’, surrounded by red beads ‘that seemed to be coral’, all tied together around his upper arm. When the young Pedreira asked where Santiago found this magical talisman, Santiago replied that he had brought it from Brazil.

Several days later, Pedreira asked to borrow the talisman from Santiago. Wrapping it around his arm, the young man asked his Portuguese-born slave, José, to stick him with a knife. As he began to do so, Pedreira immediately felt the pain and, fearing serious injury, called off the experiment. Returning the talisman to Santiago, he reported that it was ineffective. To this Santiago responded that in order for the bead to work its magic, he needed to say some words of invocation, which he knew, but would not share with the teenage boy. Upon hearing that the bead required secret prayers in order to catalyse its power, Pedreira confessed that he ‘immediately understood it was mandinga and diabolical pacts’. Eight months later, in December 1750, he denounced Santiago to the Inquisition.

In the intervening period, Santiago had absented himself from Portugal, reportedly aboard a ship bound for Pernambuco. Inquisitorial prosecutors in

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26 For Faro, see ANTT, Inquisição de Évora, Processos, No. 4333 (Gracia Maria, Angolan, 1724); for Castro Marim, ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 252 (Luiza Pina, Angolan, 1744); for Sylves, ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 502 (João da Silva, Angolan, 1752).


28 At the height of the slave trade to Portugal in the sixteenth century, approximately ten per cent of Lisbon’s population was enslaved, the majority of them Africans. In the south of Portugal, only 5.5 per cent of the population was enslaved. AC de CM Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen in Portugal, 1441–1555* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 50–58, 63–72; Jorge Fonseca, *Escravos no sul de Portugal, séculos XVI-XVII* (Lisbon, 2002), p. 28.
Coimbra attempted to pursue him, questioning numerous people ‘coming from Pernambuco and other cities of Brazil’. Some witnesses claimed that Santiago worked in Bahia; others said he lived in Pernambuco; still others reported that he fled to the Spanish Indies. Several more ‘affirmed that he was dead’. After the passage of several years without any word of his whereabouts, even his family in the vicinity of Porto assumed that Santiago was indeed dead. Finally, in 1765, after an exhaustive 15-year search, the inquisitors closed their case on João de Santiago, unable to locate the offending mandingueiro anywhere in the Portuguese Atlantic world.²⁹

The Inquisition’s lengthy and fruitless pursuit of Santiago across the Atlantic span was a microcosm of Portugal’s inability to harness and control many aspects of its imperial project. Santiago’s diabolical mandinga was first born in the minds of Portuguese missionaries proselytizing among Islamic Africans on the Upper Guinea coast in the early seventeenth century. From there, these magical talismans spread with the slave trade to all corners of the Portuguese colonial world, proliferating especially in Brazil. The mandinga crystallized as an archetypical African form of evil in the network of dozens of enslaved mandingueiros who bought, sold, traded, and shared ‘bolsas de mandinga’ in Africa, Brazil, and Portugal during the first decades of the eighteenth century. Finally, by the 1750s, the idea of the mandinga was so completely naturalized to Portugal that even a 16-year-old boy in the small village of Gaia knew to invoke it as shorthand for the Devil’s work. The general form and function of the mandinga remained consistent across time and space, and its associations with Africa and Brazil never seemed to waver. Nevertheless, the fact that the mandinga became such a thoroughly Portuguese metropolitan idiom demonstrates that colonialism was never a one-way street. As the Portuguese colonized Africans and Brazilians, they also colonized themselves, even at the very heart of the empire.

The Spanish Atlantic

Was there such as thing as a Spanish Atlantic? If there was, then its history resists most conventional Atlantic periodizations.² José C. Moya argues that ‘the concept [of the Atlantic] is applicable more to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than to previous or later periods’.³ By foregrounding Latin America in his account of the modernization and the transformation of the Atlantic world he provides a useful corrective to the Atlantic-side weaknesses of C.A. Bayly’s interpretation of the ‘birth of the modern world’.⁴ Moya argues that the divergence of Spanish America from the conventional storyboards of Atlantic history should not lead us to bury the concept of the Atlantic, but rather to define its shape and its borders more accurately by tracing the trajectories of migrants, sojourners, capital, and material goods. Other scholars focusing on Latin America have also questioned the wisdom of an Atlantic perspective. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara argues that ‘one must employ a different sense of the Atlantic World as a coherent space, one that is more multisided and interactive than the model that focuses on

²⁹ ANTT, Inquérito de Coimbra, Cadernos do Promotor, No. 107, Livro 401, fols 329–47.

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