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Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the  
African Portuguese World, 1441-1770 (review)

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ment of the treatment they have received from the regime. In contrast to the idea of a binary Cuba, with Fidel and supporters on one side and the dissident groups on the other, Hernández offers the analogy of three Cubans talking about baseball. The baseball culture in Cuba, with good sportsmanship, intense involvement and widespread participation can be likened to the strength of civil society and the degree to which all citizens contribute to it. Our wish as readers of Hernández's book is that the questions he raises will contribute to the good health of the political debate and suggest new strategies to improve the pitching of civil society in Cuba.

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*Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African Portuguese World, 1441-1770.* By James H. Sweet. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003. Pp. xvi, 296. Maps. Tables. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$55.00 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

Taking a broad approach to his subject, James H. Sweet presents readers with a fascinating collection of evidence revealing region-specific religious and cultural practices of enslaved Africans in Portugal's colonies in Africa and Brazil as well as in the Portuguese metropolis of Lisbon. Deftly mining Inquisition and other colonial documents, the author identifies undiluted rituals and cultural values "in action," within various slave communities. From the peoples of Upper Guinea, the Mina Coast, and most importantly, from the millions of Congo and Angola men and women enslaved in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such rituals and values emerged and endured both in Portugal and Brazil despite the harsh slave regimes and the efforts of Europeans and the Catholic clergy to eradicate "diabolic" customs and beliefs.

According to Sweet, an unadulterated African religion and spirituality (not a creole religion forged in the crucible of New World slavery) were the slaves' greatest resources in resisting the countless dangers and humiliations in their lives. In Chapters 5-8, the author ably outlines salient features of Central African cosmology. Here, he recounts the uses by slaves of divination rituals to solve crimes, to resolve a particular problem, or to determine an individual's immediate fate. Sweet also details the commonplace occurrence of ceremonies involving spirit possession, called *culundú*, in this period. Such ceremonies provided slaves with cures for illness and remedies for social conflicts. Specialists in African forms of healing were sought out and often received payment or remuneration for their services. Men and women slaves also used their religious powers to harm rivals or to retaliate against those who harmed them. From rituals that could harm or heal to revered talismans that could offer protection or good fortune, slaves called upon a varied arsenal of religious powers to resist and deflect the will of their captors. Sweet also informs us that masters of slaves both respected and feared the effectiveness of their slaves' arsenal of religious powers. Some owners accepted African beliefs enough to seek

aid from the slaves' religious specialists. Catholic clergy, with a few notable exceptions, condemned slave beliefs as witchcraft and/or heresy.

Sweet has intelligently used the very words of Inquisitors, clergy and colonizers to remind readers that almost all slaves arriving in the New World had their own cosmologies, cultures, and specific religious practices, which were not Christian or compatible with Christianity. He successfully demonstrates the prevalence of genuinely African rites and customs in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Brazil. Sweet's broad-stroke approach to New World slavery does not, however, serve scholars any better than the mistaken idea of one homogeneous "African" culture that he is so careful to dispel here. Within Brazil itself, as elsewhere in the Americas, the pace and depth of creolization and conversion to Christianity varied across regions and over time. Sweet's evidence is insufficient for his conclusion that in all of Brazil "the impact of Christianity on Africans was no greater than the impact of African beliefs on Christians" (p. 230).

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*The Penitente Brotherhood: Patriarchy and Hispano-Catholicism in New Mexico.*

By Michael P. Carroll. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. Pp. viii, 260. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$45.00 cloth.

Here is the latest addition to the extensive bibliography on New Mexico's penitential brotherhood known as the Hermandad de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno, or the Hermanos Penitentes. What characterizes this account is its searing critique of the extant literature, offering as its own modest antidote a strident positivist reading of well-worn sources, glazed with a psychoanalytic confection of its own. So viewed, the Penitente ritual is "pervaded by a great many elements that seem ideally suited to the gratification of homoerotic desire" (p. 204). This desire, Freud and the author claim, is a "defense mechanism against the unconscious feelings of oedipal rage and hostility that are activated by the Penitente emphasis on the intense suffering of their Padre Jesús" (p. 205).

To reach this conclusion the author contends that just about every previous interpreter got it wrong. The Hermanos were not born of antique Spanish confraternities. They were not a variant of Third Order Franciscanism imported during the colony's formation. Nor were they some contorted organization spawned by the lack of clerical supervision in the early 1800s. Instead, the Hermanos emerged as a religious association in northern New Mexico during the late 1700s rather spontaneously, with few if any historical antecedents, and persisted into the beginning of the twentieth century largely because of deep socio-political displacements Hispanos witnessed in these years. Initiated by the economic impact of the Bourbon Reforms, intensified by the United States military conquest of New Mexico in 1846, and exacerbated by Anglo American hegemony as the territory became a state in 1912,