ARH 6957  African Graduate seminar: Kongo across the Waters
Monday periods 3-5         Robin Poynor  115 FAC
Office hours:   Tuesdays 10:00-12:00 or by appointment
Please feel free to call or email me. Phone: 352-213-5056 Email: rpoynor@ufl.edu

GOAL: The seminar will explore ideas of historical, religious, philosophical and iconographic significance in the Kongo related peoples of Central Africa and the impact that cultural cluster made across the Atlantic.

Text: Cooksey, Poynor, VanHee, Kongo across the Waters, 2013, University Press of Florida. Until the book is available, I will provide PDF files for our discussions. Once the book is available, if you like I will get you a copy with author’s discount.

Readings: You will be expected to develop your own bibliography based on the bibliography in the book but also on your own explorations. Please keep a log of your readings, which I will ask to review.

Exhibition: You will be expected to spend considerable time in the exhibition once it is open, familiarizing yourself with every facet of the show.

Tests: While I normally do not give exams in seminars, there will be a final exam in which you will be expected to discuss various ideas developed in the exhibition and in the book.

Grades: Grades will be based on attendance, class participation, leadership in discussion, class presentation, a research paper, and a final exam.

Attendance: A seminar lives or dies through the interactions of the participants. You are expected to be at every meeting. The seminar meets only once a week and because of circumstances this semester with starting on Wednesday and Labor Day, there are only 14 meetings.

Leadership: You must take it upon yourself to lead some of the discussions during the seminar. We will determine how many participants are in the class and assign/select times for assuming leadership of the discussion.

Class presentation: A twenty minute class presentation will take the form of a conference paper. The presentation should summarize the research you are carrying out for your research paper and should be in the form of a PowerPoint presentation.

Paper: A topic for a research paper must be selected in discussions with Professor Poynor. It must address some aspect of the contents of the exhibition Kongo across the Waters. It may address Central African content or diaspora or may connect them. It may address traditional art or contemporary art.

Final exam: The final exam will consist of essays in which you will be asked to discuss historical philosophical, religious aspects of Kongo and diaspora culture. During the course of the seminar, participants will identify pertinent topics to be included on the final.

The five components that factor into your grade are as follows:

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<th>Component</th>
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<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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Museum Nights at the Harn will feature the exhibition on November 14. I hope you will attempt to attend it and invite friends. I have also asked that the seminar be included in the guest list for the Museum Gala to take place November 15 at the Harn.

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA POLICIES

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines which have been accepted by the University. The academic community of students and faculty at the University of Florida strives to develop, sustain and protect an environment of honesty, trust and respect. Students are expected to pursue knowledge with integrity. Exhibiting honesty in academic pursuits and reporting violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines will encourage others to act with integrity. Violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and a student being subject to the sanctions in paragraph XIV of the Student Code of Conduct. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines (University of Florida Rule 6C1-4.017).

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Faculty Responsibility: Faculty members have a duty to promote honest behavior and to avoid practices and environments that foster cheating in their classes. Teachers should encourage students to bring negative conditions or incidents of dishonesty to their attention. In their own work, teachers should practice the same high standards they expect from their students.

Administration Responsibility: As highly visible members of our academic community, administrators should be ever vigilant to promote academic honesty and conduct their lives in an ethically exemplary manner.

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Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities, who need reasonable modifications to complete assignments successfully and otherwise satisfy course criteria, are encouraged to meet with the instructor as early in the course as possible to identify and plan specific accommodations. Students WILL be asked to supply a letter from the Office for Students with Disabilities to assist in planning accommodations. Please see me outside of class time to discuss any accommodations you might need.

University of Florida Counseling Services: Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals that interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

Counseling Center www.counsel.ufl.edu, (2 locations), 301 Peabody Hall (352-392-1576) and 3190 Radio Road (352-392-1575).

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Kongo across the Waters

Introduction

SUSAN COOKSEY, ROBIN POYNOR, AND HEIN VANHEE

This book and the traveling exhibition it accompanies are meant to mark a milestone in the history of African presence in North America. They are the fruit of a particular challenge taken on by a number of scholars in 2011 to provide an important complement to the Viva Florida 500 program to commemorate 500 years of European presence in 2013. When the Spanish conquistador Juan Ponce de León set foot on La Florida in April 1513, his crew comprised two free Africans who had adopted the Spanish names of Juan Garrido and Juan Gonzalez Ponce de León. This means that with the first Europeans came also the first Africans to the North American continent.

Little is known about the biographies of Juan Ponce de León’s two African crew members. As far as we know, their precise African origins were not recorded, nor do we know how and when they arrived on the Iberian peninsula and enlisted in the crew of a Spanish voyage of exploration. We do know that Portuguese sailors had systematically explored the Atlantic coasts of Africa in the previous century and established contact with various African peoples. Among these were the Bakongo, who lived south of the equator in the region that stretched out both north and south of the lower reaches of the Congo River. Prior to their first encounter with Portuguese sailors in 1483, the Bakongo had constituted a vast kingdom mostly south of the Congo. This kingdom, called Kongo, much impressed the Portuguese for its political organization and for the high development of particular forms of art. Subsequent voyages brought to Europe fine gifts from the Kongo king and the nobility, among which were trumpets made of elephant ivory and delicately woven cloth made of raffia fiber. In 1491 the Kongo king Nzinga a Nkuwu converted to Roman Catholicism and was baptized as João I. He was succeeded in 1509 by Afonso I, who spread the new religion over most of the kingdom. Thousands of Kongolesse received baptism and religious instruction from European missionaries sent to Kongo.

In the decades preceding Ponce de León’s arrival on Florida’s shore, the Iberian peninsula had welcomed several emissaries from the newly discovered African lands, among whom were students from the Kongo kingdom. Some would have had
preliminary instruction in Kongo, and their interest in literacy and religious matters would no doubt have favored their integration in European circles. Were the Africans arriving with the Spanish in Florida in 1513 of Kongo origin? We know of Juan Garrido that he arrived in Lisbon in the 1490s, where he received baptism. From there he moved to Seville and eventually crossed the Atlantic. This means that a Kongo origin is not impossible, but the truth is that we do not know.

More important than the specific African origin of the free black conquistadors is the simultaneous arrival of the first Europeans and the first Africans in North America, the historical and symbolic importance of which cannot be overstated. Both European and African immigrants, crossing the Atlantic in various “waves” in the following centuries, shaped together with native American populations the history and culture of the United States. Many of these migrations were forced and brutal. The first enslaved Africans reached North America via the Caribbean in the course of the sixteenth century. A bit more than a century after the arrival of Ponce de León, the
transatlantic slave trade brought the first direct imports of Africans to British North America. An estimated 388,000 of them followed, to work predominantly on the plantations of the Carolinas and Georgia (54 percent) and in the Chesapeake region (33 percent). Smaller numbers were brought to estates farther north along the East Coast and to the emerging Gulf states in the South. Enslaved Africans brought with them little more than their memories, shaped by the many diverse cultures in which they had grown up. The new cultures that developed in America were marked by the common experience of slavery and by the varied cultural backgrounds of enslaved individuals.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, historians and anthropologists have studied African American cultures from a variety of angles. They have emphasized the unique contributions of African American communities to the development of contemporary American culture and also pointed at specific cultural manifestations whose origins can be traced to specific regions in Africa. The past twenty years have seen a welcome increase in African Diaspora studies, informed by new theory and by an important advance in the historiography of the slave trade. With the publication of this book and the organization of a traveling exhibition, Kongo across the Waters wishes to bring some of this new scholarship to the attention of a wider audience.

While many different African cultures have left their imprint on American culture, this project’s focus is on the historical and cultural connections between the United States and Kongo. Not to be confused with the two modern states named Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo, or Congo-Kinshasa, and Republic of the Congo, or Congo-Brazzaville), by Kongo we mean a region in West Central Africa inhabited by peoples speaking Kitongo. Kongo had the single largest contribution

Fig. 0.2. Photograph of old tombs in the coastal region of Cabinda, Angola, 1904. CIOM Archives, KADOC, Leuven, Belgium. By permission of CIOM.
to the transatlantic slave trade to North America. About one fourth of the enslaved Africans arriving on (future) United States territory originated from Kongo or at least were familiar with Kongo culture. Twentieth-century scholarship long underestimated the Central African cultural contributions to African Diaspora cultures. Research in the past two decades has provided an important corrective to this situation.

The first aim of this project is to familiarize readers and visitors with Kongo history and culture, going back to the first encounters between Kongo and Europe, and tracing cultural developments from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Since many Kongoese were during this period carried as slaves to North America, our second aim is to explore how they have contributed to the process of culture formation in communities consisting of enslaved Africans and/or descendants of enslaved Africans. This we do by looking at African American folk arts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which may be linked historically with West Central Africa. Importantly, these are more than just "cultural survivals." The process of African American culture formation was characterized by a creative blending of different African traditions, determined by the changing demographics of the slave trade as well as by national policies. The term creolization—borrowed from linguistics—best describes this process: particular beliefs, techniques or objects may—like words—be traceable to a specific region in Africa, like Kongo, but they are fundamentally embedded in new cultures that have multiple origins. Our third aim is to explore how Kongo art and visual culture continues to transform and inspire today, and this we do by looking at a number of contemporary artists working in Africa and in the United States.

Scholars researching the African Diaspora have stressed the importance of understanding the historical cultures of the African homelands, and Kongo has a lot to offer in this respect. It is beyond the scope of this introduction to provide a complete overview of the relevant scholarship on Kongo and on the African Diaspora in the United States, but some general remarks can be made. Presenting a fairly unique case in African history, the earliest literature on Kongo goes back to the end of the fifteenth century, when chroniclers wrote down the accounts of Portuguese sailors returning from the Kongo kingdom. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries left extensive descriptions of the political, social and religious organization of Kongo. The many accounts left by Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries and the descriptions published by Lopes and Pigafetta (1591), Dapper (1668) and others were first mined in the twentieth century by the missionary historian Jean Cuvelier, who published a monograph on the history of the Kongo kingdom in 1941. Although a major achievement for its time, the book reflected Cuvelier's missionary agenda and lacked the theoretical and methodological foundations of the discipline of African history as it took off in the 1960s.

A new generation of historians was greatly inspired by the kingdom of Kongo and its surrounding regions and published a series of critical revisions. About the kingdom itself, the more influential have been Anne Hilton, Susan Herlin Broadhead and mostly John Thornton. Historians writing on the precolonial history of the wider region of West Central Africa have included José C. Curto, Roquinaldo Ferreira,
Beatrix Heintze, Linda Heywood, Phyllis Martin, Joseph C. Miller, John Thornton, Jan Vansina, Jean-Luc Vellut and Jelmer Vos.\textsuperscript{12} Several among them developed a particular focus on the political and social dynamics of the slave trade and broadened their research to include specific regions in the Americas where many West Central Africans were taken by force. Thornton and Heywood, in particular, have exemplified the Atlantic approach to African history, looking beyond the demographics of the trade in order to include in their analyses cultural carryovers and transformations.\textsuperscript{13}

Given the extensive missionary activity deployed in the region at the end of the nineteenth century and the geographical proximity of important colonial centers, the colonial ethnography dealing with the Bakongo is abundant, both in published form and in the archives. The Belgian Catholic missionaries Leo Bittremieux and Josef Van Wing, the British Baptists William H. Bentley and John H. Weeks and the Swedish Karl E. Laman did pioneering work in recording traditional knowledge, in documenting the Kikongo language and in publishing religious and other texts in Kikongo.\textsuperscript{14} The most prominent was Laman, who brought together an extraordinary archive of more than 10,000 manuscript pages in Kikongo, written between 1914 and 1916 by young Kongo men who were in the service of Protestant missions as teachers and catechists. Their notebooks contain information about all aspects of Kongo life at the time, mostly provided in response to a questionnaire that Laman had given to them. Laman's Kikongo-French dictionary was largely based on this archive, as was his four-volume monograph on the Bakongo, published after his death in 1944. Although the book suffered from some ethnographic homogenization imposed on the original source material, it contrasted with the vast library of colonial ethnography.
that had been established by then and which had led to important misunderstandings about the social, political and religious culture of Kongo.15

Field research carried out by anthropologists in the 1960s broke with colonial conventions and considerably deepened our understanding of Kongo culture and society. Albert Doutreloux, Wyatt MacGaffey and John Janzen sought to reinvestigate different aspects of social, political and religious life.16 Subsequently, MacGaffey and Janzen made further use of their knowledge of Kikongo to reexamine the original texts written by Laman’s collaborators. This proved particularly rewarding in the context of their attempts to investigate the cosmological assumptions underlying political and therapeutic rituals, and to reinterpret the composition, use and function of ritual objects and the ritual investiture of chiefs.17 In addition, John Janzen encouraged the emerging Kongo researcher André Fu-kiau Bunseki-Lumanisa to describe Kongo cosmology, the publication of which was received as an important contribution to the study of African philosophy.18 Both anthropologists also engaged with history and offered critical reflections on historical analyses of precolonial Kongo. Janzen was among the first to add an Atlantic perspective to the study of an important Kongo cultural phenomenon when he described the continuity and adaptation of the Lemba therapeutic cult in Haiti.19 Based on an analysis of Kikongo texts from the Laman archive, MacGaffey’s Kongo Political Culture challenges historians and political scientists in what most of them consider to be relevant data (or not) and calls for a more serious consideration of African cosmology and ideology.20

Building on the work of historians and anthropologists, art historians Joseph Cornet, Ezio Bassani and Robert Farris Thompson studied Kongo art and visual culture. Cornet did research in the 1970s for the newly established museum in Kinshasa, including among the Woyo, a Kongo subgroup.21 Ezio Bassani’s research in museums and archives enabled him to identify individual Kongo artists and workshops, to publish important early sources and to compile an impressive inventory of art and artifacts brought from Africa, including from Kongo, to Europe before 1800.22 Cornet’s interest in Kongo funerary art led to a collaboration with Thompson, who was using techniques of comparative ethnography to explore the transatlantic connections between Kongo and African American visual cultures. The result of this was a groundbreaking exhibition and book, titled The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds (1981).23 Thompson further developed the theme of Atlantic connections in subsequent publications, drawing on a wide range of sources, extending his field of inquiry to dance, music and contemporary art and challenging other scholars as he often pushed his analyses into the realm of controversy. Outstanding connoisseurship also developed at the outer fringes of academia, with mostly Raoul Lehuard and Marc L. Felix as the tireless proponents of Kongo art, bringing scholarship to new audiences through publications and exhibitions.24

Museum audiences were familiarized with Kongo art through both survey exhibitions of African art and projects focusing specifically on Kongo. Astonishment and Power, staged at the National Museum of African Art in 1993, focused on Kongo
ritual art and on the contemporary African American artist Renée Stout, whose art intuitively links with Kongo art and aesthetics. The exhibition *Legeste Kongo* at the Musée Dapper in Paris in 2002 celebrated the richness of expression in Kongo art. Marc L. Felix organized the first traveling Kongo exhibition in China. In Europe, Leuven and Leipzig recently had focus exhibitions on Kongo art.

The questions raised by Thompson and Cornet in their exploration of Kongo-African connections were not entirely new but had been discussed by scholars researching the African Diaspora at least since the beginning of the twentieth century. Introducing a collection of essays under the title *Africanisms in American Culture* in 1990, Joseph Holloway summarized the different approaches that had previously structured the debate. In a pioneering study titled *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), Melville Herskovits emphasized the African carryovers in African American culture, arguing that various cultural "survivals" could be traced back to the African continent. In disagreement with Herskovits was Edward Franklin Frazier, who believed that the experience of slavery had been so devastating that their African cultural heritage had been lost. For him African American culture had evolved in response to the harsh realities of slavery and racism, independently of African influence. Many scholars attempted to prove Frazier wrong and did so with varying degrees of success. Herskovits's approach, however, was criticized as well, for presenting a static view of African American cultures, and for limiting his quest for African origins mostly to West Africa.
In the past two decades scholars have moved past the debate over cultural “survivals” and in so doing have benefited from advances in theory as well as from the disclosure of data that allow us to reconstruct in unprecedented detail the history of the slave trade. In an influential essay, anthropologists Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price distanced themselves from what they considered to be static conceptions of African diasporic cultures in the Americas as either essentially African or acculturated. They argued for the recognition of both cultural continuity and the creative and innovative ways in which new cultures had been shaped in radically reconstituted social contexts. Although they dismissed Herrkowits’s West African focus, they also insisted on the necessity to look beyond formal correspondences to deeper cultural principles, ideas and values, which are often shared by different African cultures and may present another kind of cultural continuity.\textsuperscript{30} Meanwhile historians increasingly took an Atlantic perspective and put more emphasis on the importance of fluidity and circulation, of commodities, peoples, cultural practices and ideas, rather than on fixed structures and identities. Atlantic history became more concerned with connections, for example, between the political history of Africa, the changing dynamics of the slave trade and ultimately the formation of new cultures in the Americas.\textsuperscript{31}

A longstanding emphasis on demographic studies within imperial and maritime historiography led in the 1990s to the development of large databases for the study of the transatlantic slave trade. The most important source today is the online database \textit{Voyages}, containing data on more than 35,000 slave voyages or an estimated 80 percent of the total trade.\textsuperscript{32} Complementary datasets are \textit{Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy} and \textit{African Origins}.\textsuperscript{33} Demographic studies led to a reassessment of the numbers of Central Africans in the transatlantic slave trade and identified them as the single largest group. Subsequently more attention was also given to the cultural contributions of Central Africans. Holloway’s 1990 collection of essays provided a first step in that direction, and the theme was more fully explored in the essays collected by Linda Heywood in \textit{Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora} (2002).

In \textit{Many Thousands Gone} (1998), historian Ira Berlin insisted on how much American slavery varied across time and space, and on the importance for African Diaspora studies to take this into account. Berlin introduced the idea of a “charter generation” of slaves in the seventeenth century, whom he called “Atlantic creoles.” Unlike the later “plantation generation,” those of the charter generation were closer to the culture of their masters and could benefit from a certain degree of social mobility. He also questioned the idea of a unilinear process of creolization, suggesting that the massive slave imports in the eighteenth century may have altered the slaves’ sense of identity and led to a sort of re-Africanization.\textsuperscript{34}

Taking up Berlin’s idea of the charter generation of slaves being significantly acculturated to European values, Heywood and Thornton have argued that these slaves came predominantly from West Central Africa. In Kongo, interior struggles between dynastic groups and military conflicts with the Portuguese and other outsiders
caused many Kongo people to be enslaved and sold to Eur-
pean traders. A significant number of them were captured from Portuguese ships by
Dutch and British privateers and brought to North America. Heywood and Thor-
ton argued that the charter generation’s “Creole culture,” which included adoption or
familiarity with Catholicism, had developed in the Kongo-Angola region. This may
have enabled Kongo people to negotiate a different slave-master relationship than was
possible for later generations.35

Acknowledging the fact that slavery produced different outcomes in different
times and in different places, and making use of the detailed documentation on
the specifics of the trade, a variety of scholars have reviewed the origins of regional
cultures in the United States. Gwendolyn Hall has looked at how African Amer-
ican identities were formed in Louisiana, and at the importance of cultural import
there from Kongo, which Jason Young also found in the Lowcountry, looking more
specifically at religion.36 The last two decades also saw an increasing interest from
archaeologists into the African American past, with pioneering work published by
Leland Ferguson in 1992.37 As archaeologists drew attention to African American
pottery (colonoware), housing styles and material traces of ritual activity, scholars of
folklore like John Vlach wrote about basketry traditions, face jugs, memory jars and
decorated walking sticks.38 A selection of such African American arts and artifacts is
presented in the exhibition Kongo across the Waters and discussed in various chapters
in this book.
This book is structured in a number of longer and shorter essays, written by leading scholars on Kongo and the Kongo Diaspora. The longer essays bring current scholarship to bear on broader themes. The shorter essays focus on more specific issues, a particular object or form of expression, a historical figure or a featured artist. Interspersed with these essays are a number of visual intermezzi presenting a small set of compelling images accompanied by a short caption. We call them focus presentations.

The essays and focus presentations generally fall into three parts. The first part deals with the culture of the Kongo kingdom and the dynamics of the transatlantic slave trade, and subsequently focuses on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The essays address processes of cultural exchange, religious renewal and economic development, and explore various themes in Kongo art history.

The first five essays look at the early period of contact between the kingdom of Kongo and the Portuguese, at the reception of esteemed Kongo diplomats in Europe and the loss of many enslaved Kongo people to the transatlantic slave trade. Linda Heywood and John Thornton’s opening essay explores the culture of the Kongo capital Mbanza Kongó in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Art historian Cécile Fromont looks at art in the era when Kongo kings and elites converted to Christianity. The essay by archaeologist Geoffroy Heimlich discusses rock art in the Lower Congo region and its intersection with Kongo visual culture. Jelmet Vos addresses the changing patterns of the transatlantic slave trade between West Central Africa and North America, as well as the dynamics of enslavement in Kongo and the integration of enslaved Kongo people in the North American economy. This first section concludes with a discussion by Linda Heywood and John Thornton of Kongo’s diplomatic missions to European courts and to the Vatican.

The next six essays reflect on Kongo in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Hein Vanhee and Jelmet Vos describe the interplay between the booming “legitimate” commerce in the Congo estuary and on the Atlantic coast and the ambitions of local Kongo rulers, both south of the Congo River involving the Kongo king, and to the north where Yombe chiefs competed with one another. The political ideology of chieftainship is reflected in carved ivory tusks made on the Loango Coast, and Nichole Bridges’ essay compares these with African American carved wooden canes produced more or less in the same time period on the other side of the Atlantic. In particular, she addresses themes and forms in the so-called Emancipation Cane, a post–Civil War example that displays imagery and a narrative scheme that resembles the style of Kongo ivory tusks and wooden staffs. John Janzen discusses the dynamic nature of Kongo religion, suggesting that the pattern of incorporating new forms and objects in rituals constitutes a “tradition of renewal” that can be documented over almost five centuries. Ethnomusicologist Rémy Jadinon considers the historical and musical contexts of a visually compelling instrument, the Kongo pluriarc. Wyatt MacGaffey examines iconography and style in Kongo art and focuses on the aesthetic impact of anthropomorphic minkisi. The many European objects imported during the nineteenth century inspired both subject matter and style in Kongo art,
and art historian Julien Volper examines how the imagery of the imported Toby jugs may be recognized in commemorative grave figures as well as other Kongo objects.

The second part examines the transmission of Kongo cultural traditions to North America and their transformation in the contemporary African Diaspora cultures. Drawing on archaeology, linguistics, anthropology and history, they take a multidisciplinary look at culture in its broadest sense, integrating aspects of religion, cuisine, music, arts and crafts and commemorative practices.

This part opens with two essays that present the work of archaeologists. The first essay by Christopher Fennell looks at colonoware, dikenga-like configurations and nkisi-like caches found in early African American dwellings and other sites where African Americans of Kongo descent were present. The second essay presents the work of a team, comprising Kathryn H. Deely, Stefan F. Woehlke, Mark P. Leone and Matthew Cochran, on two excavations in Annapolis, Maryland. It offers a description and analysis of several artifacts, including a bundle of "medicines" found under a sidewalk on Fleet Street and a circle-cross configuration of objects below the floor of the eighteenth-century home of James Brice, former governor of Maryland. The following two essays present research in linguistics. Jacky Maniacky discusses linguistic connections between Kongo and the African American communities in the southern United States and remarks on the importance of methodology and the critical use of sources. Birgit Ricquier investigates specific aspects of culinary vocabulary that have survived the Middle Passage. Historian Jason Young's essay discusses Kongo influences on African American visual, literary and performative arts. Young offers some valuable insights as to how early Kongo-inspired forms of expression were integrated into the core of America's artistic and cultural heritage. Art historian Dale Rosengarten investigates the Lowcountry tradition of coiled grass baskets and discusses them in terms of their historical connection with Kongo. The next essay, by Freddi Williams Evans, discusses the Kongo and related dances being performed in the early nineteenth century at New Orleans' Congo Square, as well as the musical instruments being manufactured and played there by enslaved individuals. Historian Mathilde Leduc-Grimaldi considers how Central Africa, particularly the Kongo region, was represented in the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in popular travelers' accounts and visual media. She is interested in the ways in which these representations affected popular understanding and imagination of Africa. The final two essays of this part address African American yardwork throughout the southeastern United States. Anthropologist Grey Gundaker discusses yard shows that suggest Kongo-derived principles of defining sacred space. Art historian Kellim Brown hones in on a specific yard in Tampa, Florida, and describes how Kongo aesthetic concepts inform the selection and spatial arrangement of found objects to create personal and emotionally charged spaces.

Contributions to the third part of this book explore the ways in which Kongo traditions continue to inspire contemporary artists, in both Africa and North America. Art historians Susan Cooksey and Robin Poynor chart the course of artists with diverse cultural backgrounds in the modern and contemporary eras who have sought...
affinity with African, and specifically Kongo, art and culture. The following four essays discuss the work of artists living in the United States who are heavily influenced by Kongo art and ideas. Michael D. Harris writes about Renée Stout and her self-identification as an artist/conjuror who is inspired by Kongo minkisi. Carol Thompson elucidates Radcliffe Bailey’s borrowing of Kongo ideas and aesthetics in his quest for personal and collective histories in America and in Africa. Donald Cosentino discusses the many African sources of Haitian Vodou—including its Kongo origins—as represented in Edouard Duval-Carrié’s paintings of Iwas, bimbi and other Vodou beings. The concluding essay by art historian Judith Bettiheim looks at two installations by the Cuban American artist José Bedia in which he expresses his relationship with the Afro-Caribbean religion Palo Monte.

Kongo across the Waters offers readers a journey across time and space, in multiple and opposite directions. In sixteenth-century Kongo, we find religious iconography that connects to twentieth-century African American visual culture. In twenty-first-century American art, we find forms and ideas that reinterpret Kongo ritual art from the nineteenth century. Many such linkages can be made, and the idea of crossing waters, as alluded to in the title, may capture metaphorically the ambition of this project. “Across the river/water” is a recurring trope in Kongo mythology to indicate where “our people” originally came from. Kongo stories of origin usually narrate in some detail how that river was crossed and which other peculiar events marked the journey to “our land.” The specifics of all that explain why “we” are divided into a number of groups, and why we are here and so-and-so are elsewhere. The river may be on the map, but in the story it serves as a cosmological boundary between society as we know it and elsewhere.
Kongo across the Waters is therefore a metaphor that describes one of the rich historic cultures of our world, having developed across the centuries on this side of the water into a complex set of ideas, beliefs and forms of expression, both in Africa and in its many Diasporas. This book is meant to familiarize readers with Kongo culture, with its historical depth and with the many influences it continues to have on our increasingly globalized cultures.

Kongo across the Waters may also be on the other side of the water, a “land” taken as the origin or the source of things. It may be the African continent, which is often looked at as a potential source for self-empowerment or for inspiration, by those who feel historically or spiritually connected to it. Or it may be the Other World, where the ancestors and spirits live, a capricious world from where technology comes, and foreign aid, across an ocean that has a name on the map but is also a cosmological boundary. To appreciate what is on this side and imagine what may be on the other is what this book is about.

Notes

1. Landers, Black Society in Spanish Florida, 10–11. There is some discussion as to whether Juan Gonzalez Ponce de León really was of African descent; see Ayes, Juan Ponce de Leon: His New and Revised Genealogy.

2. See Bassani and McLeod, African Art and Artefacts in European Collections, for an overview of early collections.

3. For a recent discussion of Kongo’s early engagement with Christianity, see Heywood and Thornton, Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, 49–67.


7. The introduction by Heywood in Heywood, Central Africans and Cultural Transformations, summarizes the situation.

8. See chapter 1 in this volume.

9. For an excellent discussion, see Thornton, “Religious and Ceremonial Life.”


12. For an overview of the bibliography, see Vos, “Kongo and the Coastal States of West Central Africa.”


15. For discussion of the work of Laman, see Janzen, “Laman’s Kongo Ethnography” and MacGaffey, Kongo Political Culture, 34–42.

16. See Doutreloupe, L’ombre des étiches; MacGaffey, Custom and Government; Janzen, Lemba.
20. MacGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture*.
32. Eltis, "Construction of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database."
33. *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy* (www.ibiblio.org/laslave) was developed by historian Gwendolyn Hall; *African Origins* (www.african-origins.org) has data on Africans liberated from transatlantic slave vessels.
37. Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground*.
38. Vlach, *By the Work of Their Hands*. 
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“Steve Bandoma the first young black artist at NIROX Foundation”, http://stevebandoma.blogspot.com/2011/05/steve-bandoma-is-congolese-performance.html


