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"With Their King and Queen"

Early Colonial Mexico, the Origins of Festive Black Kings and Queens, and the Birth of the Black Atlantic

In February 1539, Mexico City was consumed by a series of extravagant public displays. These festivities, intended to commemorate the Truce of Nice, signed the previous year between Emperor Charles V (r. 1516–56) and King Francis I of France (r. 1515–47) at Aigues-Mortes near Nice, represented an end to a long period of economic instability for New Spain. Trade with Spain had ground to a halt, no ships had arrived with news or goods for six months, and a prominent friar began to darkly predict the end of Spanish rule, which unnerved the city's small Spanish population.[1] Amidst local political disruptions, an alleged Black rebellion plot in 1537 had been blamed on the war.[2] So, when the news of the peace accord arrived in Mexico City in September 1538, Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza (r. 1535–50) and the Audiencia, the two government authorities most closely linked to the victorious monarch, ordered the staging of great festivities whose planning took more than four months.[3] The celebrations in Mexico City mirrored those held at Aigues-Mortes and other parts of the empire, which included banquets, mock battles, and jousting, among other festive acts, with one notable addition: surprisingly, given the Black rebellion plot supposedly thwarted in 1537, the festivities in Mexico included a procession of "más de çinquenta" (more than fifty) "negros" (Blacks) wearing "grandes riquezas ... de oro y piedras ricas y aljófar y

[1] "Informe del virrey Antonio de Mendoza," sf. [2] Ibid.
[3] Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera*, 754. See Lopes Don, "Carnivals," 17–18.

argentería" (great riches ... of gold and precious stones and pearls and silver).[4]

Bernal Díaz del Castillo (ca. 1496–1584), who had come to Mexico with Hernán Cortés (1485–1547), witnessed the festival. Writing some thirty years later, Díaz del Castillo described these celebrations in chapter 201 of his *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (*True History of the Conquest of New Spain*) (ca. 1575).[5] According to Díaz del Castillo, the two-day festivities consisted of mock stag hunts, a *moros y cristianos* (Moors and Christians) choreography, a mock naval battle reenacting the Siege of Rhodes, a mock battle between Black and Indigenous performers, plays, banquets at the end of each day – one hosted by Mendoza at the viceregal palace and the other by Cortés in his own palace – jousting tournaments, speeches by significant personages, and the procession of the more than fifty Blacks, "todos a cavallo" (all on horseback).[6]

The mock battles shared a common theme of the triumph of Christendom over its infidel enemies. The reenactment of the Siege of Rhodes, either in 1480 or 1522, both of which took place against the Ottoman Empire, was itself a restaging of Cortés' offensive against Tenochtitlan in 1521. Cortés, who had fallen out of royal favor and had been dismissed from his post of governor of New Spain, was elected to perform the prominent role of Captain General, symbolically returning to his former post.[7] On both occasions (1480 and 1522), the Europeans lost to the Ottomans.[8] The reenactment in Mexico City then was a reinvention of that loss as victory in light of what had happened in Tenochtitlan in 1521. The *moros y cristianos* choreography was also significant, dramatizing the Reconquista (780–1492), or the war to expel the Moors from the Iberian Peninsula.[9] These various mock and restaged battles were

[4] Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera*, 755. Aigues-Mortes' festival is narrated in the anonymous *Relación muy verdadera* (1538). For analysis of other commemorations of the truce in the viceroyalty of New Spain, see Harris, *Aztecs*, 123–47.

[5] Published posthumously in 1632 in Madrid, Spain. That edition was based on what became known as the "Madrid" manuscript, which is a clean copy of the "Guatemala" manuscript, believed to be Díaz del Castillo's first draft and from where I cite. The "Guatemala" manuscript contains Díaz del Castillo's redactions. For example, he had originally written that there were "çiento y çinquenta" (150) Blacks in the festival, later crossing out "çiento y" and leaving just "çinquenta" (50) (755n5).

[6] Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera*, 753–60.

[7] The viceroyalty of New Spain, Spain's first in the Americas, was created in 1535 and Mendoza was appointed its first viceroy.

[8] The Knights Hospitaller colonized Rhodes at the onset of the fourteenth century. The Ottomans had tried unsuccessfully to expel them in 1444: see Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller*.

[9] See Harris, *Aztecs*.

intended to signify conquest, the triumph of Christianity, and the military superiority of the Spanish Empire. The battle staged between the Black and Indigenous actors, however, stands apart as a festive performance with a different genealogy, albeit this is one of its earliest known iterations.

The Blacks' performance took place on the first day in a life-size forest set up in the city's main square: "amanesçió hecho un bosque en la plaça mayor de México, con tanta diversidad de árboles tan natural como si allí oviera[n] nasçido" (in the morning there was a forest in Mexico [City]'s plaza mayor, with such a diversity of trees, which look so natural, as if they had grown there).[10] The forest had been the setting of the mock hunt, wherein Indigenous performers stalked Mesoamerican animals to the delight of onlookers, but Díaz del Castillo writes that the spectacle

> no fue nada para la inbençión que ovo de xinetes hechos de negros y negras con su rey y reina, y todos a cavallo, que eran más de çinquenta, y de las grandes riquezas que traían sobre sí, de oro y piedras ricas y aljófar y argentería; y luego van contra los salvajes y tienen otra quistión sobre la caça, que cosa era de ver la diversidad de rostros que llebavan las máscaras que traían, y cómo las negras daban de mamar a sus negritos y cómo hacían fiestas a la reina.[11]

> was nothing compared to the performance of horseback riders made up of Black men and women who were there with their king and queen, and all on horses, they were more than fifty, wearing great riches of gold and precious stones and pearls and silver; and then they went against the savages [in battle] and they had another hunt, and it was something to be seen the diversity of their faces, of the masks they were wearing, and how the Black women breastfed their little children and how they paid homage to the queen.

Scholars such as the historian Jerry Williams and the folklorist Max Harris have struggled to explain this performance. Williams, unable to account for the Blacks' performance, wondered whether – and Harris concurs – their rich regalia and diversity of masks were a parody or an imitation of the Spaniards' own ostentatious clothing, for, according to Díaz del Castillo, the Spanish women were richly dressed in "sedas y damascos" (silk and damask dresses) and wearing "oro y plata y pedrería" (gold and silver jewelry with precious stones).[12] I contend that this assessment a priori underplays the Blacks' agency and propose instead in this chapter a line of inquiry that attends to their previously ignored role in the festivities.

Díaz del Castillo's text leaves open several major questions about the performance. Was this a particular type of (festival) performance? Who

[10] Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera*, 754. [11] Ibid., 755.
[12] Williams, *Teatro*, 65; Harris, *Aztecs*, 130; Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera*, 755.

were the performers? That is, what ethnocultural group did they represent? If the 1537 rebellion plot had really transpired, how were they able to perform in a public festivity only two years later, and what would that participation mean? In this chapter, I pursue possible and thus far unexplored avenues for answering these questions. First, I address the question of the identity of the performers. To do so, I explore the demography of New Spain's Black population at the time, which consisted of two groups: *ladinos* and *boçales*. *Ladinos* were Christianized, Spanish-speaking, mostly free Blacks, while *boçales* (or *bozales* in later Spanish) were slaves newly arrived from the African continent itself. I contend here that the performers were *ladinos* and that the 1537 plot, if it took place, would have been led by *boçales*. I then move on to identify the performance itself, tracing *ladinos*' journey from Africa to New Spain via the Iberian Peninsula. I then consider the possibility that this performance could be the first American instance of or at least a precedent for the Central African–derived festival performance of kings and queens that became widespread in the African diaspora in the Atlantic.[13] As this book contends, this performance was central to Afro-Mexicans' festive culture. Finally, I consider the possibility that the Black performers represented a confraternity, or lay Catholic brotherhood, since these performances were normally staged by Black confraternities in the Iberian Atlantic.

Critically, I also attempt a full reconstruction of the 1539 performance of Black kings and queens in order to trace the development of this genre in public, official ceremonies. Since Díaz del Castillo's account reveals few details of the performance, it is therefore necessary to situate this performance within a festive tradition that took place across the early modern Atlantic. Using a diasporic framework, I discuss the performance's African origins and Iberian transformations and link them to colonial iterations. Finally, I compare Díaz del Castillo's text to the most detailed description of festive Black kings and queens in the early modern Atlantic, staged in Brazil in 1760. Through it all, I seek to apply to the Mexican context what scholars have discovered about this practice in the Atlantic, while attending to the specificity of early colonial Mexico.

Examining this performance from an Afro-centric perspective (in the broadest meaning of the term) foregrounds cultural continuity in the diaspora. In other words, it demonstrates how Africans took and adapted their culture to their new Iberian lives. In the case of Latin America, as

[13] See Dewulf, *From the Kingdom of Kongo*; Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo"; Kiddy, *Blacks of the Rosary*; Mello e Souza, *Reis negros*.

advocated by the historian Herman L. Bennett, this approach allows us to tell the story of the African diaspora from a perspective other than that of the institution of slavery.[14] The work of historians such as Linda A. Heywood, John H. Thornton, and James H. Sweet demonstrates the value of this paradigm for understanding the African diaspora from the perspective of Afrodescendants.[15] More related to this book's topic, Marina Mello e Souza's *Reis negros no Brasil escravista* (2002) and Jeroen Dewulf's *From the Kingdom of Kongo* (2017) demonstrate how adapting this approach is useful to account accurately for the fragmentary evidence Europeans and Afrodescendants alike left of their colonial lives.

Scholars who have studied Díaz del Castillo's text have struggled to understand the Blacks' performance because they have not looked to Africa or the African-derived festive practices of colonial Latin America. Although those practices are only recorded in later sources, a range of details amply warrant an evaluation of their connection with the performance Díaz del Castillo describes. Starting in the 1570s, for example, the *actas* (minutes) of Mexico City's *cabildo* (city council) record payments for Black performances for some of the city's major annual celebrations, such as Corpus Christi.[16] Because of the dearth of scholarship on Afro-colonial festivals available to them at the time that these scholars wrote about Díaz del Castillo's text, it is easy to understand why they may have overlooked this aspect of the performance. Moreover, the Black performance was not the focus of their analysis, and it is precisely because they viewed the Black performance through the lens of the European performance (i.e., the reenactment of the Siege of Rhodes and the *moros y cristianos* choreography) that previous analyses offered a Eurocentric explanation for its staging. My approach, by contrast, analyzes the fragmentary descriptions of Black festive performances by bringing them together with other examples of this performative genre in the African diaspora. This broad comparative method brings to the fore new possibilities to interpret Afro-Mexican festive traditions heretofore overlooked or misunderstood.

While the paucity of sources means that my analysis remains speculative, pursuing this line of inquiry has significant implications for the scholarship on Afro-colonial festivals and, more generally, on the

[14] Bennett, *Colonial Blackness*, 5–7.
[15] J. H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa*; Heywood, *Central Africans*; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*.
[16] See *Actas del cabildo*, 17:180, 335, 18:79, 296.

diaspora. For one thing, it invites scholars to probe further into the often-overlooked sixteenth century, and thus push back the timeline of research on expressions of Black social and religious life in the Americas. An examination of New Spain is key in any attempt to write a full history of Black festive tradition in the Americas, even if it has not received substantial scholarly attention to date. Not only did New Spain's Afro-colonial festive history begin the earliest but it also had arguably the most vibrant festive culture of early modern America, one that regularly incorporated Black festive practices.[17] While most scholarship on the topic of Afro-colonial festivals has focused on Brazil in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, attending to New Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as recorded in many manuscript and printed volumes (especially post-1570), can help us construct a clearer history of Afro-colonial festivals in the Americas and their unique Mexican iterations.[18] This approach, moreover, helps us further inscribe New Spain within the Black Atlantic, in whose debate it has not featured prominently, and at the same time expands our understanding of this cultural space.

In this chapter, by comparing the 1539 performance with later, similar performances from the Iberian Atlantic, I propose that the former stands at the threshold of the cultural transformations that ushered in the modern Black Atlantic. In order to illustrate this proposition, I begin using the diasporic framework outlined in the Introduction. My main goal in this chapter is to emphasize early Afro-Mexicans' place in the formation of the Black Atlantic. Simply put, Díaz del Castillo's text and the others analyzed in this book put Mexico City at the forefront of the cultural transformations set in motion by imperial expansion, particularly the slave trade, as well as mark Mexico City as a central locus in the formation of the Black Atlantic as a cultural space.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section looks at New Spain's Black population in the 1530s in order to identify why *ladinos* were better poised to stage this performance. The following section discusses Kongolese court pageantry to investigate how it may have inspired festive Black kings and queens in the Atlantic, as scholars contend. The third section looks at the development of Black confraternities in the Iberian World and specifically in Mexico City. Given confraternities'

[17] See Curcio-Nagy, *The Great Festivals*, 58–63.

[18] For the scholarship on Afro-Brazilians' festive practices, see, for example, Mello e Souza, *Reis negros*; Kiddy, *Blacks of the Rosary*; Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo"; Voigt, *Spectacular Wealth*, 121–50.

historic association with festive Black kings and queens and the possibility that Afro-Mexicans may have been admitted to a brotherhood as early as 1538, I propose that the Blacks who performed in 1539 may have already belonged to a Mexican sodality. The last section discusses a 1762 text that describes a performance of festive Black kings and queens in Brazil. This text, the best description of this performance we have, and despite its temporal and geographical separation from Mexico City, bears striking similarities to Díaz del Castillo's text, especially in its description of a mock battle between Blacks and "Indians." I propose that these similarities underscore continuities in the African diaspora and allow us to make sense of the performance Díaz del Castillo describes. The aim of the chapter then is to discuss the origins and continuities of this tradition in the Atlantic and Mexico's place and role in it.

THE BLACK POPULATION OF NEW SPAIN IN 1539

As noted earlier in this chapter, on December 10, 1537, less than two years before the festival, Viceroy Mendoza had written in his annual report that he had been informed by "un negro" (a certain Black man) that "los negros tenian helegido un rrey y concertado entrellos de matar a todos los españoles y aserse con la tierra" (the Blacks had elected a king and plotted to kill all the Spaniards and take over the land).[19] Mendoza also wrote that, because the informant was Black, he did not give it much weight at first, but that after doing the "proper" investigations, he was convinced of the plot and had hanged "al que tenian helegido por rrey y a los mas principales que se pudieron aver" (the one they had elected as king and the leaders that could be apprehended). Mendoza's report is the first instance of what would become a fairly common trope in the colonial archive: rebel Black king (and sometimes queen), as I explore in the next chapter.[20] Yet, without any other source, it is difficult to verify if what Mendoza was informed of was indeed a Black conspiracy seeking to undermine Spanish rule or the first record of festive Black kings and queens in Mexico and possibly the Americas. This background makes the inclusion of the Black group in the 1539 festival surprising. Were they included to make them demonstrate a certain submission to Spanish rule or did they represent a different group, that given the alleged plot sought

[19] "Informe del virrey Antonio de Mendoza," sf.

[20] See, for example, Tardieu, *Resistencia de los negros en el virreinato de México*; *Cimarrones de Panamá*.

to distance itself from another Black group by showcasing their allegiance to the Spanish crown? The evidence supports the latter. Nonetheless, the choice to perform "with their king and queen" is significant.

The inclusion of Blacks in the festival could be explained by New Spain's two different Black groups at the time. As noted earlier in this chapter, in the early colonial period, two groups of Africans populated Mexico City: *boçales* and *ladinos*. *Boçales* were mostly West Africans (i.e., from regions between Senegambia and the Bight of Biafra) brought as slaves to the Americas starting in 1501.[21] Colin Palmer estimated in the 1970s that there were ten thousand *boçales* in New Spain in 1537, an estimate that has since been called into question.[22] Indeed, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, the authoritative source for Middle Passage demography, records fewer than one thousand enslaved Africans in New Spain in 1537. Nonetheless, this is still a significant number of West Africans (*boçales*) in the former Mexica (Aztec) capital only recently seized by Spain. Newly arrived from West Africa, *boçales* had little exposure to European culture, religion, and language. Indeed, *boçal* came to denote the languages spoken by enslaved Africans.[23]

Ladinos, on the other hand, were free Africans or Afrodescendants who had lived in the Iberian Peninsula or the Caribbean, where they had been Christianized before coming to New Spain. Many of these *ladinos* may have been Central Africans who had traveled to or been taken to Iberia after the Portuguese reached the region south of the Congo River in the 1480s. Others may have been second- or third-generation *ladinos*, descended from sub-Saharan Africans brought to the Iberian Peninsula through the trans-Saharan slave trade (700–1500 CE). *Ladinos* came to the Americas as personal servants (*negros de acompañamiento*) of the invading Spaniards; Cortés himself is said to have had at least three *ladinos* in his service.[24] Those *ladinos* who fought alongside their Spanish employers were rewarded for the part they took in the colonization of Mexico and gained a considerable degree of social and economic agency in the new Spanish territory. Working in the service of Spaniards gave *ladinos* a high degree of Iberian cultural literacy and the economic

[21] On the early years of the slave trade to Spanish America, see, for example, Borcuki, Eltis, and Wheat, *From the Galleons to the Highlands*; Vila Vilar, "The Large-Scale Introduction"; Mendes, "The Foundation of the System"; Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, "Atlantic History," in *From the Galleons to the Highlands*, 1–14. *Boçal* refers to the muzzle first used for animals and later on enslaved Africans.

[22] Palmer, *Slaves*, 133. [23] See Lipski, *A History of Afro-Hispanic Language*.

[24] See Restall, "Black Conquistadors."

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rewards reaped from their role in the conquest gave *ladinos* a stake in the colonial project and Novohispanic society.

This allows us to differentiate between two very distinct groups of Afrodescendants in Mexico City at the time of the performance Díaz del Castillo describes. While both groups possessed and sought cultural literacy and cultural capital, *ladinos* were better poised to build the alliances that would have allowed them to stage the performance at the municipal festivities. Newly enslaved in a foreign land, *boçales*, on the other hand, would have been keener to resist their European oppressors. Indeed, Joan Cameron Bristol contends that "African-born slaves may have been more likely to be involved in acts of resistance, in part because many of them had been warriors taken prisoner in Africa."[25]

Narratives of the Spanish colonization of Mexico give some indication of *ladinos*' status in early colonial society. The Azcatitlan Codex, created in the mid-sixteenth century, recounts the history of the Mexica or Aztec people from their migration from their ancestral home, Aztlán, to the Spanish colonization of Mexico from an Indigenous perspective. One of its images chronicling the early colonial period depicts Juan Cortés, one of Hernán Cortés' Black servants, in Spanish clothing (Figure 1.1).[26] In the case of the Codex Durán (ca. 1581), a literary narrative of the colonization of Mexico authored by the Spanish Dominican friar Diego Durán (ca. 1537–88) with illustrations by Indigenous artists, there is no mention of *ladinos*; yet Juan Cortés appears in two illustrations. In the illustration of Hernán Cortés meeting the Lords of Tlaxcala, Juan Cortés stands behind the Spaniard as richly dressed as he appeared in the Codex Azcatitlan (Figure 1.2). These depictions of Juan Cortés suggest that *ladinos* enjoyed some degree of social status in early colonial society. His attire, especially in the Azcatitlan Codex, is comparable to that of a Spanish *señor* or gentleman.

That *ladinos* could attain such status is also recorded in the story of Juan Garrido, who, for his role in the colonization of Mexico, was given a plot of land outside the city. He later became the porter of the city council, for which he was awarded a lot within the city's *traça*, limits, making him a *veçino*, a resident, a privilege normally reserved for Spaniards.[27] This information comes from the *probança de méritos y servicios*, or account

[25] Bristol, *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches*, 98.
[26] On these images, see Sifford, "Mexican Manuscripts."
[27] Restall, "Black Conquistadors," 177. See also Alegría, *Juan Garrido*; Gerhard, "A Black Conquistador."

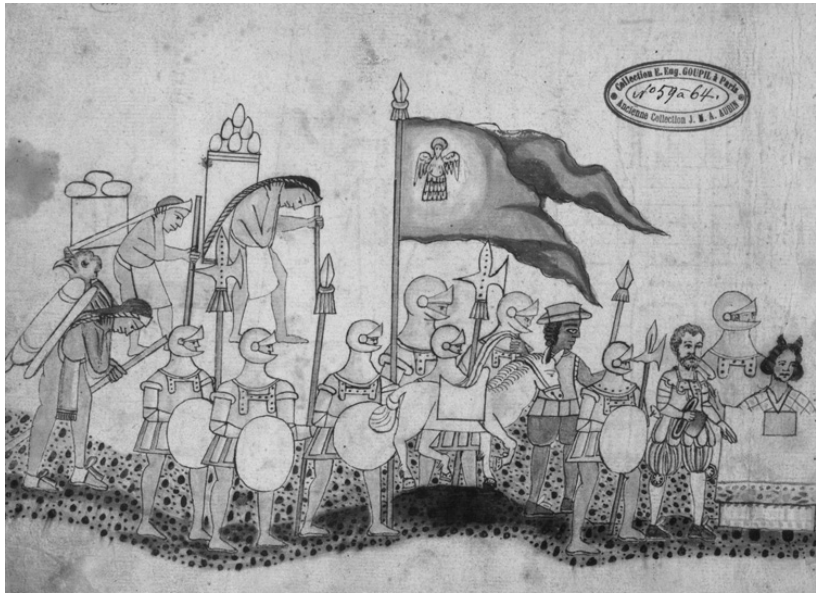

FIGURE 1.1 Anonymous, Black conquistador in the Codex Azcatitlan, Mexico, sixteenth century, fol. 22v. Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Mexicain 59–64. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France

FIGURE 1.2 Anonymous, Black conquistador in the Codex Durán, Mexico, sixteenth century, fol. 207 r, detail. Biblioteca Nacional de España, Mss/1980-Mss1982. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid, Spain

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of services to the crown, Garrido made in 1538, requesting a royal pension in his old age. Garrido had been born in West Africa, taken to Lisbon as a child, and subsequently sold to a Spaniard, Pedro Garrido, who took him to the Caribbean, where, as a freed man, he entered Cortés' expedition as a *negro de acompañamiento* of one of Cortés' companions. As stated earlier in this chapter, after the conquest, Garrido was given a lot outside the city's *traça*, where – by his own account – he was the first person to plant wheat in the Americas and where he built a house and a chapel (*ermita*). In his *probança*, Garrido presents himself as a self-sufficient and dutiful subject of the Spanish crown who has not received the reward he deserved for his service to the crown:

Juan Garrido de color negro veçino desta çibdad paresco ante v. m. e digo que yo tengo nescesidad de hazer una provança a perpetuad rey memoria de como e servydo a V. M. en la conquista e pasificaciçion desta Nueva España desde que paso a ella el Marques del Valle y en su compañia me halle presente a todas las entradas e conquista e pacificaciones que se an hecho siempre con el dicho Marques todo lo qual he hecho a mi costa sym me dar salaryo ny repartimiento de indios ni otra cosa siendo como soy casado e veçino desta çibdad que siempre e ressedido en ella.[28]

I, Juan Garrido, Black resident of this city [of Mexico], appear before Your Mercy and state that I am in need of making a *provança* for perpetual memory, on how I served Your Majesty in the conquest and pacification of this New Spain, from the time when the Marquis of the Valley [i.e., Hernán Cortés] entered it; and in his company I was present at all the invasions and conquests and pacifications which were carried out, always with the said Marquis, all of which I did at my own expense without being given either salary or allotment of natives or anything else though I am married and a resident of this city, where I have always lived.

Garrido emphasizes how he financed his participation in the conquest. He also emphasizes that he is a *veçino* of Mexico City, which was tantamount to saying he was a freeman, like any Spaniard. In his view, Garrido thought that, like other conquistadors, he deserved an *encomienda*, or allotment of land and free Indigenous labor, for his part in the conquest. Garrido's petition demonstrates how *negros ladinos* saw themselves, as Christian conquistadors entitled to the same rewards and privileges as their white counterparts. Six witnesses backed Garrido's claims; however, he never received his pension.[29]

[28] "Probanza de Juan Garrido," AGI, Mexico 240, n. 3, fol. 1. See Alegría, *Juan Garrido*, 126–38.
[29] "Probanza de Juan Garrido." See Icaza, *Conquistadores y pobladores*, 1:98.

An anonymous sixteenth-century Dutch painting of Lisbon also illustrates the high social standing some *ladinos* were able to achieve in the Iberian Peninsula.[30] The painting shows daily life in one of Lisbon's central squares, the Chafariz d'El-Rey, or the King's Fountain (Figure 1.3). Prominently featured in the right foreground is a Black knight on horseback, wearing a black cape emblazoned with the cross of the knightly order of Saint James. Two Black figures, perhaps knights themselves or the knight's pages, walk in front of him. To his left, there may be another Black knight, also on horseback; however, as his back is to us, we cannot discern his race. The rest of the painting shows many other Africans of varying social groups engaged in a range of activities, from playing the tambourine in a boat on the Tagus to dancing with a European.[31] Another Black man is hauled away by police officers. The painting demonstrates the wide range of social roles available to Afro-Portuguese in the sixteenth

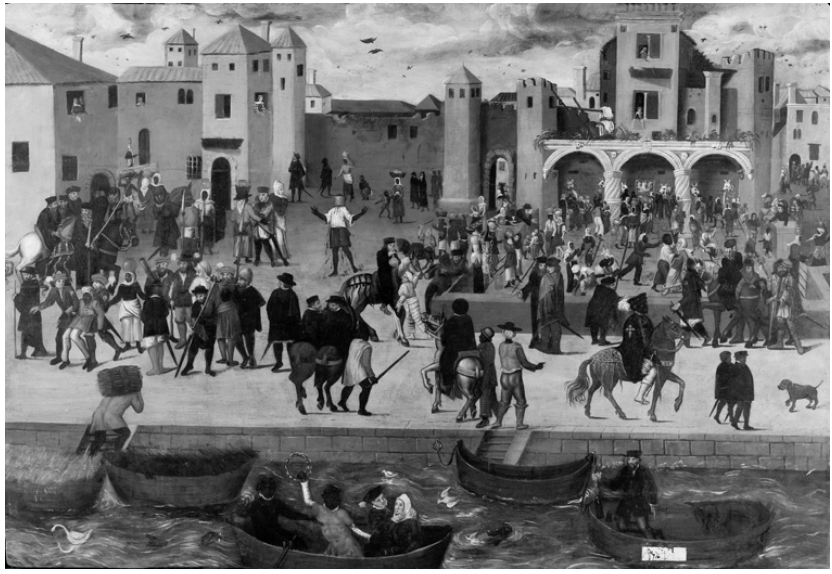

FIGURE 1.3 Anonymous, *Chafariz d'El-Rey*, Netherlandish, sixteenth century. Private collection. Courtesy of The Berardo Collection, Lisbon, Portugal

[30] See Lowe, "The Lives of African Slaves"; Castro Henriques, *Os africanos em Portugal*, 25–36.
[31] See Lowe, "The Global Population."

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century, from the highly decorated knight of St. James to street musicians, water carriers, and slaves. According to Didier Lahon, around 1550, Lisbon had a Black population of ten thousand, or 10 percent of the total population of one hundred thousand;[32] and according to historian Leo Garofalo, there were thirty-five thousand Afrodescendants in the Iberian Peninsula by 1492, which means that most were in Spain.[33] This population would only increase, and as it did so, Afro-Iberians transformed and adapted their African culture to their new Iberian lives and in turn brought that new Afro-Iberian culture to the Americas with them as they accompanied the first Spanish colonizers.[34]

The Dutch painting of Lisbon also bears witness to Afro-Iberians' festive practices in its depiction of music playing and dancing as central components of Iberian life. As the scholarship on these early Afro-Iberians has established, these subjects preserved and developed festive customs and were regularly included in public festivities and ceremonies.[35] Indeed, Afro-Iberians held their own communal celebrations and were included in public festivities in both Portugal and Spain starting in the fourteenth century.[36] In Lisbon, in 1451, for example, Afro-Iberians performed dances for the wedding of Leonor of Portugal and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III.[37] Though the documents leave no explicit description, these dances were presumably African-inflected.

This Iberian precedent of Black knights could explain why the performers in Mexico City appeared as a cavalry. If that is the case, it will begin to illustrate how Afrodescendants adapted European elements to their festive practices, as I further show in what follows. Horses were a rare commodity in New Spain in 1539; Mendoza himself reported in 1537 that there were only 620 horses in the whole viceroyalty, 450 of which were in good health.[38] Given this scarcity, we can imagine the significance of seeing *ladinos* on horseback. Since the horses were likely borrowed from the city's elite, the Black actors would have had to coordinate with the city's elites to enable their performance. This already begins to

[32] Lahon, "Da redução," 54.
[33] Garofalo, "The Shape of a Diaspora," 28; Franco Silva, *La esclavitud en Sevilla*; Cortés, *La esclavitud en Valencia*; Fonseca, *Escravos e senhores*; Cortés López, *La esclavitud en la España peninsular*; Saunders, *Social History of Black Slaves*; Phillips, *Slavery*; González Díaz, *La esclavitud en Ayamonte*; Armenteros Martínez, *La esclavitud en Barcelona*.
[34] See the works cited in the previous note.
[35] See Lowe, "The Global Population"; Moreno, "Plurietnicidad"; Trambaioli, "Apuntes."
[36] See Lahon, "Da redução" and "Esclavage"; Moreno, "Plurietnicidad."
[37] Lowe, "The Global Population," 58.
[38] "Informe del virrey Antonio de Mendoza," sf.

illustrate the *cultural intimacies*, or conditions for symmetrical or quasi-symmetrical relations sometimes created by cultural contact. In this performance, these intimacies imply the collaboration of Black, Indigenous, and Spanish actors for its staging. This collaboration in turn suspended the colonial hierarchy, however briefly, and may have gained the groups involved more lasting leverage. Mary Louise Pratt has called the spaces where creolization takes form "contact zones," or "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination."[39] However, the texts studied in this chapter and the remainder of this book, especially in Chapters 3 and 4, demonstrate that those relations were not always "highly asymmetrical"; and not just for the duration of the preparation and execution of colonial festivals, but beyond, as festival coordination required and produced less asymmetrical relations.

Several elements in Díaz del Castillo's text (the Black performers' rich regalia, the fact that they are portrayed as Black knights, and their masks) have led scholars to see the Blacks' performance as carnivalesque mockery à la Rabelais.[40] And indeed we cannot exclude the carnivalesque from these performances. As Cécile Fromont has proposed and as I discuss later in this chapter, festive Black kings and queens were added to an African martial dance in the Iberian Peninsula; or alternatively, an African martial dance (which in Díaz del Castillo's text may have taken the form of the mock battle between the Black and Indigenous actors) was added to Afro-Iberian festive kings and queens. Thus, besides filling in for absent African monarchs, this practice may have been inspired by European carnival customs of mock courts. Moreover, as with confraternities (see Introduction), Afrodescendants may have found a parallel between African masks and European carnival masks. As we have already seen and will see again later in this chapter and in Chapter 3, masks were staples of these performances. Furthermore, in the next chapter, we will see how carnivalesque play of inversion may have been central to this performance.[41] Thus this performance can truly be seen as a "space of correlations" (see Introduction), where European and African practices were correlated to create creole culture. This is further borne out by the fact that many of the elements of this tradition were later incorporated

[39] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 4. See my discussion of creolization in the Introduction.
[40] See Harris, *Aztecs*, 123–31; Lopes Don, "Carnivals."
[41] See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*.

into carnival, especially in Brazil, the River Plate region, Panama, and New Orleans.[42]

Finally, in her analysis of this festival, Lopes Don demonstrates how the Indigenous actors' performance was informed by Nahua culture. According to Lopes Don, the comparison of what she calls "the Indian festival of 1539" with ethnographic information collected by the likes of friar Bernardino de Sahagún (ca. 1499–1590) in the Florentine Codex – the most extensive record of preinvasion Nahua culture – demonstrates that "all festival ceremonial behaviors were related to pre-Hispanic worship."[43] For example, Lopes Don notes that "the artificial forest of decorated trees, flowers, live animals, and birds on the plaza was typical of [Nahua] monthly festivals and intermittent festivals, most of all those related to the ancient rain god Tlaloc."[44] Lopes Don concludes that "the aesthetic and symbolic characteristics of the Renaissance triumphal festival as it developed in the sixteenth century corresponded very well to the Indian festival mode."[45] By showing how African culture also informed this mock battle, I triangulate Díaz del Castillo's text, accounting for the three cultures – African, American, and European – that gave the performance and the festival as a whole its shape. More importantly, in doing so, I emphasize the cultural intimacies this performance put into play. While the colonial encounter of Europe, Africa, and the Americas has been rightly portrayed as one of unimaginable catastrophic human, cultural, and environmental consequences, Díaz del Castillo's text attests to the possibilities for cultural intimacies that encounter held. This is perhaps borne out by the fact after the mock battle, the Indigenous and Black performers staged another stag hunt. Creole culture forms through cultural intimacies.

BLACK KINGS AND QUEENS IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD

While it is shy on details, Díaz del Castillo's account may very well be the earliest textual evidence we have of a Black festive tradition that became commonplace in the Atlantic: Afrodescendants performing with "their king and queen." This tradition has been the subject of a few scholarly

[42] See Fryer, *Rhythms of Resistance*; Dewulf, *From the Kingdom of Kongo*; Atkins, *New Orleans Carnival Balls*; Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers*, 99–105; Mello e Souza, *Reis negros*; Cunha, *Ecos da folia*; Bettelheim, "Carnaval of Los Congos"; Craft, *When the Devil Knocks* and "*¡Los Gringos Vienen!*"; Lund Drolet, *El ritual congo*.

[43] Lopes Don, "Carnivals," 24. [44] Ibid., 24–5. [45] Ibid., 34.

works, notably Mello e Souza's *Reis negros*, Elizabeth Kiddy's *Blacks of the Rosary*, and Fromont's "Dancing for the King of Congo," all focusing on this tradition in Brazil.[46] These works highlight two different aspects of the king and queen tradition that seems to be present in Díaz del Castillo's text: royal regalia (Mello e Souza and Kiddy) and a ritual battle (Fromont). In what follows, I locate the African origins of these two elements and attempt to identify their Afro-Iberian diasporic transformations, situating the 1539 performance within a wider Atlantic tradition. The line of inquiry I pursue through this diasporic framework allows us to see New Spain's importance for understanding the formation of the Black Atlantic.

Then I draw a wide temporal and geographic diasporic net in search of answers to the many lacunae in Díaz del Castillo's text. The connections I make bear on this chapter and those to come. These connections seek to highlight spatial and temporal continuities in the diaspora. This global view of the diaspora is not intended to erase local specificities but rather to underscore similarities that may provide answers to questions where the local context offers limited clues. In the case of the performance Díaz del Castillo describes, only such a broad view allows us to make sense of it. This section specifically looks at Kongolese royal culture to investigate to what extent it may have influenced this tradition, as scholars have argued. In the last section, I look at a Kongolese martial dance that has been identified as a constituent part of this tradition and that seems to explain the mock battle between the Black and Native actors in Díaz del Castillo's text. My discussion then builds on Fromont, Kiddy, and Mello e Souza's work on this tradition by adding Mexico to the discussion.

In Brazil, where the tradition persists, the performance of Black kings and queens became known as *congados* (translatable as "Kongolese kingdoms").[47] This name indicates the tradition's African, specifically Kongolese, origins. I argue that while of Kongolese origin, this tradition was adapted by Afro-Iberians and colonial Afro-Latin Americans regardless of African origin, although it was primarily the descendants of Central Africans who practiced this performance.[48] Mello e Souza and others claim that *congados* originated in the diaspora as an imitation of

[46] For studies of this performance in other Atlantic geographies, see Dewulf, *From the Kingdom of Kongo*; Piersen, *Black Yankees*, 117–42; Bastide, *African Civilisations*, 182–4; Bettelheim, "Carnaval of Los Congos"; Craft, *When the Devil Knocks*; "*¡Los Gringos Vienen!*"; Walker, "The Queen of Los Congos; Fogelman and Goldberg, "El rey de los congos"; Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers*, 99–105; Lund Drolet, *El ritual congo*; Howard, *Changing History*.

[47] See Kiddy, *Blacks of the Rosary*. [48] See Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo."

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Kongolese royal pageantry.[49] These scholars point to the description offered by the Italian Franciscan missionary Giannantonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo (1621–78) in his *Istorica descrizione de' tre regni Congo, Matamba et Angola* (*Historical Description of the Three Kingdoms of Congo, Matamba, and Angola*) (Bologna, 1687). In Book II of *Istorica descrizione*, Cavazzi da Montecuccolo describes how the Kongolese ruler was chosen in early modernity as well as the displays of pageantry he made on a regular basis. These elements do indeed resonate with what we know about *congados*, where the king and queen were elected annually and made ostentatious public displays, as witnessed by the Italo-Portuguese traveling soldier Carlos Julião (1740–1811) in late eighteenth-century Rio de Janeiro (Figures 1.4–7).[50] At the time Cavazzi da Montecuccolo wrote

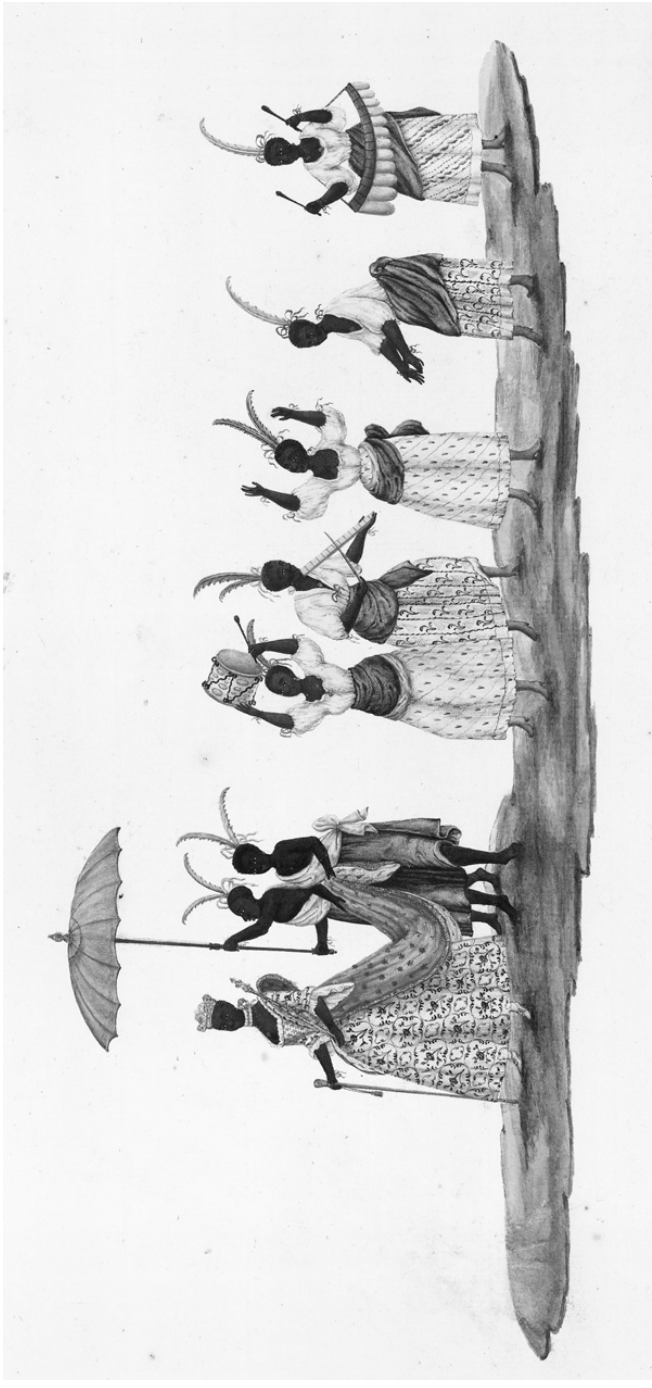
FIGURES 1.4–7 Carlos Julião, "Black Kings and Queens," ca. 1775. In *Riscos illuminados de figurinhos de brancos e negros dos uzos do Rio de Janeiro e Serro do Frio*, fols. 70–3, Iconografia C.I.2.8 in the collections of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional

[49] Mello e Souza, *Reis negros*, 85–95; Lara, *Fragmentos*, 176–9.
[50] On these images, see Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo."

FIGURES 1.4–7 (cont.)

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009086905.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

FIGURES 1.4–7 (cont.)



FIGURES 1.4–7 (cont.)

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about the Kongo, its culture had already been heavily influenced by European, especially Portuguese practices, as we will see.

This imitation of Kongolese royal pageantry is also connected to the elections and coronations of Afro-Mexican kings and queens and elucidates their origins. In the Kingdom of Kongo (ca. 1390–1914; Figure 1.8), royal succession was not determined by primogeniture, but rather new rulers were elected by the kingdom's regional governors.[51] According to Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, akin to the election of a new pope or Holy Roman Emperor, in the Kingdom of Kongo the election of a new ruler began with the gathering of the electors after the death of the preceding ruler: "Nella elettione vonvengono necessariamente trè principali Signori del Regno, cioè i Mani-enffunda, il Matti Batta, & il Conte di Sogno" (For the election, the

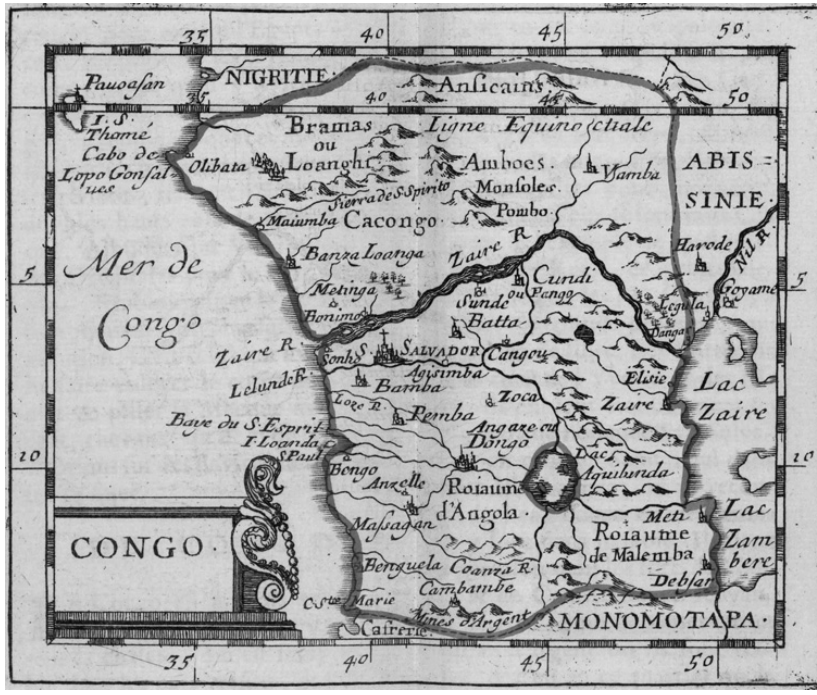

FIGURE 1.8 Kingdom of Kongo in the seventeenth century. Pierre Duval, 1682. Courtesy of the David Rumsey Map Collection

[51] See Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 27.

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three main lords of the kingdom, Efunda, Mbata, and Soyo, necessarily gathered).[52] This triumvirate included the three main leaders of the Kongo: the high priest (Efunda) and the governors of the two provinces (Mbata and Soyo).[53] This is an essentially Kongolese component of the ceremony, governed by pre-Christian tradition.

As it happens in St. Peter's Square in the Vatican during a conclave, in the Kongo, the expectant people gathered in the main square in the capital, Salvador: "Divulgatasi la fama, convengono i principali del Regno con infintà di Popolo nella Città Metropoli detta S. Salvatore sù la Piazza, che'ssi chiamano il Terreno, affine di publicare solennemente quale sia l'Eletto" (As the word spread, the lords of the kingdom, with an infinitude of people, gathered in the square, which they call the Ground, in the city of Salvador, waiting for the new king to be solemnly announced).[54] Though this tradition predated the arrival of Christianity to the Kongo, the second part of the ceremony demonstrates how Africans incorporated Christian elements into the new king's coronation:

> Al sentirsi quel tale proclamato per nuovo Rè, immediatamente si postra davanti al Prelato, e nelle mani di lui promete di vivere Cattolico, e di spargere il sangue in difesa della vere Fede … Il Prelato dopoi presolo per la mano, e condottolo a sedere sù'l Trono, gli consegna le Insegne reali, e l'incorona; intanto che tutto il Popolo secondo il suo costume prosteso al suolo, come vero Rè, lo riconosce, e l'adora.[55]
>
> Upon hearing that he had been elected, the new king immediately prostrated himself before the bishop, and promised to live a Catholic life, and to spill his blood in defense of the true faith … The bishop then took him by the hand and guided him to the throne, where he [i.e., the bishop] crowned him and gave him the royal insignias, while the people, prostrated on the ground, as per their custom, recognized and paid homage to him as true king.

In the period before the Christianization of the Kongo in 1491, the king may have been proclaimed and crowned by the Effunda, or high priest, but here he is crowned by the Catholic bishop.[56] This illustrates, as John K. Thornton has argued, that from the start of European contact, Central Africans "were quick to adapt elements of European culture, including religion and aspects of material culture."[57] Indeed, we can see this

[52] Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istorica descrizione*, fol. 251. *Mani* is the Kikongo term for lord.
[53] Mello e Souza, *Reis negros*, 88.
[54] Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istorica descrizione*, fol. 252.
[55] Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istorica descrizione*, fols. 252–3.
[56] On the early modern Christian Kongo, see Fromont, *Art of Conversion*.
[57] Thornton, "Central Africa," 84. See also his *Africa and Africans*, 206–34.

propensity in the first European text about the Kongo, Filippo Pigafetta's *Relatione del Reame di Congo* (*Description of the Kingdom of Congo*) (Rome, 1591), which influenced subsequent early modern writings on the Kongo, including Cavazzi da Montecuccolo's *Istorica descrizione*. Pigafetta's text is not a firsthand account but rather based on an account he heard from a Portuguese emissary, Duarte Lopes, who accompanied a Kongolese embassy to Rome in 1583.[58]

In his chapter on the Kongolese court (Book II, Chapter 7), Pigafetta describes how the Kongolese king and his court promptly adopted European customs.

Ma poiche quel regno ha ricevuto la Chriftiana fede, li grandi della Corte han cominciato à vestirsi all'usanza de Portoghesi portando mantelli, cappe, tabarri di scarlatto, & di drappi di seta ciascheduno secondo la sua possibilità, & in testa capelli, & berrete, & in pie pianelle di velluto & di cuoio, & stivaletti al modo Portogheso, con le sue spade à canto, & i popolani, che non possono farsi gli habiti al modo de' Portoghesi, ritengono la pristina consuetudine. Le femine etiandio vanno alla Portoghese, fuorche non hanno il manto, ma ben nel capo veli, & sopra loro vna beretta di velluto nero, ornata di gioie, & al collo catene d'oro assai: ma le povere al modo antico, peroche solamente le donne di corte alla guisa predetta s'adornano. I oscia che il Re si conuertì alla Chriftiana fede confermò etiandio la sua Corte in certo modo alla somigliãza del Re di Portogallo, & prima in quanto al servitio della tavola, quando mangia in publico, s'erge un solio di tre scaglioni, coperto di tapeti d'India, & sopra vi si colloca la mensa con la sedia di velluto cremesi, con li chiodi d'oro, & sempre mangia solo ne gia mai alcuno siede con esso lui à tavola, stando li prencipi coperti. Hà li vaselli della credenza d'oro, & d'argento, & gli si fa la credenza nel mangiare, & del bere. Tiene la guardia degli Anzichi, & d'altre nationi, che ftà d'intorno al suo palazzo ornata dell'arme sudette, & quando vuole uscire suonano le nacchere, che s'odono lunge cinque ò sei miglia, cõcio intendendosi il Re volere andar fuori.[59]

Since that kingdom received the Christian faith, its courtiers began to dress in the manner of the Portuguese, with red silk capes, hats, velvet and leather shoes and boots, with his sword on his side, each according to his means. The women too, but not capes, but rather a veil on their heads, and on top of it a velvet hat adorned with jewels, and gold chains on their necks. The poor, who cannot afford these things, keep their old customs. Since the King converted to the Christian faith, he arranged his court in the fashion of the King of Portugal. First, when he eats in public, a platform, with three steps, covered with an Oriental rug, is erected. On this platform, a table with a chair is placed. This chair has a velvet seat and gold arms. The king always eats alone. He eats and drinks from gold and silver vessels and cups. He is guarded by members of the Anzichi nation and of other

[58] See Pigafetta and Lopes, *Le royaume de Congo*, esp. 9–16.
[59] Pigafetta and Lopes, *Relatione*, fols. 67–8.

neighboring nations. When he wishes to go out, drums are beat. These drums can be heard for five or six miles. When they are heard it is understood that the King wishes to go out.

This phenomenon also points to how quickly Central Africans adapted Christian/European customs in Africa and the diaspora. While Pigafetta is mostly silent on the pomp that accompanies the king when he goes out, stating only that "Tutti i Signori l'accompagnano" (he is accompanied by his courtiers), we do not have to wonder about it, for Cavazzi da Montecuccolo provides a detailed description.[60] First, however, these luxury items – silk, gold, Oriental rugs, swords – are examples of the kinds of foreign objects the Portuguese brought, especially from India, to the Kongo as trading goods. More importantly, however, this fragment underscores how the precedent for Black kings and queens in the diaspora was set in Africa itself. There are, for example, some similarities between this text and a 1609 description of the ceremony in Mexico City (see Chapter 2). For example, in 1609, the festive king also sat on a throne set up on a dais. A banquet was also a central part of the Mexican performance. Moreover, as Reginaldo Lucilene argues, when Central Africans arrived in Europe and the Americas, they already had these practices – Afro-Christian confraternities and celebratory rituals – in their cultural repertoire.[61] Furthermore, in Europe and the Americas, Africans and their descendants acted on this propensity to adapt new cultural elements – European and American – into older traditions, as may be suggested by the cavalry and mock battle between the Black and Indigenous performers in Díaz del Castillo's text. It was through this adaptability that Afrodescendants built their own creole culture in the diaspora, not only as forms of survival, but as concrete social practices that gave meaning to their existence beyond mere survival.[62]

One recurring ceremony Cavazzi da Montecuccolo describes may best resemble Black confraternal kings and queens' cultural practices:

Una cerimonia molto riguardevole, principalmente per la stima, con cui vedesi praticata, usano i Rè del Congo, e volgarmente chiamasi benedire i suoi Sudditi. A certi tempi determinati, ò quando affronta il giorno di qualche straordinaria, e publica allegrezza, cõgregasi tutto il Poppolo sù'l Terreno maggiore della Città, attendendo dalla benignità del suo Sovrano questa, ch'essi reputano pregiatissima grazia. Esce egli con tutto l'imaginabile decoro, e postosi in luogo rilevato,

[60] Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istorica descrizione*, fol. 68.
[61] Reginaldo, *Os Rosários dos Angolas*, 51–64.
[62] See J. H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 2; Hall, "Creolité."

distintamente osserva, se vi sia qualche immeritevole, e non veggendone, ò non essendo avvisato in contrario . . . con la mano destra alzata, movendola à guise di paralitico, senza proferire parola, torce le dita or quà, or là sopra gli astanti.[63]

A very remarkable ceremony, more for how much they value it, which the kings of the Congo have, is that which they commonly call the blessing of his subjects. At a determined time, or before a day of extraordinary public joy, they all gather in the city's main square, to wait for their sovereign's blessing, which they consider a great favor. He comes out with all the imaginable pomp, stands on a high place, attentively observes, and if there is no one unworthy, or he is not informed of it . . . with his hand raised, moving it like a paraplegic, without saying a word, he bends his fingers here and there above the attendants.

This ostentatious display foreshadowed what Afrodescendants would seek to reenact in the performance "with their king and queen" in the diaspora. The foregoing examples make explicit that Afrodescendants were not merely imitating European markers of status in the performance of festive kings and queens. Instead, they were seeking to recreate their African world in the diaspora. Indeed, as discussed in what follows, Afrodescendants in the diaspora added festive kings and queens to their festive practices because many of them stemmed from dances normally performed before African rulers.

While Díaz del Castillo does not describe the Black king and queen, the examples from Brazil I discuss next may illustrate what that pomp may have looked like, as do those I discuss in the next chapters. The images I use to supplement these texts underscore the importance of visual records to fully understand this performative genre; though, as with the texts studied here, we cannot accept them prima facie. Indeed, we must be cautious of both as many of them participate in the exotic genre, or exoticization of the non-European Other.[64]

The final ceremonial element Cavazzi da Montecuccolo describes may best resemble what *congados* looked like:

Il Rè hà una Corte, che non uguaglia quelle de' Principi Europei, tuttavia vi è fasto, e nobilità proportinata alle alter cõdizioni del Regno. Quando egli esce in publico, le Guardie, armate di archi, li lancie, e di moschetti, inordinatamente sanno la scorta: dietro ad essi vanno I Sonatori, toccando i loro barbari stromenti, & e anche i Pisseri, havendone da Portughese appreso l'uso, col quale festevole, benche non armonioso concerto, accordano sovente musicali encomij intorno alle prodezze, & alla magnificenza del Rè presente, e de' suoi Aui; & in questa sorte di componimenti, sommamente adulatorij, sono aiutati da certi Araldi, che maneggiando Mazze di ferro con alcuni Campanelli, si fanno senitre

[63] Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istorica descrizione*, fol. 254. [64] See Mason, *Infelicities*.

ben da lontano: dopo questi la Corte bassa … poscia i Paggi, gli Ufficiali, e grande numero di Cavalieri detti della Croce di Christo, Ordine molto nobile, instituito da Primi Rè Conghesi Cattolici, e fino al giorno di hoggi sostenuto in molta riputazione: finalmente comparisce il Rè, servito da due Scudieri giovanetti, di sangue illustre, uno de' quali porta una Targa coperta di pelle di Tigre, & una Scimmitarra gioiellata, l'altro tiene in mano un bastone coperto di velluro rosso, guernito d'oro con un Pomo di argento massicio: a' fianchi l'assistono due, che sventollano code di Cavalli, quasi in atto di cacciare le Mosche; e queata trà le Cariche familiari, stimasi la più riguardevole. Un Caviliere de' più favoriti porta il Parasole di damasco cremesino trinato d'oro sempre aperto sopra del suo Signore.[65]

The king has a court which, although it does not equal those of the princes of Europe, still has pomp and nobility proportionate to the other conditions of the kingdom. When he goes out in public, guards armed with bows, lances, and muskets make up his escort. Behind them go the musicians playing their barbarous instruments and fifes, which they have learned to play from the Portuguese, disturbing, with their dissonant noise, the king's valor and magnificence, as well as his ancestors. In this kind of composition, they are aided by some heralds who make themselves heard from afar with metal clubs and small bells. Then follows the lower court … the pages, the officials, and a great number of knights of the Cross, a very noble order instituted by the first Christian kings of the Congo and still held in high esteem. The king comes in last, attended by two young squires of noble blood. One carries a shield covered in tiger hide and a bejeweled cutlass. The other carries a staff covered with red velvet, adorned with gold and solid silver. Two pages accompany the king swinging horse's tails to keep away flies. This task is the most esteemed of all. Then one of the king's favorites carries a parasol, which is always open on the king.

In the mid-eighteenth century, the Capuchin missionary Bernardino d'Asti depicted this pageantry in a watercolor of a meeting with the governor of Soyo (Figure 1.9).[66] In the image, the missionary and the Kongolese ruler, both shaded by a parasol, meet as equals, their respective retinues behind them. The ruler's costume communicates his elevated status through elements borrowed from both European and African aristocratic traditions.[67] Afro-Iberians appeared in a similar fashion – albeit on a float – in Braga, Portugal, in 1731. The performance was part of the city's Corpus Christi festivities. Intended to show the rest of the Iberian world how the city of Braga celebrated Corpus Christi – through the a priori publication

[65] Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istorica descrizione*, fol. 257.
[66] Elsewhere in the manuscript D'Asti appears saying mass under a parasol. Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, Julão, and D'Asti were all from Turin, Italy.
[67] Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo," 188–90.

FIGURE 1.9 Bernardino D'Asti, "Franciscan Missionary Meets the Governor of Soyo, ca. 1750, fol. 9 r." In *Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti*, Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin, Italy, MS 457. Courtesy of Biblioteca Civica Centrale

of the festivities' components (hence the future tense) – the Black performance was meant as one of the festival's main attractions:

> Formarse-ha hum vistoso Carro, ou Carroça, pela qual hiraõ puxando dous Leões, no frontespicio, do Carro se veraõ duas Aguais, e no fim se levantarà huma gruta, dentro da qual hiraõ sentados Rey, Rainha, sobre a gruta se verà hum pavilhaõ, ou guardasol de penas, o qual sustentarà un Negro vestido à Ethiopeza.[68]
>
> There will be an elegant carriage drawn by two lions, there will be two eagles in the front of the carriage, and on the back there will a cave, inside which will travel the king and queen. On top of the cave there will be a parasol held by a Black person dressed in African custom.

This performance was most likely staged by one of Braga's Black confraternities. Furthermore, the king and queen in Julião's images appear under a parasol – to highlight a recurring element – illustrating that Black confraternities imitated this European practice first adopted in Africa

[68] Anonymous, *Breve extracto*, fol. 2.

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throughout the Atlantic in their festive performances. The parasol was an important symbol of status in European culture, and here we see Afrodescendants using it to denote prestige.[69]

We do not know when this tradition began to take root on Iberian soil. Isidoro Moreno posits that Black confraternities may have held elections and coronations of festive kings and queens in Seville as early as 1477.[70] In the nineteenth century, João Ribeiro Guimarães suggested that Blacks performed "with their king and queen" in Lisbon in 1484.[71] As for the Americas, writing in the early 1540s, the Italian "conquistador" Girolamo Benzoni (1519–72) wrote that "ogni natione" (every [Black] nation) in Hispaniola "tiene il suo Re, o Governatore" (has its king or governor).[72] Indeed, in the Iberian Peninsula, Black communities were assigned a "governor" who saw to the community's affairs and resolved disputes.[73] In 1475, for example, Queen Isabella named the Afro-Iberian Juan de Valladolid (not to be confused with the *converso* Juan de Valladolid also known as Juan Poeta) "mayoral e juez" (overseer and judge) of the Blacks of Seville, instructing "que no puedan fazer, ni fagan los dichos Negros, y Negras, y Loros, y Loras, ningunas fiestas, nin juzgados de entre ellos, salvo ante vos" (that the said Black and mulatto men and women, may not, and cannot, have fiestas nor meetings, unless it is in your presence).[74]

A common office among Afro-Iberians, the mayor acted as justice of the peace in the community and was sometimes referred to by a royal title, as was Juan de Valladolid, who was known as the "conde negro" (Black count).[75] According to Moreno and other scholars, these "governors" would perform as kings in Afro-Iberians' festivities.[76] While Benzoni's text seems to suggest that this practice continued in the Americas, if it did, it was only initially, for by the 1600s Afrodescendants had been assimilated into the *república de españoles* (commonwealth of Spaniards) and, thus, were deprived of an officially recognized form of political

[69] See my discussion of *Trujillo del Perú* in Chapter 3.
[70] Moreno, "Plurietnicidad," 176. [71] Guimarães, *Summario de varia historia*, 5:148.
[72] Benzoni, *Historia*, fol. 64; see W. H. Smyth's translation in *History of the New World*, 92; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 202.
[73] Fracchia, "*Black but Human,*" 48–54; Moreno, "Plurietnicidad"; Phillips, *Slavery*, 93–4. This practice was even common in eighteenth-century New England (see Piersen, *Black Yankees*, chap. 10).
[74] In Ortiz de Zuñiga, *Anales*, 374.
[75] Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers*, 81; Moreno, *La antigua hermandad*, 43; "Plurietnicidad," 176.
[76] Moreno, "Plurietnicidad."

organization. While they were technically members of the republic of Spaniards, Afro-Latin Americans saw their nominal rights mostly neglected by colonial authorities (see Chapter 2). It was perhaps to redress this lack of a state-recognized form of political existence that Afrodescendants elected ceremonial kings and queens in an effort to thereby exercise some semblance of sovereignty.

Confraternities, the main hosts of festive Black kings and queens, offered Afrodescendants some degree of political authority, as they allowed members to have some power over their own lives as well as helped them form their creole performative culture. This contrasts with José Ramón Jouve Martín's argument that "la inexistencia de una comunidad negra colonial entendida como una unidad social ideológica, jerárquica y políticamente cohesionada, en la que los individuos tuvieran una fuerte conciancia de pertenencia al grupo, hizo que ésta tampoco se pueda encontrar textual y discursivamente" (the inexistence of a colonial Black community understood as an ideologically, hierarchically, and politically cohesive unit, where the individuals had a strong sense of belonging, means that this community cannot be found in colonial texts or discourse).[77] I contend, on the contrary, that Black confraternities and Afrodescendants' festive culture speak to their communal activities and "strong sense of belonging."[78] This is borne out by the fact that, as Jouve Martín points out, *cofrades* stipulated in their wills that they wanted to be buried in their parish church and that their *cofrades* attend their funeral mass and burial and annual masses for their soul.[79] As stated previously, confraternities were the closest thing colonial Afro-Latin Americans had to a political organization; through them they forged and expressed a strong sense of community and belonging, both to their confraternal and to the broader community.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK CONFRATERNITIES

Although sub-Saharan Africans have been present in the Iberian Peninsula since antiquity, they began arriving in larger numbers in the late medieval period through the Muslim slave trade.[80] Christian Iberians also took part

[77] Jouve Martín, *Esclavos*, 183.
[78] Ibid., 183; Bennett, *Africans*, 2. Jouve Martín's book in fact demonstrates the opposite of what he argues in the cited text.
[79] See also Jouve Martín, "Death, Gender, and Writing."
[80] See Phillips, *Slavery*; Fonseca, *Escravos e senhores*; Silva, *La esclavitud en Sevilla*; Cortés, *La esclavitud en Valencia*; Armenteros Martínez, *La esclavitud en Barcelona*.

in this enterprise. Lisbon, Seville, Valencia, and Barcelona became the main slave ports of the Peninsula. It was in these cities that a free Black population began to emerge, and with this population, Black confraternities developed at the end of the fifteenth century (see Table 1.1).[81] Seville, for example, was home to what is considered the oldest Black confraternity, Our Lady of the Angels, known as "Los Negritos," believed to have been founded for infirm Blacks toward the end of the fourteenth century by the city's archbishop.[82] In 1455, a group of free Blacks in Barcelona received royal approval for their confraternity's charter:

Nos Iohannes etc. caritatis zelus et ingens devocio quos nec sine cordis puritate vigere comprehendimus in vos christianos nigros libertate donatos et qui in civitae Barchinone habitatis instituendi seu faciendi confratriam inter vos et alios christianos ex gente vestra nigra libertate donatos et qui in futurum ipsa libertate donabuntur sub invocacione et ecclesia parrochiali Jacobi.[83]

TABLE 1.1 *Afro-Iberian confraternities, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries*

CONFRATERNITY	CITY
Our Lady of the Angels	Seville
Our Lady of the Rosary	Seville
Saint Idelfonso	Seville
Saint Jaume	Barcelona
Our Lady of Mercy	Valencia
Our Lady of the Rosary	Lisbon

SOURCES: AGCA; BNP; Blumenthal, "*La casa dels negres*"; Camacho Martínez, *La hermandad de los mulatos*; Fonseca, *Religião e liberdade*; Moreno, *La antigua hermandad*; Mulvey, "Black Lay Brotherhoods," 283–6

[81] Moreno, *La antigua hermandad*, 25–56. On Afro-Iberian confraternities, see Brásio, *Os prêtos em Portugal*; Camacho Martínez, *La hermandad de los mulatos*; Fonseca, *Religião e liberdade*; Armenteros Martínez, "De hermandades y procesiones"; Blumenthal, "La Casa dels Negres"; Martín Casares, "Free and Freed Black Africans"; Lahon, "Da redução and "Esclavage"; Phillips, *Slavery*, 94–7. For a relatively comprehensive list of early modern Afro-Iberian confraternities, see Mulvey, "Black Lay Brotherhoods," 283–6.

[82] Moreno, *La antigua hermandad*, 25–56; Fracchia, *"Black but Human,"* 48–55. Karen Graubart contests this narrative, arguing that there were too few sub-Saharans in Seville at the time to support the existence of this confraternity before the sixteenth century (in conversation, July 2015).

[83] Bofarull y Mascaré, *Documentos inéditos de la corona de Aragón*, 8:466.

We John etc. understand that you, freed Black Christians residing in the city of Barcelona, moved by the zeal for charity and devotion that emanates from pure hearts, seek to establish among yourselves and other freed Blacks, and other Blacks who will be freed in the future, a confraternity under the invocation and in the parish church of St. James.

In 1472, a group of free Blacks in Valencia received the same royal approval.[84] In Lisbon, Blacks were admitted to the city's Rosary confraternity in 1460 and "soon formed an independent entity that outsiders could already recognize in the last decades of the fourteen hundreds."[85]

The origins of these Afro-Iberian confraternities highlight the different means by which Black confraternities in the Iberian world first came about. First, Los Negritos' origins point to the fact that some Black confraternities were established by non-Black Europeans, through paternalistic gestures, to minister to Blacks. In the port cities of the Iberian Peninsula, there were many of these confraternities, particularly those ministering to enslaved Africans passing through the Peninsula on their way to the Americas.[86] Los Negritos' path in this sense is unique, for they appear to be the only such confraternity to eventually come under Black leadership.[87] This points to the social development Afro-Iberians engineered for themselves in Iberia, from newly arrived Africans in the fourteenth century to semiautonomous communities in the fifteenth.

Second, the admittance of Afro-Portuguese into Lisbon's originally white Rosary confraternity points to another means by which Black confraternities came into existence. In this case, Blacks were first admitted to an existing confraternity. For whatever reason, most likely because they did not enjoy the same privileges as their non-Black fellow *irmãos* (confraternity members in Portuguese), the Blacks in Lisbon established their own branch in 1565 (Figure 1.10).[88]

[84] Gual Camarena, "Una cofradía de negros."
[85] Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo," 185. See also Fonseca, *Religião e liberdade*, 23–37; Saunders, *A Social History*, 150–6.
[86] See Graubart, "*So color de una cofradía*.'"
[87] In the eighteenth century, however, white Spaniards took over the confraternity, and this is the one that survives today, still known as Los Negritos.
[88] "Compromisso da irmandade de Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos homens pretos," Lisbon, 1565, BNP, MS 151, fols. 9v–10r; Fonseca, *Religião e liberdade*, 23–37.

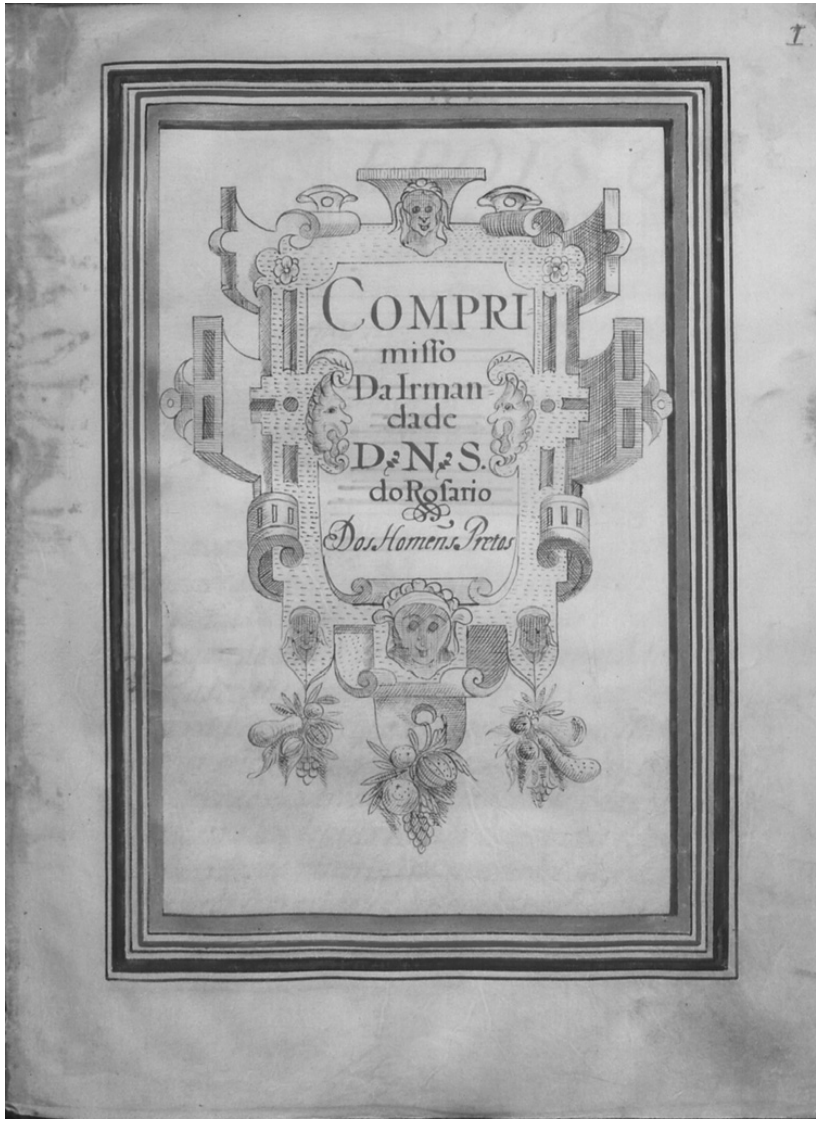

FIGURE 1.10 Anonymous, Compromisso da Irmandade do Rosário dos Homens Pretros, Lisbon, 1565, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, MS 150. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal

The origins of Lisbon's Black Rosary confraternity also point to the role religious orders played in urging Blacks to establish confraternities, something missionaries like Alonso de Sandoval (Seville, 1576–Cartagena

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de Indias, 1652), known for his work with Blacks, did in their ministry.[89] In New Spain, it was primarily the mendicant orders, particularly the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, and Mercedarians, that encouraged Afro-Mexicans to establish confraternities and defended them from secular authorities (see Table 1.2).[90] Finally, the origins of Barcelona and Valencia's Black confraternities point to the crucial fact that Blacks also founded confraternities on their own initiative, recognizing the valuable social and cultural functions, such as caring for the sick, burying the dead, and allowing them to maintain kinship networks, these corporate groups allowed them to fulfill.

As avenues for self-governance and the expression of collective identity, confraternities helped Afrodescendants negotiate their status within Mexican society and thus develop their own creole culture. Pertinent to our discussion is the festive culture of Afro-Iberian confraternities. These groups held their own celebrations and participated in public performances in the Iberian Peninsula, where they elected Black royalty and performed in city streets with "their king and queen."[91] Indeed, the 1565 charter of Lisbon's Black Rosary brotherhood called for the election of "principe, reys, duque, condes, marquezes, cardeal & quaes quer outras dignidades" (kings and queens, princes and princesses, dukes and duchesses, counts and countesses, marquises and marchionesses, cardinals, and other royal titles).[92] This provision became the norm among Black confraternities. Didier Lahon, for example, cites an undated election by a Black confraternity from the city of Vila Viçosa, Évora, Portugal, indicating that it took place before 1639.[93] Afrodescendants brought this tradition to the Americas, where it reached its full potential, becoming an integral part of Novohispanic festive culture. Díaz del Castillo's text shows how early this tradition crossed the Atlantic, within twenty years of the conquest of Mexico. While Afro-Mexican confraternal statutes have not survived, the festive traditions studied in this book show that Afro-Mexicans built on this Iberian precedent.

A year before the festival chronicled by Díaz del Castillo, two confraternities were founded in Mexico City. One, that of the Most Blessed Sacrament, was founded by Cortés himself, supposedly for "conquistadors," although the founding document does not state anything to that

[89] See Sandoval, *Un tratado*; Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers*, 1.
[90] See Valerio, "That There Be No Black Brotherhood."
[91] See Fromont, "Envisioning Brazil's Afro-Christian *Congados*."
[92] "Compromisso," fols. 9v–10r. [93] Lahon, "Esclavage," 142–3.

effect.[94] Even so, "Black conquistadors" such as Juan Garrido and Juan Cortés may have been admitted to this confraternity. In fact, Garrido's house in Mexico City was on Calle Tacuba, which still bears this name to this day, very close to the Cathedral, where the Confraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament had its chapel. Garrido's status and location in the city's *traza* may have given him access to this confraternity, and certainly to the second one founded in 1538: that of the Rosary.[95] Moreover, in a 1699–1702 Inquisition case, this confraternity appears along some Black sodalities, including one of Mexico City's oldest, Saint Nicholas of Toletino, accused of processing through the streets of Mexico City without ecclesiastical approval (see Conclusion).[96] This case shows the Blessed Sacrament *cofradía* forming part of a broader, interethnic community.[97]

The Rosary confraternity was founded by the Dominican fathers, who arrived in Mexico in 1526.[98] The Order of Preachers (Ordo Pedicatorum) had been founded by the Spaniard Domingo of Guzmán (1170–1221), known as Saint Dominic, in 1216 to teach Christian doctrine to the poor. One means by which they did this was by promoting devotion to the Rosary, which until that point had only been used by cloistered men and women. To this end, the Dominicans began establishing Rosary confraternities, where the members would meet regularly to pray the abbreviated five-decade Rosary in use today.[99]

As we have seen, in the Iberian Mediterranean, Dominicans were the first to admit Blacks into their Rosary confraternities; these members established their own chapters in turn, as they did in Lisbon in 1565.[100] Moreover, two Afro-Sevillian sodalities – Our Lady of the Rosary and St. Idelfonso – were founded with the Dominicans' aid. Unsurprisingly, then, one of the first actions the Dominicans took in Mexico City was establishing a confraternity dedicated to their patroness, the Virgin of the Rosary. According to Fray Agustín Dávila y Padilla, the first chronicler of the

[94] "Copia de la fundación de la Ylustre Archicofradía del Santísimo Sacramento," Mexico City, 1538, AGN, Cofradías, vol. 10, exp. 1, fols. 1–39. See Larkin, "Confraternities," 194.

[95] Dávila y Padilla, *Historia*, 354–7; Méndez, *Crónica*, 80–1.

[96] "El señor fiscal del Santo Oficio contra Ysidro de Peralta, mulato, por fundar a su modo una religion de san Agustin," Mexico City, 1699, HL, Mexican Inquisition Papers, Series II, Box 6, HM35168 and HM35169.

[97] See Farman Sweda, "Black Catholicism"; Bristol, "Afro-Mexican Saintly Devotion."

[98] Rivera Cambas, *México pintoresco*, 2:7.

[99] See, for example, Kiddy, "Congados" and *Blacks of the Rosary*, chapters 1 and 2; Mello e Souza, *Reis negros*, 160–3. The full Rosary worn by religious persons had fifteen decades.

[100] "Compromisso."

Dominican order in Mexico, "en pocos días" (within a few days) after Mexico City's Rosary confraternity was founded, "casi no huvo en toda ella hombre ni muger que no lo estuviese" (there was hardly any man or woman in the city who was not a member).[101] While the next chapter shows that later definitions of personhood may have not included Blacks, at least not as free persons, the Dominicans' Iberian practices indicate that they may have let Afro-Mexicans, especially *ladinos*, into this sodality. (For this period, however, Chloe Ireton has shown that *ladinos* could affirm themselves as free persons through the Spanish legal system.[102]) Moreover, the founding document does not state who was welcomed into or barred from the confraternity.[103] Indeed, Clara García Ayluardo and Nicole von Germeten have proposed that "membership was open to all."[104]

If that was the case, the Blacks in the 1539 festival may have belonged to the Rosary confraternity. This would have better positioned the performers to stage the performance and collectively procure the necessary resources. The Dominicans, for example, may have aided them in these efforts. Eventually, there came to be a Black confraternity in Mexico City's Dominican convent, which performed with their king in the 1610 festival I analyze in Chapter 3. It could be that, as in Lisbon, this confraternity emerged from a group of Black members of the original Rosary confraternity, changing their name to Holy Christ of the Expiration and the Holy Burial when they branched off.[105] Moreover, several Afro-confraternities date to the sixteenth century, albeit we do not know their year of foundation (Table 1.2).[106] The oldest is believed to have been Exaltation of the Cross and Tears of Saint Peter in the parish of Santa Veracruz, Mexico's oldest, known for its Black *ladino* parishioners.[107] While research on Afro-Mexican sodalities has focused on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Table 1.2 shows Black brotherhoods that were active in Mexico City in the sixteenth century.

[101] Dávila y Padilla, *Historia*, fol. 357. [102] Ireton, "They Are Blacks."
[103] "Reglas de la cofradía del Rosario," Mexico City, 1538; in Bautista Méndez, *Crónica*, 80–1.
[104] Quote: Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers*, 22; García Ayluardo, "Confraternity," 132–9.
[105] "Memorial de todas las cofradías de españoles, mulatos e indios," Mexico City, 1706, AGN, BN, vol. 574, exp. 2, sf. This is the earliest surviving census of Mexico City's confraternities. See Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers*, 83.
[106] See Valerio, "That There Be No Black Brotherhood."
[107] See Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers*, 82–3; Valerio, "That There Be No Black Brotherhood."

TABLE 1.2 *Afro-Mexican confraternities founded in the sixteenth century*

CONFRATERNITY	LOCATION
Exaltation of the Cross and Tears of Saint Peter	Parish of Santa Veracruz
Holy Christ of the Expiration and Holy Burial	Dominican convent
St. Nicholas of Mount Calvary	Augustinian convent
St. Iphigenia	Mercedarian convent
Saint Benedict and Coronation of Christ	Franciscan convent
Our Lady of the Conception	Hospital of Our Lady of the Conception
Our Lady of the Helpless	Hospital of Our Lady of the Helpless

SOURCES: "Carta del virrey Martín Enríquez," Mexico City, April 28, 1572, AGI, México R. 19, N. 82, f. 1v; *Actas del cabildo*, 14:115, 227; "Contra algunos mulatos que han fundado cofradia y salido en procesion sin licencia," Mexico City, 1600, AGN, Bienes Nacionales, vol. 810, exp. 28; Franco, *Segunda parte de la historia de la Provincia de Santiago*, 546; Ojea, *Libro tercero*, 10

As Table 1.2 shows, Afro-Mexican confraternities were linked to religious orders, especially the mendicant orders (Augustinian, Dominican, Franciscan, Mercedarian). This was true even of Exaltation of the Cross and Tears of Saint Peter, for Franciscans ran the parish church of Santa Veracruz where they were based.[108] As Karen B. Graubart and others have noted, "the Catholic Church had long mistrusted all *cofradías*.'"[109] Yet missionaries relied on them to evangelize Black and Indigenous populations. This is borne out by the fact that the situation was similar in Lima, where most Black confraternities were linked to the religious orders in the city.[110] Indeed, a 1578 Dominican document states that the friars "se ocupan todos los dias en confesiones de españoles é indios é indias, negros y Negras y mestizos y mestizas y mulatos y mulatas" (dedicate their days to hearing the confessions of Spaniards, Indians, Blacks, mestizos, and mulattos).[111] Moreover, in his chronicle of the Dominicans in Mexico, Fray Hernando Ojea (d. 1577) singled out Fray Juan de Contreras, who "en especial gustaua mucho de

[108] Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers*, 19–20, 84.
[109] Graubart, "*So color de una cofradía*," 48. [110] See Bowser, *The African Slave*, 249.
[111] Anonymous, "Información apologética de los dominicos en México en 1578," in Ojea, *Libro tercero de la historia religiosa*, 4.

confessor á gente pobre y humilde como son indios, negros y otros de desta manera" (delighted in confessing the poor, such as Indians, Blacks, and others).[112] These sources invite further investigation into the mendicant orders' work with urban Black populations in colonial Latin America.

Table 1.2 also speaks to another important aspect of Afro-Mexican confraternities: their devotion to Black saints. Initially promoted by missionaries, as scholars have noted, Black brotherhoods eventually embraced Black saints as their own.[113] Saints and biblical figures like the Queen of Sheba; the Black magus Balthazar (or sometimes Caspar); Iphigenia, a legendary first-century Aksumite (Ethiopian) princess said to have been converted to Christianity by the Apostle Matthew; and another sixth-century Aksumite royal convert, Kaleb of Axum, inscribed Blacks in the story of salvation from antiquity and allowed Afro-Mexicans to make claims to Old Christian blood in a world that saw them as "the quintessential foreign element that, like 'Jewishness,' could not be fully assimilated into Spanish colonial society," as María Elena Martínez observed.[114] For missionaries, more contemporary saints like St. Nicholas of Mount Calvary (ca. 1246–1305), a supposed mulatto, and the sixteenth-century Afro-Sicilian lay Franciscan friars St. Benedict the Moor (1526–89) and Anthony of Carthage (d. 1549) served as models of the kind of piety they wished to instill in Afro-Mexicans. Afro-Mexicans, like other Blacks in the Iberian world, formed devotion to these latter two saints decades before they were officially canonized by Rome.[115]

Yet Afrodescendants' main aim in founding or joining confraternities was to form community in the diaspora, pool their meager resources to care for each other in times of need, and express their Afro-Catholic identity through devotional and festive practices.[116] Indeed, caring for ill members and poor Blacks was a major tenet of Black sodalities. This

[112] Ojea, *Libro tercero de la historia religiosa*, 68. For Jesuit examples, see *Monumenta mexicana*, 1:296, 437, 529.

[113] See Brewer-García, "Hierarchy and Holiness"; Rowe, *Black Saints*, "Visualizing Black Sanctity," and "After Death Her Face Turned White."

[114] Martínez, "The Black Blood of New Spain," 515. On Blacks claiming Old Christian blood, see Ireton, "They Are Blacks."

[115] See Rowe, *Black Saints*; Castañeda García, "Santos negros."

[116] See Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers*, 1–10; Kiddy, *Blacks of the Rosary*, 15–38; Mulvey, "Black Lay Brotherhoods," 1–37.

principle can be seen in the oldest surviving confraternity constitution, that of Barcelona (1455):

Item sia ordinacio de la confraria que si algun confrare o confraressa vendra a pobressa o fretura per malaties o perdues o en altra qualsevol manera que los prohomens de la dita confraria e caxa segons llur bon vijares a aquell o aquella la dita fretura sostendra axi en provisio de son menjar com en necessitats de metges et de medecines com en totes alters coses a ell o a ella necesaries.[117]

It shall be a statute of this confraternity that if any member falls into poverty through illness or loss of goods or any other manner, the board shall provide for their sustenance, medicine, or any other need.

While Afro-Mexican confraternal statutes have not survived, Afro-Mexican confraternities must have been guided by this principle, found in most Black brotherhood charters. Indeed, as Table 1.2 shows, two Afro-Mexican sodalities – Our Lady of the Conception and Our Lady of the Helpless – were directly involved in the care of the sick in Mexico City. These brotherhoods cared for ill Afro-Mexicans when these were admitted to the hospitals from where they took their names. But Afro-Mexican *cofrades*, and mainly *cofradas* (female members), cared for ill Afro-Mexicans in other settings as well, especially in domestic ones. Moreover, in 1568, a group of Mexican mulattos tried unsuccessfully to establish a hospital "aviendo cofradía" (with a confraternity) to care for their own, because, as they put it in their petition, "pues los que hay en [en la ciudad de] México son para españoles o para los indios" (those in the city only serve Spaniards and Indians).[118] A 1572 viceregal report states that another Black sodality (another name for a confraternity) also tried to found a hospital around the same time.[119] In this respect, Afro-Mexican

[117] "Ordenanzas de la cofradía de los cristianos negros de Barcelona," March 20, 1455, AGCA, R. 3298, fol. 3v.

[118] "Memorial de vecinos mulatos de la Nueva España," Mexico City, March 5, 1568, AGI, México 98, s/f; "Carta del virrey Martín Enríquez," fol. 1v. See Valerio, "That There Be No Black Brotherhood" and "The Spanish Petition System."

[119] "Carta del virrey Martín Enríquez," fol. 2r. See also "Real cédula a la Audiencia y a el arzobispo de México para que en la solicitud de los mulatos de Nueva España, hijos de negros e indias o de españoles y negras, que piden licencia y ayuda para hacer un hospital donde sean curados y fundarlo junto a la iglesia de San Hipólito, en unos solares al lado de la ermita de los Mártires, les proporcionen sitio en dichos solares sin perjuicio de tercero y el favor y ayuda necesarios," El Escorial, November 4, 1568; AGI, Mexico N.1089, R.5, ff. 260; "Real cédula a Martín Enríquez, virrey de Nueva España, y a la Audiencia de México para que provean lo que convenga en la solicitud de los mulatos de México que piden un sitio, con estancias y propios, para fundar un hospital, pues los que hay en México son para españoles o para los indios," El Escorial, June 2, 1569, AGI,

confraternities resembled the others in the city and through the Iberian world. It was indeed their festive practices and predilection for Black saints that set them apart.

While Afro-Mexican confraternities were not allowed to establish their own health-care institutions, Afro-Peruvians, by comparison, were in fact forced to do so. While in Mexico City Blacks were allowed to minister to infirm Blacks in the city's hospital for the Indigenous population – which was run by a religious order – and later in the hospital for Blacks, mulattos, and mestizos founded by the Castilian Doctor Pedro López in 1582 – which was administered by the Dominicans – in Lima, Blacks were excluded from the city's health-care institutions for Spaniards and the Indigenous population.[120] In Lima, two hospitals located outside the city's wall were dedicated to the care of infirm Blacks: San Lázaro, for enslaved Africans, and San Bartolomé, initially established for free Afro-Limeños but eventually available to all Afro-Limeños.[121] These hospitals were founded and staffed by members of the city's Black confraternities, especially their female members.[122] As Germeten has noted, in Afro-Mexican confraternities, women too were principally responsible for Afro-Mexicans' medical care.[123]

Another pivotal activity of Black confraternities was the burial of members and poor Blacks. In a world that disposed of deceased slaves' bodies in "dung heaps or open fields" – as Dom Manuel I of Portugal (r. 1469–1521) put it in 1515 – this confraternal function was so important to Afrodescendants, for whom proper burial was crucial, that in the 1970s, Patricia A. Mulvey argued that Black brotherhoods emerged as a "form of death insurance."[124] In Mexico City, Holy Christ of the

Mexico N.1089, R.5, ff. 347v–348v; "Real cédula al virrey de Nueva España y presidente de la Audiencia de México para que informen sobre la solicitud de los mulatos de Nueva España que piden ayuda para la fundación y edificación de un hospital," El Escorial, November 3, 1570, AGI, Mexico N.1090, R.6, f. 180; "Carta del virrey Martín Enríquez," f. 1v; Valerio, "That There Be No Black Brotherhood."

[120] "Testamento del fundador Dr. Pedro López," AGN, Tierras, vol. 3556, exp. 4, f. 38r; Dávila y Padilla, *Historia*, 446; *Actas del cabildo*, 7:548, 572; Martínez Ferrer, "Pedro López"; Mondragón Barrios, *Esclavos africanos*, 57; Jouve Martín, *The Black Doctors*, 10–11.

[121] Jouve Martín, *The Black Doctors*, 13–14. See also Deusen, "The 'Alienated' Body."

[122] Ibid. [123] Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers*, 41–70.

[124] See Mulvey, "Black Lay Brotherhoods," 15. On the importance of proper burial to Afrodescendants, see Kiddy, *Blacks of the Rosary*; Reis, *Death Is a Festival*. For another example of Europeans' neglect of deceased slaves' bodies, see Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 70–1.

Expiration and Holy Burial was particularly dedicated to this mission.[125]

Thus it is clear that in the sixteenth century, Afro-Mexicans had access to Mexico City's confraternal life and were keen to establish confraternities from the colony's earliest years. Like their Afro-Iberian predecessors, Afro-Mexicans recognized confraternities' valuable social and cultural instrumentality. This is not meant to suggest in the least that Afro-Mexicans, or Afro-Iberians for that matter, only founded confraternities for their usefulness. Afrodescendants in the Iberian world were truly devout Catholics, but they imbued their popular form of Catholicism with African-inflected elements, practicing a syncretic Afro-Catholicism that has survived to this day, particularly in Brazil and the Caribbean. Of course, as we will see in the next chapter, both secular and religious colonial authorities found this worrisome and even threatening to colonial rule. Finally, Afro-Mexican confraternities of the sixteenth century have not been studied, and the 1539 performance and other sources could gesture to how early New Spain's Black population sought to join or start confraternities. Confraternities indeed would have been ideal sites for community formation, mutual aid, and expressions of group cohesion, kinship, and festive practices. Díaz del Castillo's text may show the first Afro-Mexican confraternity engaging in these customs.

A MEXICAN SANGAMENTO?

Perhaps the best available description of Black festival kings and queens in the Americas is the Luso-Brazilian Francisco Calmon's *Relação das fautíssimas festas* (*Account of the Most August Festivities*) (Lisbon, 1762). Calmon's text narrates the festivities held in Santo Amaro, a major sugar production hub a few miles from Salvador, the capital of colonial Brazil between 1550 and 1763, in honor of the nuptials of the heir to the Portuguese throne, Princess Maria, the future Dona Maria I, in October 1760. The festivities that took place in Santo Amaro bear striking similarities to the performance described by Díaz del Castillo. The performers appear on horseback, wear masks, the king and queen don rich regalia, and there is a ritual battle. These remarkable parallels put Díaz del Castillo's text in dialogue with Calmon's and, more importantly, point to a continuum – neither static nor unchanging – of this practice from Africa to the Americas, from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth.

[125] Ojea, *Libro tercero de la historia religiosa*, 10.

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The *congado* in Santo Amaro was performed in two parts. First there was an *embaixada* (embassy) announcing the main performance with the king and queen to follow:

O dia quatorze foi singularmente plausível pela dança dos Congos, que apresentaram os Ourives em forma de embaixada, para sair o Reinado o dia dezesseis. Vinha adiante um estado de dezesseis cavalos ricamente ajaezados, cobertas as selas de preciosos pelizes, trazidos por fiadores pelas mãos de dezesseis pajens.[126]

The fourteenth day was singularly praiseworthy because of the Congo dance which the goldsmiths presented in the form of an embassy, announcing the ceremony of the sixteenth. This embassy was led by sixteen richly mounted horses, the saddles covered in precious leather, guided by sixteen pages.

This was followed by "vinte criados custosamente vestidos, e montados em soberbos cavalos" (twenty servants richly dressed and riding majestic horses).[127] Then came the *embaixador do rei* (the king's ambassador),

magníficamente ornado de seda azul, com uma bordadura formada de cordões de ouro, e peças de luzidos diamantes, e na cabeça levava um chapéu da mesma fábrica com cocar de plumas brancas matizadas de encarnado: descia-lhe pelos ombros uma capa de veludo carmesi agaloado de ouro.[128]

magnificently dressed in blue silk, with an embroidery made of golden cords, and precious stones. He was wearing a hat of the same style with a cockade of white feathers. From his shoulders descended a red cape with gold trimmings.

As Fromont points out, the cape and other European elements were adopted by Africans in the Kongo in the original ceremony that *congados* imitated, *sanagmento*, discussed in what follows.[129] The ambassador's horse was no less elegant: "O cavalo, em que vinha montado, correspondia ao demais ornato, e preciosidade, e se fazia admirar pelo ajustado da marcha, com que ao som de muitos instrumentos acompanhava as mãos, e os festejos" (The horse on which he traveled corresponded with the rest in ornament and gallantry, and caused admiration with its march, to the rhythm of many instruments and dancing).[130] As in Díaz del Castillo's account, here we find many of the performers on horseback; this may point to Afrodescendants' use of horses as markers of status. Upon arriving before the city council, the ambassador "anunciou ao Senado, que a vinda do Rei estava destinada para o dia dezesseis" (announced to the council that the king's arrival was set for the sixteenth).[131]

[126] Calmon, *Relação*, fol. 6. [127] Ibid. [128] Ibid.
[129] Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 47. [130] Calmon, *Relação*, fol. 6. [131] Ibid., fol. 7.

These *embaixadas* were a unique component of the Afro-Bahian version of festival kings and queens and reflect historical African embassies to Brazil. In 1642, for example, the ruler of Soyo, one of the three provinces of the Kingdom of Kongo, sent an embassy to Recife, at that time the capital of Dutch Brazil (1630–54).[132] It was in the context of this embassy that the first *sangamento* (ritual fight) was recorded in Brazil by the official chronicler of Dutch Brazil, Gaspar van Baerle (1584–1648). According to Baerle's chronicle of Dutch Brazil, *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia* (*Eight Years in Brazil*) (Amsterdam, 1647),

> Mira eorum tripudia, saltus, gladorium vibrationes terribiles, oculus irae in hostem simulation scintillantes, coram vedimos. etiam scenam sedentism in solio Regis sui & majestatem pertinaci silentio testantis. inde Lagatorum peregrè venientium & Regem ritibus gentium suarum adoratium, habitum & sicta obsequie ac veneratinem. quae recreandis nostratibus post pocula hilariores exhibebant.[133]

> I saw with my own eyes as I watched their dances which were marvelous to see, the way they leapt, the fearful flourishing of their swords, their eyes flashing as they pretended an attack on their enemy. We also witnessed a scene of the king sitting on his throne, maintaining an absolute silence as testimony of his majesty. Also, how foreign envoys, coming from far, pay homage to the king according to the rituals of their country; they showed us their fawning behavior and pretended honor, which they reenacted to our great hilarity after bouts of drinking.[134]

Baerle's text points to the fact that Afro-Brazilian king and queen performances drew on actual African embassies to Brazil. In Chapter 3, we will see how European festive motifs inspired by African embassies to Europe made it to Mexico. For this reason, it is worthwhile to look at other African embassies to Brazil and consider their possible connections to Afro-Mexican festive practices.

Albert Eckhout, painter to the Dutch court in Recife, also left us images of the five envoys.[135] The principal ambassador, whom Fromont has identified as Miguel de Castro, wears a hat resembling a papal tiara, but is in fact what is known in the Kongo as a mpu cap (Figure 1.11). He has on a voluminous black cape over a black tunic, with a white sash at his

[132] The Dutch invaded Salvador, Bahia, in 1624, then under the Iberian Union, but the Spanish retook the city the next year. The Dutch then invaded Pernambuco in 1630 and occupied the captaincy until 1654. See Baerle, *The History of Brazil*; Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil*; Ferrão et al., *Dutch Brazil*.

[133] Baerle, *Rerum*, fol. 245. [134] Baerle, *The History of Brazil*, 238.

[135] See Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 215–23.

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FIGURES 1.11–12 Albert Eckhout, *Portraits of a Kongo Ambassador to Recife, Brazil*, ca. 1642. Jagiellonian Library, Krakow, Poland. Courtesy of the Jagiellonian Library

waist and a red sash across his chest. According to Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, black silk was the most prized fabric in the Kongo.[136] In one image, the ambassador wears a gold chain with a heart pendant and in another, a chain with a cross. In both, he has a long red bead collar wrapped twice around his neck and descending to his waist (Figures 1.11–12). This display of wealth underscores the kind of material culture African elites deployed to impress foreigners. As Díaz del Castillo's text

[136] Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istorica descrizione*, fol. 116.

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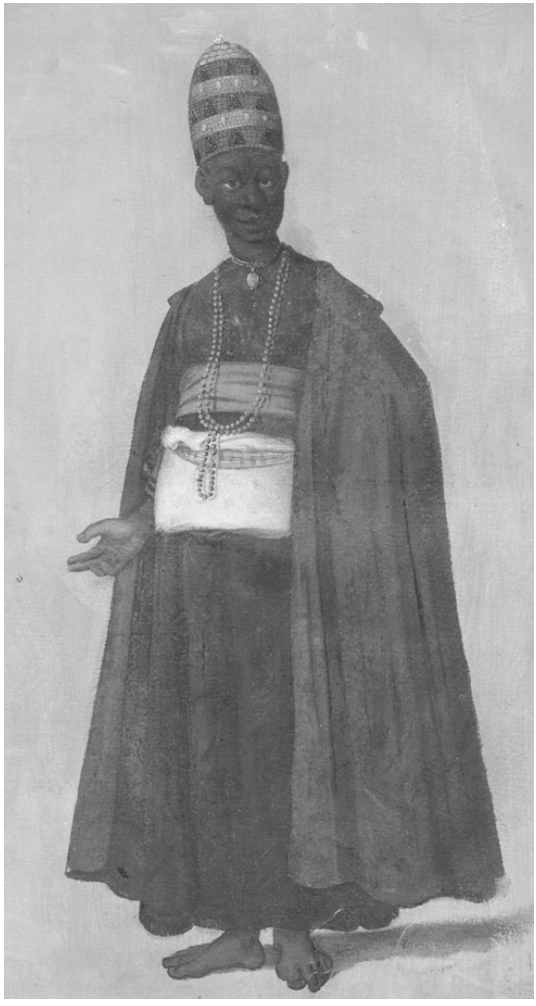

FIGURES 1.11–12 (cont.)

suggests, Afrodescendants in the diaspora likewise mobilized similar material wealth in their festive practices, seeking to impress white audiences.

In 1750, moreover, after his forces attacked the Portuguese fort of Ajuda on the Minas Coast, the king of Dahomey sent an embassy to the Portuguese governor in Salvador to ease the tensions between the two

nations the incident had caused.[137] José Freire Monterroio de Mascarenha describes the ambassador in his *Relaçam da embayxada* (*Account of the Embassy*) (Lisbon, 1751). According to Monterroio de Mascarenha,

> Estava o Embayxador vestido com hum sayal de tela carmesi, todo guarnecido de rendas de ouro crespas, com huma especie de saya como de mulher, sem coz, a que elles dão o nome de *Malaya*, tambem do mesmo estofo, todo guarnecido de franjas de seda, hum sendal curto con bordas pendentes, e huma capa com um grande cauda, como roupa Real, de tela furta-cores, forrada de setim branco com listas de cores differentes.[138]

> The ambassador was wearing a red petticoat, with curled gold tassels, and a short seamless skirt, like a woman's, which they call "malaya," and a shirt of the same fabric, with silk borders, as well as a large, royal cape of iridescent fabric, lined with white satin and strips of different colors.

These embassies elucidate Afro-Brazilians' firsthand knowledge of African ambassadors, Brazil's close relations with Africa, and, finally, an element – the embassy – of the performance not present in other geographies. Yet the fact that some Afro-Mexican festive practices drew from Renaissance and baroque motifs inspired by African embassies invites to consider to what extent Afro-Mexicans were aware of these embassies and acted as "African" ambassadors in their festive performances. It is worth asking, therefore, to what extent were Afro-Mexicans inspired by these displays of material wealth in the Atlantic?

The similarities among (the real and ceremonial) ambassadors' regalia, such as the cape and gold accents, also show how much of Africa remained in these ceremonies across the Atlantic, even though the Dahomean ambassador hailed from a different region than most Afro-Brazilians, who, like Afro-Mexicans, came mostly from Central Africa, specifically Angola and the Kongo, particularly before the nineteenth century.[139] As Silvia Hunold Lara has concluded by comparing these two types of performances – *congados* and the actual African embassy – "podiam rememorar outros reis negros, na longíqua África ou bem mais próximos, líderes de muitos irmãos e confrades pretos" (they could have recalled other Black kings, in faraway Africa or much closer, leaders of many brothers in the Black confraternities).[140] Thus, both the embassy

[137] See Lara, "Uma embaixada africana." [138] Mascarenha, *Relaçam*, fol. 8.
[139] On the slave trade to Brazil, see Klein and Luna, *Slavery*; Alencastro, *O trato dos viventes*, esp. 155–326; Vieira Ribeiro, "The Transatlantic Slave Trade"; Florentino, "Slave Trading."
[140] Lara, *Fragmentos*, 217–18. Voigt, *Spectacular Wealth*, 131.

and *congados* functioned as bridges between Africa and the Americas. This points to one of the main raisons d'être of Black performances in the Americas: to recall, to keep Africa alive in the collective memory, and, in so doing, to honor their ancestors. Black performances in the Atlantic, moreover, did not merely evoke the past but projected themselves onto the present, not only as performances of a desired sovereignty but also of social and cultural agency – a self-fashioned sovereignty that allowed Afrodescendants to preserve community and rituals in the diaspora, as well as make statements about their dignity to a wider colonial audience.

Like no other text, Calmon's account of the festivities that took place in Santo Amaro allows us to see the opulence the regalia worn by festive Black kings and queens could reach:

> Na tarde do dia dezesseis saiu o Reinado dos Congos, que se compunha de mais de oitenta máscaras, com farsas ao seu modo de trajar, riquíssimas pelo muito ouro, e diamantes, de que se ornavam, sobressaindo a todos e Rei, e a Rainha.[141]
>
> In the afternoon of the sixteenth the Reinado dos Congos came out, which was composed of more than eighty masked figures, with costumes in their manner of dress, the king and the queen foremost among them.

As in Díaz del Castillo's text, masks are a central component of the performance, though neither chronicler describes them. There are two interpretative possibilities for these masks that have significant implications for how we understand the performance of festive Black kings and queens. A Eurocentric interpretation would see these masks as European carnival masks. This would signal the performance as an imitation of European practices and give the performance a Rabelaisian nature.[142] But if we consider that masks are central to West and Central African ritualistic practices, we could also see these masks as African. This would give other layers of meaning to the performance. First, African masks were a common feature of colonial Afro-Latin American festive practices.[143] Second, Afrodescendants managed to use these African masks in public ceremonies, and colonial authorities at the very least allowed them.[144] This gives Afrodescendants great autonomy in shaping their own public performances in colonial festivals.

[141] Calmon, *Relação*, fol. 11. Voigt, *Spectacular Wealth*, 129.
[142] See Bakhtin, *Rabelais*.
[143] See Carvajal y Robles, *Fiestas de Lima*; Jouve Martín, "Public Ceremonies."
[144] We also see this in the watercolors from *Trujillo del Perú* I discuss in Chapter 3.

As was to be expected, the king's and queen's costumes were far more ornate than their ambassador's:

> Vinha o Rei preciosíssimamente vestido de uma rica bordadura de cordões de ouro matizada de luzidas peças de diamantes. Trazia pendente do cinto um formoso lagarto dos mesmos cordões, com tal artífício, que parecia natural: na cabeça coroa e ouro na mão direita cetro, e na esquerda o chapéu guarnecido de plumas, e pernas manilhas de ouro batido, nos sapatos bordaduras de cordões, e matizes de luzidos diamantes. A capa, que lhe descia pelos ombros, era de veludo carmesim agaloada de ouro, e forrada de tela branca com agradáveis florões. Pelo ornato do Rei se pode medir o da Rainha, que em nada era inferior.[145]

> The king was dressed most ornately with rich gold embroidery and golden cords with bright gemstones. About his waist was a beautiful alligator made of the same cords and in such a fashion that it seemed real. On his head, a gold crown, and on his right hand, a gold scepter. On his left, a hat adorned with feathers. His shoes were of gold embroidery with bright gemstones. The cape, which fell from his shoulders, was of red velvet with gold borders, and lined with white fabric with beautiful roses embroidered on it. The queen's costume, which was in no way inferior, can be measured from the king's.

While it may be impossible to determine what it meant for the actors from an African perspective, the alligator often stood for Africa in Renaissance allegories of the four continents. If this is the meaning invoked here, it would underscore how creole, American-born Afrodescendants sometimes "Africanized" themselves in their performance of African culture. Where the alligator could evoke barbarism, its description as "beautiful" (*formoso*) negates these connotations. Finally, the account's claim that the costume was made in such a "fashion that it seemed real" (*artificio que parecia natural*) could underscore how the actors self-fashioned their regalia and performance to imitate and compete with Europeans, to make claims about their dignity and status, and to proclaim the quality of their craftsmanship or the wealth they mobilized to commission others.

Even though the monarchs are more richly attired than their ambassador, there are many parallels between the two components of the performance, making the first part a true foreshadowing of the second. In other words, the embassy's regalia accorded with the "monarchy" it represented. Moreover, while the queen is only referred to as being attired in a similar manner as the king, Carlos Julião's watercolors allow us to see what these costumes might have looked like. While Calmon does not describe the queen, Julião dedicates two additional illustrations to her

[145] Calmon, *Relação*, fols. 11–12.

(see Figures 1.6–7).[146] And while in the Brazilian iteration, the king has been understood as wielding more or the same power as the queen,[147] evidence from Peru and elsewhere in the diaspora demonstrates that the queen wielded more power.[148] Moreover, in the form this tradition has taken in Panama, the king is also secondary to the queen.[149] Perhaps Díaz's text alludes to this dynamics when it states that the Black performers "[les] hacían fiestas a la reina" (paid homage to the queen).[150]

Similar to the festivities in Mexico City two centuries earlier, the *congado* in Santo Amaro included a battle between the king's guard and Black performers dressed as Indigenous people, which Calmon describes in terms similar to Díaz del Castillo:

> Não foi de menor recreção para os circumstantes hum ataque, que por ultimo fizerão os da guarda do Rei com seus alfanjes contra hum troço de Indios, que sahírão de emboscada, vestidos de pennas, e armados de arco, e frecha, com tal ardor de ambas naçaoes, que com muita naturalidade representárão ao seu modo huma viva imagem da guerra.[151]
>
> Those in attendance were no less entertained by an attack, which, as the last act, the king's guard, with their swords, charged against a group of Indians, who, dressed in feathers and armed with bows and arrows, ambushed the guard. There was such ardor between the two nations that they easily represented a vivid image of war.

Like the performers' royal regalia, this component is of African origin. As a matter of fact, Fromont has argued that this ritual battle, known as *sangamento*, was the original African performance and that Black confraternities added ceremonial royalty to it in the diaspora.[152] Although *sangamentos* do not appear in the other performances studied in the book, they can help us understand the Blacks' performance Díaz del Castillo describes.

[146] See Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo."
[147] See ibid. See also Kiddy, *Blacks of the Rosary*; Dewulf, *From the Kingdom of Kongo*; Mello e Souza, *Reis negros*.
[148] See Walker, "The Queen of *los Congos*."
[149] See Lund Drolet, *El ritual congo*; Craft, *When the Devil Knocks*, "*¡Los Gringos Vienen!*"; Bettelheim, "Carnaval of Los Congos."
[150] While Chapter 3 discusses a text that only features kings, the final chapter studies a text where women – performing as the Queen of Sheba – are the protagonists.
[151] Calmon, *Relação*, fol. 12. This component of the performance became known as *quicumbis* in Brazil: see Fryer, *Rhythms of Resistance*, 72–3, and Voigt, *Spectacular Wealth*, 130.
[152] Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo," 185.

According to Fromont, this ritual fight developed in the Kongo after the arrival of Portuguese traders in 1483.[153] The ritual battle staged in Mexico City bears many similarities with the form *sangamento* took in the diaspora. Thus I propose looking at this dance as the second stage of this tradition as evidenced in Díaz del Castillo's text. As Fromont points out, in the Christian Kongo *sangamento* consisted of two acts:

> In the first act, the dancers dressed "in the way of the country," wearing feathered headdresses and using bows and arrows as weapons. In the second act, the men changed their outfits, donning feathered European hats, golden crosses, necklace chains, knee-length strings of corals, and red coats embroidered with gold thread.[154]

This description already illustrates how the dance had incorporated European elements in Africa. As Fromont notes, the two parts of *sangamento* reenacted the two foundations of the Kongo, one mythological and the other Christian.[155] The first act of the dance reenacted the founding of the Kongo by Lukeni in the region's creation myth.[156] The second act of the dance reenacted the founding of the Christian Kongo by King Afonso I Mvemba a Nzinga (r. 1509–42) in 1509. As Fromont asserts, Afonso "imposed Christianity as the kingdom's state religion and integrated it into the symbolic and historical fabric of the Kongo."[157]

After rising to power, through several letters to the kingdom's elite, Afonso recast his victory over his main challenger, his brother Mpanzu a Kitima, as a Christian miracle. As Fromont points out, while the Portuguese recognized Afonso as his father's legitimate successor as the firstborn son of the deceased king, Kongo law only recognized him "as one of several eligible successors."[158] Mpanzu opposed his brother's rule because he did not want to convert to Christianity. He led an army of followers who also rejected Christianity. According to the legend, during what seemed the final battle, greatly outnumbered and about to be defeated, Alfonso's soldiers began shouting the name of St. James, the saint Iberians called upon in their battles against the Moors during the Reconquista (711–1492). The shouting of Afonso's army caused Mpanzu's men to panic, costing them the battle and the war. According to the narrative formulated by Afonso in his letters, those who survived from Mpanzu's army later said that – in Fromont's words – "an army of horsemen led by Saint James himself appeared in the sky under a

[153] On the meaning of *sangamento*, see Fromont, *Art of Conversion*, 21. [154] Ibid., 23. [155] See ibid., 23–53. [156] Ibid., 24. [157] Ibid., 4. [158] Ibid., 27.

resplendent white cross and struck scores dead."[159] After this, *sangamento* developed as a martial dance that reenacted this decisive battle, especially on royal occasions (Figure 1.13).[160]

According to Fromont, *sangamento*'s next transformation was the addition of ceremonial kings and queens in the Iberian Peninsula in the late fifteenth century.[161] As stated earlier in this chapter, Afro-Iberians may have elected ceremonial royalty as early as the 1470s. The Kongolese practice therefore found and joined an existing festive tradition in the peninsula – one that allowed it to fill in for now absent African sovereigns. This transformation may have been brought about by the presence of Kongolese nobles in the Iberian Peninsula. We can see these Kongo elites on horseback in the anonymous sixteenth-century Dutch painting of

FIGURE 1.13 Bernardino D'Asti, "Franciscan Missionary Blesses Warriors before a Sangamento," ca. 1750, fol. 18 r. In *Missione in prattica: Padri cappuccini ne Regni di Congo, Angola, et adiacenti*, Biblioteca Civica Centrale, Turin, Italy, MS 457. Courtesy of Biblioteca Civica Centrale

[159] Ibid. Not only was *sangamento* a Kongolese tradition brought to the Americas by slaves, but it was also performed on American soil by Kongolese envoys, as in Recife, Brazil, in 1642, while under Dutch rule (1630–54). See ibid., 114–21.

[160] Ibid., 23. [161] Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo," 185.

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Lisbon's central square discussed earlier (Figure 1.3). These Black knights and those in Afonso's narrative of his victory could account for those in Díaz del Castillo's text. *Ladinos* like Garrido could have learned about this practice during their time in Lisbon. Díaz del Castillo's text, therefore, may show how this practice was brought to the Americas by the Afro-Iberians who accompanied the first Spanish colonizers. So, even though *sangamentos* do not appear in the other performances studied in the book, they can help us understand the Blacks' performance in Mexico City in 1539.

Santo Amaro's *congado* was sponsored by the town's goldsmiths. This has caused some controversy since the guild of goldsmiths did not admit Blacks.[162] Some historians have argued that the performers in the *congado* were the goldsmiths themselves imitating an Afro-Brazilian practice. José Ramos Tinhorão, for example, contends that a close reading of Calmon's text leaves no confusion that the goldsmiths were also the performers.[163] Silva Hunold Lara, citing imitations of "uma dança de ... americanos pretos" (a dance of ... Black Americans) by non-Black Europeans in Porto, Portugal, in 1793, and *congados* by *pardos* or mulattos in Rio de Janeiro, in 1762, argues that the goldsmiths performed all the components.[164] On this basis, she concludes that Santo Amaro's goldsmiths were merely taking part in a long tradition of white, non-Black actors imitating Afrodescendants' festive practices.[165] Others contend, as I do, that the performers were Blacks who were hired by the goldsmiths.[166] Mello e Souza, for example, argues that only those who knew the tradition to the fullest – that is, Blacks – could perform it. Indeed, as the author asserts,

> [A]s embaixadas com danças e versos africanos, e o reinado festivo ... tinham que ser realizadas por quem conhecesse as tradições, os gestos a serem executados, os passos de cada coreografia e os versos dos episódios representados. O rei, a rainha, a corte, os músicos e os dançarinos tinham que ser negros habituados a tais tradições.[167]
>
> The embassies with African dances and songs, the festive royalty ... had to be performed by those who knew these traditions, the gestures to be executed, the steps of each dance and the song of each element. The king, the queen, the court, the musicians and the dancers had to be Blacks familiar with these traditions.

[162] Alves, *Mestres ourives*, 7.
[163] Tinhorão, *As festas*, 127n14.
[164] Lara, *Fragmentos*, 787–9.
[165] Ibid., 188.
[166] Mello e Souza, *Reis negros*, 263; Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo," 196.
[167] Mello e Souza, *Reis negros*, 263. Fromont also argues that it is more likely that the performers were Black: "Dancing for the King of Congo," 196.

Thus, as Mello e Souza concludes, the goldsmiths sponsored but did not perform Santo Amaro's *congado*. The goldsmiths' access to gold may have made this one of the most lavishly attired Black performances of the Iberian Atlantic. So, while *pardos* may have performed *congados*, as Lara contends, it is unlikely that Europeans did.

In the absence of details in Díaz del Castillo's text, Calmon's text and Julão's images – albeit temporally and geographically removed – could suggest how the king and queen at the 1539 celebration may have been attired. In this fashion, the diasporic framework adopted in this book can help supplement the many intentional, racialized silences about Afro-Mexicans' performative culture in so many colonial texts. Beyond this, the performance's rich fanfare underscores how Afrodescendants mobilized African and European symbols of prestige to perform symbolic, if not real sovereignty. Their customs recalled European monarchs as well as African rulers. This amalgamation speaks to the cultural intimacies that characterize the process of creolization.

The *congado* in eighteenth-century Santo Amaro, Brazil, illustrates how the original African practice was transformed in the Americas. Acquainted with feathered headdresses and bows and arrows in the African context – as Fromont's text attests – Africans found in Amerindian attire and weapons familiar components. Díaz del Castillo's account could be the first evidence of this cultural transformation in the Atlantic, placing Mexico squarely at the center of the cultural changes ushered in by early modern imperial expansion.[168]

When we consider this tradition's African origins, we can see, as Mello e Souza points out apropos the election of ceremonial royalty among Afro-Brazilian confraternities, "[a]s raízes africanas eram visíveis no processo de escolha dos reis e se manisfetavam na comemoração festiva da eleição e coroação, com ritmos própios, ao som de instrumentos de origem africana, acompanhando danças" (its African roots were clearly visible in the process of choosing the king and queen and manifested themselves in the celebration of the election and coronation, with African rhythms and instruments accompanying dances).[169] And while Díaz del Castillo's text does not state if the Blacks performed with music in 1539, we will see in Chapter 3 how music was central to Afro-Mexicans' festive practices, as it was and remains for all Afrodescendants.

[168] See Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans*; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*.
[169] Mello e Souza, *Reis negros*, 181.

CONCLUSION

While scholars have struggled to explain the performance, its true nature may come to light when viewed from the perspective of a *sangamento*, as delineated earlier in this chapter. Newly arrived from the Iberian Peninsula (either Seville or Lisbon), *ladinos* could have brought the festive practice to New Spain.[170] If that is the case, as I have indicated, this would be the first performance of *sangamento* in the Americas, many years before it was recorded in Brazil.[171] Even if that were not the case, the events still formed a significant precedent against the backdrop of which Afro-colonial festivals would later develop in Mexico and elsewhere in the Americas.[172]

The *sangamento* dimension would also add another layer of meaning to the battle between the Black and Indigenous performers. In his analysis of the festival, Harris argues that this mock battle came from the European tradition of battles of wild men.[173] However, when viewed from the perspective of a *sangamento*, this battle gains a new significance. As Fromont points out, in the Christian Kongo, the second part of *sangamento* was formulated as a battle between Christian victors and defeated heathens.[174] In the Americas, Indigenous people took the place of the heathens in the performance.[175] Viewed from this standpoint, the battle between the Black and Indigenous performers could suggest that the Black performers coordinated the battle with the Indigenous performers. This would indicate the agency of Black performers in the planning of the festivities, which previous analyses of the festival have neglected.[176] Viewed from this viewpoint, the Blacks' performance stands on its own and is not dependent on the Spaniards' performance and attire for meaning. Nevertheless, it fits within a well-established European genre of theatrical performances of Christianity triumphing over Islam. That fact is significant to our interpretation of the cultural adaptability of Afro-Mexicans.

In the current state of knowledge, it is unclear whether the Black performers in Díaz del Castillo's text performed a *sangamento* or belonged to a confraternity. Nor can we ascertain who they were

[170] On Blacks' trajectory from Africa to the Iberian Peninsula and the Americas, see Graubart, "*So color de una cofradía*."
[171] See Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo." [172] See Mello e Souza, *Reis negros*.
[173] Harris, *Aztecs*, 128. [174] Fromont, "Dancing for the King of Congo," 188.
[175] Ibid., 196–200.
[176] Lopes Don, "Carnivals"; Williams, *Teatro*, 64–5; Harris, *Aztecs*, 123–31.

individually. Strong evidence, however, indicates that they were *ladinos* who had lived as members of African and Afrodescendant communities in the Iberian Peninsula. There they had the opportunity to join confraternities and to take part in festive celebrations independently or on broader civic or religious occasions. The performance described in Díaz del Castillo's text is the earliest reference to the participation of Africans in festival celebrations in the Americas. As such, it could be the earliest evidence of a *sangamento* in the diaspora, and in any case, it provides us the background against which the American versions of the Kongo martial dance should be considered. Considered as an African-derived event rather than an act of mimicry, the 1539 Black performance provides an important demonstration of uninterrupted – but neither simple nor unchanging – cultural continuity between African and diasporic celebrations, even with a detour through the Iberian Peninsula. It underscores how Africans and their descendants took and adapted their culture to their new lives. At a minimum, this performance remains an important early moment in the archive of Afro-colonial festivals in the Atlantic. It constitutes an important early example of Africans using European Christian rituals as a medium to express their identity. We will see in the next chapters how Díaz del Castillo's account, though brief, marked the beginning of a performative tradition that would characterize the Afro-Mexican colonial experience, even if colonial officials mischaracterized them, as studied in the next chapter. Finally, Díaz del Castillo's text shows that this tradition made forays into the Americas earlier than scholars have suggested, and that it was present in Spanish America as much as it was in Portuguese America.

Through a diasporic framework, we were able to situate this performance and Mexico City at the heart of the early cultural formation of the Black Atlantic. In the following chapters, we will have the opportunity to see how Afro-Mexican festival kings and queens continued to be permanent fixtures of Mexico City's public festivals, despite the suspicion with which colonial officials regarded them. We will see how this performance evolved, reflecting the development of an Afro-Mexican creole culture away from its African roots and more and more toward its new American soil.