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Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa

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New Book

Crossroads and Cosmologies:

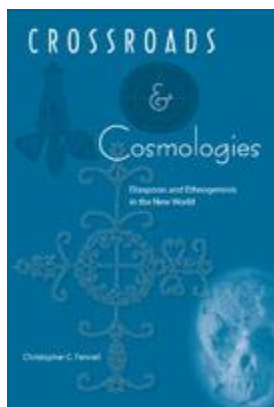
Diasporas and Ethnogenesis in the New World.

By Christopher C. Fennell

Foreword by Robert Farris Thompson

192 pages, Cloth (\$59.95), ISBN 13: 978-0-8130-3141-5, forthcoming 10/14/2007; Series: Cultural Heritage Studies. University Press of Florida

Description from the publisher and reviewers:



"A far-reaching anthropological study of African and African American religions, German American folkways, and archaeological methodology." -- Leland Ferguson, University of South Carolina.

"The notion of 'emblematic' vs. 'instrumental' symbolism provides an exciting new model for analyzing material culture and its meanings for the people who produced it and used it." -
- Anna Sophia Agbe-Davies, DePaul University.

Fennell offers a fresh perspective on ways that the earliest enslaved Africans preserved vital aspects of their traditions and identities in the New World. He also explores similar developments among European immigrants and the interactions of both groups with Native Americans.

Focusing on extant artifacts left by displaced Africans, Fennell finds that material culture and religious ritual contributed to a variety of modes of survival in mainland North America as well as in the Caribbean and Brazil. Over time, new symbols of culture led to further changes in individual customs and beliefs as well as the creation of new social groups and new expressions of identity.

Presenting insights from archaeology, history, and symbolic anthropology, this book traces the dynamic legacy of the trans-Atlantic diasporas over four centuries, and it challenges existing concepts of creolization and cultural retention. In the process, it examines some of the major cultural belief systems of west and west central Africa, specific symbols of the BaKongo and Yoruba cosmologies, development of prominent African-American religious expressions in the Americas, and the Christian and non-Christian spiritual traditions of German-speaking immigrants from central Europe.

Chapters include: 1. Introduction: Diasporas, Histories, and Heritage. 2. From the Diminutive to the Transatlantic. 3. Shared Meanings and Culture Dynamics; Core Symbols across a Continuum; A Core Symbol of the Bakongo Culture; Marking Social Group Contours; Expressions of Group Identity and Individual Purpose. 4. A Model for Diaspora Analysis; Interpreting Cultural Expressions through

Ethnohistorical Analogy; Bakongo Culture in West Central Africa. 5. African Diasporas and Symbolism in the New World; Private Rituals in North America; Yoruba and Bakongo Dynamics in Cuba; Innovation of New Emblems in Haiti and Brazil; Afro-Christian Dynamics in North America. 6. European Diasporas and the Persistence of Magic; From the Palatinate to Virginia; Hexerei Practices among German Americans; Social Networks and Interpersonal Conflicts; Expressions Instrumental and Emblematic. 7. Creolization, Hybridity, and Ethnogenic Bricolage.