



## Kongo across the Waters

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“A powerful statement through both word and image of how individuals of African descent have negotiated African cultural practices, whether through remembrance or rediscovery, as strategies for their physical and psychological health.”—Jean Borgatti, Boston University

“Uses an interdisciplinary approach to understanding Kongo culture in Africa and its transformation in North America. Valuable in its scope and coverage, this is an important collection of studies from the leading scholars on Kongo.”—Mariana Candido, author of *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World*

The Kingdom of Kongo, situated in today’s Angola and the DRC, had already developed a sophisticated artistic and cultural life by the time the Portuguese arrived in 1483. Europeans soon admired and collected particular forms of Kongo art while Kongo elites converted to Christianity and started communicating with European courts through writing.

With the development of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, many less fortunate Kongolese were transported to the New World. From the Chesapeake Bay to New Orleans, Kongo peoples left their imprint on the life, art, and cultures of the African diaspora. Only recently have scholars begun to fully understand the extent of this influence.

Immersing readers in Kongo history and culture, the contributors to *Kongo across the Waters* investigate how an African culture with considerable historical depth evolved over five centuries in West Central Africa and also contributed significantly to the process of culture formation in communities of enslaved Africans and descendants of enslaved Africans in North America. By looking at art from Kongo and from African American communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *Kongo across the Waters* brings to light historic links between West Central Africa and North America.

This volume allows leading scholars of Kongo history, anthropology, linguistics, archaeology, and art to examine the history of Kongo peoples from the fifteenth century through today. These essays probe the historical interactions between the Kongolese and the Atlantic world, Kongo presence and influence in the United States, and Kongo inspired artistic expression in contemporary art.

Visually and textually appealing, *Kongo across the Waters* is an overdue and valuable contribution to the literature on Africa’s history and its Atlantic connections.

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