



## **Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640 (Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia)**

*By David Wheat*

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**Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640 (Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia) By David Wheat**

This work resituates the Spanish Caribbean as an extension of the Luso-African Atlantic world from the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, when the union of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns facilitated a surge in the transatlantic slave trade. After the catastrophic decline of Amerindian populations on the islands, two major African provenance zones, first Upper Guinea and then Angola, contributed forced migrant populations with distinct experiences to the Caribbean. They played a dynamic role in the social formation of early Spanish colonial society in the fortified port cities of Cartagena de Indias, Havana, Santo Domingo, and Panama City and their semirural hinterlands.

David Wheat is the first scholar to establish this early phase of the "Africanization" of the Spanish Caribbean two centuries before the rise of large-scale sugar plantations. With African migrants and their descendants comprising demographic majorities in core areas of Spanish settlement, Luso-Africans, Afro-Iberians, Latinized Africans, and free people of color acted more as colonists or settlers than as plantation slaves. These ethnically mixed and economically diversified societies constituted a region of overlapping Iberian and African worlds, while they made possible Spain's colonization of the Caribbean.

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- Sales Rank: #182728 in Books
- Published on: 2016-05-16
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.00" w x 6.00" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 352 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

Wheat makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the Atlantic slave trade and the experiences of Africans and African-descended peoples in the Caribbean. The work underscores the continuing importance of the Spanish Caribbean in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and suggests that the 'Africanization' of the Caribbean began well before the rise of sugar economies in British, French, and Dutch colonies.--Ida Altman, University of Florida

David Wheat's *Atlantic Africa* boldly rewrites the early history of the Spanish Caribbean, demonstrating how Africans and their descendants became Spain's 'surrogate colonists' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Exhaustively researched, this book reveals the indelible imprint of various groups of Africans on the history of the Spanish Caribbean.--James H. Sweet, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Brilliantly researched and elegantly written, Wheat's study of the centrality of slavery and Africans in the pre-sugar Caribbean challenges much of what we think we know about the early Caribbean, New World slavery, and the early Spanish empire. This is a must-read book for students of Atlantic, African diaspora, and colonial Latin American history.--Ada Ferrer, New York University

### About the Author

David Wheat is assistant professor of history at Michigan State University.

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