On a Sunday of rest in 1662, three enslaved men from today’s Guinea-Bissau disrupted the dancing and drumming on a sugar hacienda along the northern coast of Peru. Witnesses reported that these enslaved men, who were known as *brans*, demanded that a group of criollo and other African men (born in west or southwestern Africa) cease to play. One of the *brans* confessed at trial that he and his companions wanted to play and had been rebuffed by the American-born criollo owner of the drum.\(^1\) As a result of this rejection, the three spoke their language together and destroyed the drum. Then they returned later to assault the drummers and kill the owner of the instrument. Seeking restitution for their wounded and murdered criollo slaves, slaveholders filed a criminal suit against the *brans*. The African origins of the accused were not significant to the slaveholders who took legal action to recover the value of their human property. Nevertheless, the three enslaved men acted collectively, suggesting their diasporic affinities.

Enslaved and free people of the African diaspora—such as these three men called *bran*—created, revised, and transformed their identities within the physical demands and legal erasure of New World slavery. In the Americas, new identities such as pious Catholics, skillful sugar masters, and coworkers were possible.\(^2\) Yet criollo identities were not the only possibilities. Using the lens of precolonial African history, scholars have described specific African identities in the Americas. Enslaved women presented themselves as Yoruba speakers and religious practitioners to signify their elite status among others from the Bight of Benin.\(^3\) African men invoked their royal origins to claim leadership positions on the western side of the Atlantic.\(^4\) Central Africans transformed the political organization of war camps to create sustainable fugitive settlements and employed common religious beliefs and practices to respond to slavery’s challenges.\(^5\) As these and other examples indicate, Africans and their descendants established social, religious, cultural, and political institutions, as well as meaningful community, in the Americas even though they were forcibly removed, subjected to the Middle Passage, and denied corporate rights in most slavery societies.\(^6\) Indeed, by exploring African diasporic identities
Instead of “blacks” or “slaves,” now we also see Yorubas, Muslims, and Central Africans, who articulated coherent collectivities with distinct histories and religions as well as particular kinship, political, gender, and social structures.

Locating diasporic collectivities from the multicultural region of Senegambia, including today’s Cape Verde Islands, Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and northern Guinea, presents an analytical challenge. From this region of northern West Africa, Muslims with non-Muslims, herders, fishermen, agriculturalists, as well as those from “stateless” societies, were sold en masse into the transatlantic slave trade until the mid-seventeenth century. Within this diversity, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall has argued, the Bambara (from Senegal) constituted a language community that shared a concept of political sovereignty—if not a common ethnicity—in early-eighteenth-century Louisiana. Peter Caron, however, has challenged Hall’s definition of Bambara to argue that the French in the trading fortress of Gorée labeled any enslaved individual as a “bambara,” while in Louisiana the term meant any black or Senegambian. The debate rests on locating the historical specificity of captive Africans’ origins, but also on decoding the meaning of terms used by traders, owners, and diasporic people. For slaves sold from West Africa, there were multiple possibilities of identification; captives claimed many ethnicities, spoke a wide variety of languages, and participated in a plethora of religious systems. Some, such as skilled rice agriculturalists, were possible for historians to trace from Guinea-Bissau to South Carolina. Still, people from village-based societies of precolonial Guinea-Bissau remained largely independent from Mandinka state and other centralized political control. The societies of Guinea-Bissau were politically decentralized and adaptive, as much as they were connected by local bonds of marriage and generational hierarchies. Located on the coast and river deltas, societies of Guinea-Bissau were targeted by their neighbors as well as European slave traders and sold into the Middle Passage to become a diaspora in Spanish America. Their variability requires a shift in the definition of diasporic community. Instead, captives from Guinea-Bissau formed a coherent diasporic
community in coastal Peru based not on a singular ethnicity, but on their multiple and dynamic means of adaptation.

People called bran in colonial Peru originated in the northern region of today’s Guinea-Bissau, but like Louisiana’s bambaras they did not necessarily share a singular national, ethnic, or linguistic identity. In colonial Peru, moreover, Spanish hacendados and colonial judicial officials employed terminology learned from slave traders and Catholic missionaries to describe all enslaved men as bran who originated from the northern “rivers of Guinea” on the West African coast. Those called bran, though, could also identify as pious Catholics, inhabitants of particular haciendas, and with other people called bran because of their shared languages and cultural practices. I argue that in the context of enslavement on the Peruvian coast, those called bran articulated a polycultural identity that was simultaneously recognizable, conflictual, and also surprisingly adaptable, all features commonly ascribed to diasporic people in more “modern” transnational histories. By following those called bran from Guinea-Bissau to colonial Peru, I reconfigure “transnational” borders separating Latin America and African historiography, as well as complicate ethnicity as a stable marker of early modern identity.12

As a contribution to African diaspora history, the following approach should also be familiar to transnational historians. Without seeing the elements of Guinea-Bissau or Central African cultural expressions in historical context, I would construct a purely Andean, Peruvian, or colonial interpretation of African diasporic communities to find only “black” cultures, “slave” adaptations, or static “Africans.” Like other scholars, I seek to disrupt a monolithic construction of a singular black identity by describing the elements of Guinea-Bissau collectivities in the Americas. Without seeing those called bran act in the social and cultural context of coastal Peru, I could gloss them as continuing their Guinea-Bissau identities without crucial adaptations to Catholicism or slavery. Whether I employ the historical tools of African diaspora or transnational scholars, however, my main task is to forefront the actions of enslaved men from Guinea-Bissau, not to dwell on their region of origin or their site of enslavement. Therefore, I show how enslaved men acted not always in resistance to slavery, but in conflict with each other and other subalterns in particular applications of Guinea-Bissaun practices. This transnational “way of seeing” requires that I see double or listen to simultaneous narratives of West African and colonial Andean histories to interpret the specific actions of the enslaved from Guinea-Bissau in Peru.13
Those who were called bran constituted a meaningful proportion of the enslaved and free African populations in Spanish America. From the late sixteenth through the first half of the seventeenth century, captives from Upper Guinea (Senegambia) and the coasts of Kongo and Angola in Central Africa dominated those sold into the Spanish Empire. Therefore, Senegambian men and women probably constituted at least half of slaves sold into Mexico. In Peru, 30 percent of Africans sold in Lima carried the Spanish and the transatlantic nomenclature of bran, associated with the “rivers of Guinea” or Guinea-Bissau. Yet in the northern coastal city of Trujillo, between 1580 and 1660, those from Senegambia and Guinea-Bissau comprised upward of 50 percent of the total numbers of slaves sold to local slaveholders. While the numbers of enslaved men and women from Guinea-Bissau would decline by the mid-seventeenth century, in the early period of Peruvian slavery they constituted a significant presence, but by no means a majority of all enslaved Africans and their descendants.

Among the more than sixty castas, or labels, of enslaved Africans listed by slaveholders in coastal Peru, those who were called brans probably came from or were associated with the Brame, one of many village-based societies of Guinea-Bissau. In particular, the Papel, who had more access to and contact with European traders, raided their Brame neighbors for sale to Luso-African intermediaries. Also, some Brame communities sold their own members for European goods. Furthermore, Brame villages were in close proximity to the port of Cacheu, where, in the first half of the seventeenth century, European traders active in the “rivers of Guinea” (or today’s Guinea-Bissau) purchased the majority of their captives.

If the bran included the Brame, they would express coherent cultural affinities such as those practiced by the three enslaved men discussed at the beginning of this essay. According to witnesses in the resulting criminal trial, in 1662 the three arrived together and disrupted a group of slaves who had gathered on a hacienda by demanding that the criollo Hernando Dávila stop playing his drum. According to Gaspar bran, Hernando Dávila refused to let the brans play and then insulted them. In response, Gonsalo bran urged Miguel bran “in their language” to destroy the drum. According to witnesses and defendants, Miguel bran took out his knife and cut the drum up. Later, the brans or the angry owner of the drum sought each other out and had another, more serious confrontation. Some witnesses claimed that Gaspar bran ironically taunted the criollo Dávila by noting that his drum was ruined (as the other brans had destroyed it earlier). Hernando Dávila, presumably offended by Gaspar’s audacity, again insulted...
the **brans**. For the second time, the **brans** agreed to a collective response that suggests a shared perspective reflective of cultural affinities: Miguel and Gonsalo **bran** played another drum while Gaspar **bran** danced between them. Gaspar **bran** explained that they played the drum “because it was Sunday,” yet it would seem that the three men performed in retaliation against the criollo and his allies. The **bran** men spoke the same language and had developed a common response to insults or affronts based on shared cultural understandings that included drumming and dancing.

Even if the **bran** men expressed Brame affinities, they were not exclusive. After the three **brans** and Hernando Dávila fought (resulting in the criollo’s mortal wound), “a **negro** called Balanta” whisked Gonsalo **bran** into the countryside on his horse. Gonsalo **bran** had developed an alliance with his temporary savior, who presumably was from one of the Balanta communities close to Brame villages in Guinea-Bissau. According to the Jesuit missionary Alonso de Sandoval, some of these communities could speak “Bran.” Even if the “**negro** Balanta” and Gonsalo **bran** were allies, not all the **brans** who were present that day became involved in the altercations. Pablo **bran** and Agustín **bran** were at the drumming confrontations but did not join their “fellow” **brans**, suggesting that common origin could generate shared cultural practices (like drumming) but did not categorically mean a common affinity leading to action.

The incident on the coastal hacienda reflects the diverse identities contained within the slave trader category of **bran**. The Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval, who evangelized among new captives arriving in Cartagena, had learned from his correspondence with missionaries in Guinea-Bissau that **negros brans** were also called **papeles** and **bojolas**. Sandoval also reported that some **bran** populations who inhabited the southern bank of the Cacheu River were also called **papeles**, while others who lived south of the Casa Mansa kingdom were called **bojolas**, and still others who populated the coastal islands of the Mansoa River were known as **bran** kings. The distinct locations of **brans** reflected Sandoval’s reading of Guinea-Bissau’s village and confederation, or small-state, societies that included the Balanta, Papel, Biafada, and the Brame. Brames who became known as **brans** in the Americas would see themselves as related members of distinct villages. Thus, Brames were already practiced in creating new identities, polities, villages, or translocal diasporas before they were sold to the Americas.

Spanish American **brans** had been sold from a region already undergoing significant transformations of social identity. The market opportunities encouraged by the increasing number of European slave traders attracted kin groups to resettle in Euro-African trading towns such as Cacheu. There, Brames would have been able to capitalize on the vibrant commerce that boomed in this principal port of Guinea-Bissau. Brame communities
also established themselves where Jesuit missionaries, Portuguese traders, and local Christians in the market town of Ziguinchor prospered from the active trade between the Atlantic coast and the interior Muslim states and kingdoms. As for the Brames who inhabited the coastal regions, they would have had ready access to itinerant European traders, including those from the English trading forts to the north. Brame society in the seventeenth century encouraged proliferation and competition, including seizing on multiple affiliations that could be politically, economically, or culturally more advantageous.

Clerics such as the Jesuit missionary Sandoval, though, attempted to condense Brame diversity into the colonial homogeneity of the bran slave category. Sandoval communicated through male interpreters with people from Guinea-Bissau, but he did not honor their self-identifications. Sandoval reported that he would ask, “Which casta are you?” to which captives declared “names” such as cacheo, baserral, bojola, papel, or pesis. In these exchanges, Brame people identified themselves according to places of origin, such as the region in or near the trading town of Cacheu (“cacheo”) or the Pecixe (“pesis”) Island, one of the coastal islands of the Mansoa River. After Sandoval listed the multiple “names” that captives provided, the Jesuit explained to his reader that these terms were the same as saying

Figure 1. Map of precolonial societies in Guinea-Bissau. Drawn by the author; see endnote 23 for sources.
“I am of casta bran.” In this way, Sandoval collapsed the multiplicity of identity and allegiances from the “rivers of Guinea” into the Spanish colonial casta category of bran. Rather than the village confederations of Guinea-Bissau, Sandoval created a new singularity even as captives articulated the multiplicities of their identities.

Even though missionaries and slaveholders dismissed self-reported identities of those called bran, enslaved men still expressed the multiple identities of their diasporic location. In 1614, Joan Bran (as he was identified in the colonial judicial case) purchased some chicha (corn-based alcohol) in a rural Peruvian valley market. There, he encountered Hernando Cacho, who asked Joan Bran for a drink. Drinking together or sharing alcohol was a common sign of companionship among northern coastal laborers. Also indicating their affinity, after Joan Bran gave Hernando Cacho the bottle, the two spoke in a language that their other companions did not understand. But when Joan Bran took the bottle back and tried to walk off, Hernando Cacho grabbed the chicha and knifed Joan Bran in the neck. Clearly, a shared language may have also allowed the two to share conflict. Explaining a possible reason for their disagreement, Hernando Cacho’s surname was probably Cacheo, signifying a name he called himself rather than the slave-trade misnomer of bran. Cacheu, mentioned above, was an active Atlantic port in Guinea-Bissau and a location where coastal merchants traded slaves to transatlantic Europeans. The conflict between the two men in coastal Peru also coincided with intense slave raiding around Cacheu. The markets in this Luso-African town were fueled by Banhun attacks on Brames who, in turn, raided the Balanta for captives. If Hernando hailed from Cacheu, then Joan Bran may have been traded from a rival community or one raided by those of the market city.

The language choices of Hernando Cacho and Joan Bran also indicated the multiplicity of identities that characterized the Guinea-Bissau coast. It is likely that both men spoke any number of languages from coastal Guinea-Bissau or the regional Crioulo of Senegambian commerce. Indeed, such trade affinities may in fact have been the cause of their conflict, as they switched from Spanish, when they argued, into a language unknown to their indigenous and African companions. Hernando Cacho was accompanied by other enslaved men from the same coastal hacienda, including Andres Nalu and Francisco Biafara. Their surnames indicate that they were from the southern rivers of Geba and Corubal in Guinea-Bissau, where it is possible that people knew the languages of northern Guinea-Bissau or the commercial lingua franca of the trading town of Cacheu. Joan Bran or Hernando Cacho must have known which language their companions did not speak or understand. In choosing a language only they knew, Joan Bran and Hernando Cacho
also excluded Anton Bran, Hernando Cacho’s companion and coworker. Again, their choices suggest an intimacy born from a shared Guinea-Bissau origin that included a proliferation of contacts and allegiances as well as an election for privacy. Compellingly, Hernando Cacho and Joan Bran expressed a recognizable identity through conflictual multiplicity, rather than homogenizing unity.

The term *bran* was a creation of transatlantic processes that included slave trading and diasporic self-identification. In all likelihood, European slave traders and Catholic missionaries corrupted a Guinea-Bissau ethnicity of Brame into *bran*, a term that labeled the characteristics of captives sold from the northern rivers of Guinea-Bissau. On the northern Peruvian coast, slaveholders inventoried their human property according to the categories they learned from transatlantic slave traders and their agents in the ports of Cartagena, Panama, and those that extended southward along the Pacific coast of South America. Spanish judicial officials also employed these terms to identify witnesses, defendants, and accusers in a replication of transatlantic mercantile terminology in court. Those who were called *bran*, however, were not necessarily of the same society, since the Guinea-Bissau coast and river deltas were home to a multiplicity of affiliated villages and small states that were connected by trade networks and shared languages. On the northern Peruvian coast, those who came to be called *bran* shared the multicultural nature of their original region. Their diasporic identity, therefore, was expressed in their ability to choose among multiple shared languages and alliances, even to express new or continuing conflicts.

**Building Bran Alternatives**

Enslaved men and women from Guinea-Bissau adaptively approached their collectivity on the Peruvian coast. For those called *bran*, a person or group could invoke multiple combinations of languages, origins, and allegiances to express their identity. Slave traders and colonial missionaries, not captives, created the category of *bran* but ignored the diversity within it. While those called *brans* might include the society of Brames from Guinea-Bissau, most enslaved men (the majority in these documents) sought to claim alternative identities to that of *bran*. By asserting themselves as pious Catholics or including themselves within other African diaspora majorities, *bran* men expressed core characteristics of their identities: that of flexibility and adaptability.

In a rural estate outside of Lima, as an example, three *bran* slaves
articulated Catholic identities traceable to contemporaneous adaptations of the Luso-African communities of Guinea-Bissau. In July 1610, four enslaved men traveled to petition the archbishop’s court in Lima. As identified in the colonial court case, Francisco bran, Duarte Bran, Juan bran, and their work companion Antonio bañon testified that their owner forced them to work on holidays and Sundays and would beat them if they asked to attend religious services. Duarte Bran and Juan bran explained that they had come to the farm as bozales, or unacculturated African captives who did not speak or understand Spanish. Spanish slaveholders also associated bozales with Africans who knew at best only the rudiments of Catholic practices. Yet regardless of their bozal status, the bran and bañon petitioners considered themselves to be Christians, with the obligation to attend Mass. It is plausible that they did not tell the truth in the archbishop’s court, however, and their owner, Vicente Polco, had fulfilled his Christian duty (as he claimed) by sending his slaves to attend Mass “so they would be good Christians.” Polco explained that he had revoked this permission when his slaves had returned to the hacienda drunk, sick, wounded, and unable to work after their Sunday in the local town. Regardless, both parties exhibited their knowledge of Catholic practice and ecclesiastical law. The owner defended himself by claiming that he had behaved as a Christian, even if his slaves had not. In turn, by asserting their right to attend Mass as practicing Christians, the enslaved bran claimed ecclesiastical provisions based on a previous knowledge of Catholicism.

By petitioning the ecclesiastical courts as Catholics, the four men sought public recognition of identities beyond that of bran slave. Their actions were successful in this regard since the ecclesiastical notary identified the first man to testify, Francisco bran, as a moreno, a common label for free people of color who wished to mark their manumitted status. The casta category of moreno suggests that Francisco bran, while admittedly still enslaved, may have been more acculturated than other Atlantic African slaves. Francisco bran knew enough Catholic law to assert his rights as a Christian in the archbishopric court. He claimed that he and his compañeros from the farm were “baptized Christians [who] had an obligation to hear Mass on Sundays and holiday mornings and not work on those days.” Juan bran could have collected information about slaves’ Catholic rights and the archbishopric court when he sold bread for his owner in the viceregal capital. There, other acculturated slaves or free people of color may have told Francisco bran that the ecclesiastical court heard petitions from practicing Christians. In addition, the ecclesiastical notary also identified another plaintiff, Juan bran, as a moreno, suggesting that the group consisted of other similarly acculturated young men from...
Guinea-Bissau. By asserting themselves as Catholics, the enslaved bran men subsequently could claim another public identity as moreno to signify their acculturation in coastal Peru.

Their abilities, as newly arrived slaves, to activate the protections afforded to enslaved Catholics also suggest that the brans were familiar with Christianity before their transatlantic passage. As the slave category bran covered multiple distinctions, it is possible that Francisco and Juan bran, whom the ecclesiastical court called moreno, were from the trading towns of Cacheu and Ziguinchor. There, Jesuit missionaries had founded Catholic churches and inhabitants carried Christian names. Indeed, in these and other settlements, African historians have identified emerging Luso-African communities in the seventeenth century. Luso-Africans were identifiable by their trading occupation, Catholic (or Afro-Catholic) religion, European-style clothing, and “Portuguese” houses that dotted the Atlantic coast of Guinea-Bissau during the time the four men petitioned Lima’s archbishopric court. Contained within the homogenizing term of bran were captives from these long-standing European-African communities and others who were familiar with the hierarchies and practices of their Catholic neighbors in Guinea-Bissau. It is plausible that Luso-Africans, though called bran in coastal Peru, already had adapted Catholic-Iberian mores and therefore had been prepared to assert a united petition to attend religious services from their estate outside of Lima.

Using Catholic institutions, enslaved men from Guinea-Bissau articulated alternative identities to the imposed category of bran. In 1637, a notary in Trujillo recorded the sale of a property belonging to the San Nicolás de Tolentino confraternity, conducted by two officers of that lay religious institution. The two representatives were Pedro Bran and Anton Folupo, who were not identified as either enslaved or free. Unsurprisingly, the two men from the Guinea-Bissau region headed a confraternity that was known in Mexico and Peru as a common avocation for groups of negros or mulatos. By locating their actions in both Guinea-Bissau and coastal Peru, it is also plausible that Pedro Bran and Anton Folupo shared certain understandings of Catholicism. Pedro Bran could have been a Brame from south of the Casamance River, where Anton, as a Floup, also originated. There, they would have been exposed to the same missionary intentions. Viewed through a transnational paradigm, the two men did not adopt Catholicism only as slaves in the Americas. Rather, their exposure to Catholic institutions began in Guinea-Bissau and continued in coastal Peru. Additionally, Pedro Bran and Anton Folupo would have been traded through the West African ports of Cacheu and Cape Verde as well as the northern Pacific entry points of Cartagena and Panama, where they would have also been
exposed to Catholic practices and beliefs during this period. Thus their Catholic identity was not merely an opportunistic strategy employed in Peru, but an expression of an ongoing cultural process in Guinea-Bissau. Those called bran were accustomed to adapting alternative identities that, in fact, were central characteristics of their diasporic communities.

Brans also employed their adaptive strategies to develop allegiances with distinct communities of the African diaspora in coastal Peru. For instance, in 1622 Trujillo’s magistrate prosecuted a group of enslaved and free men who had gathered to drink during a restful afternoon. The incident reveals a friendship between Pedro, identified by the notary as a black of tierra bran (“bran land”), and Juan Angola, a black slave. The two disagreed and fought with an enslaved mulato who refused to gamble and drink chicha with them. Pedro of tierra bran and Juan Angola defended each other’s account of the events, suggesting that they had a more longstanding allegiance. In contrast, the victim of their assault had just arrived in Trujillo and knew few, if any, people in the tavern. Juan Angola had originated from the southwestern African coast, a region that often produced large, coherent diasporic communities in the Americas that shared a common culture. Yet Pedro from Guinea-Bissau had clearly developed a trustworthy relationship with this angola man. Together, the two enslaved men of radically distinct origins defended each other, physically when insulted by a stranger and judicially when targeted by the colonial Spanish official.

Also illustrating the adaptability of the bran diaspora was Simón Bran, a lone Guinea-Bissau man within a fugitive slave encampment dominated by Central Africans and led by two congo leaders. Captain Gabriel and Lieutenant Domingo organized members to trade with indigenous neighbors and to defend their hillside settlement. Based on strict discipline, the two congo leaders conducted “a war against the Spanish” in a clear adaptation of Central African warfare. Men from Guinea-Bissau did not share this tradition, but Simón Bran was a trustworthy member for many years. In fact, he was valuable as one of the few fugitives who knew how to use a firearm to defend the camp against intruders. Again, skills developed in Guinea-Bissau served Simón Bran well in coastal Peru. Before captivity, Simón Bran’s exposure to firearms allowed him to integrate into the most prominent slave resistance movements in the northern coastal valleys, as well as be part of a distinct diasporic community.

Men from Guinea-Bissau and Central Africa developed other such masculine allegiances in coastal Peru. In 1645, Bartolomé Angola called on his bran compañero to help him free his wife from her reluctant owner. By naming a bran slave as his “compañero,” Bartolomé Angola deemed
Those called *bran* used Catholic institutions to claim protections and communities as Christians. *Bran* men also developed close allegiances with the dominant group of Central Africans as well as the Andean subaltern majority.

Enslaved men from Guinea-Bissau clearly adapted to the circumstances of enslavement on the northern Peruvian coast. Those called *bran* used Catholic institutions to claim protections and communities as Christians. *Bran* men also developed close allegiances with the dominant group of Central Africans as well as the Andean subaltern majority. When evaluated within the context of New World slavery, Guinea-Bissau men developed critical strategies to survive the impositions of forced labor, yet they were not necessarily an “ethnic group” and they certainly were not
the majority among the enslaved. After the 1640s, legal Portuguese trade from Guinea-Bissau to Spanish America ceased. As a result, enslaved people from Guinea-Bissau often constituted less than 15 percent of the total slave populations on northern coastal estates. Hailing from the multicultural coast of Guinea-Bissau, bran men had the skills to adapt to the social structures of the Pacific Andes, where they continued to create new networks and identities.

Conclusions

By tracing how Guinea-Bissaun men articulated affinities in colonial Peru, this essay underlines the heterogeneous tendencies of peoples who conceptualized themselves outside of state, colonial, and national categories. Indeed, branches provide an early modern example of “transnational” historical subjects who, by crossing borders, created new identity boundaries in coastal Peru. By acting together, enslaved men infused some meaning into bran while seizing on the parallel identities of Catholic and coworker. Yet precolonial African and colonial Latin American collectivities and communities have very little to do with “national” identities so uncomfortably implicit in “transnational” histories. Atlantic Africans transformed the mercantile category of bran into a diasporic identity not because they were all one “nation” of people, or even a single ethnicity. Rather, those called bran originated from multiple politically decentralized societies, small principalities, and Luso-African trading towns of Guinea-Bissau. Their adaptive characteristics and disparate origins allowed them to build alliances with others from the same region as well as their neighbors and coworkers, Central Africans and indigenous Andeans.

By focusing on captive branches—those who were forcibly moved—I also disrupt an inherent assumption in transnational history that those who power the circulation were the critical subjects of historical analysis. While John Thornton and Jeffrey Bolster have demonstrated that as sailors, merchants, and servants, Africans and their descendants moved transnationally somewhat of their own volition, the majority did not choose to be sold into slavery. Once made present in a historical narrative, the massive numbers of transatlantic captives force a disruption of an additional presupposition of transnational history: that more human movement has occurred in the modern period than the past. Indeed, recent technological innovations have shifted the type of movement and, in many cases, the size of migrations—but the tools of modernity present a progression only if scholars ignore the millions dislocated by the slave trade and the agency of those sold across the Atlantic. Moreover, transatlantic captives
and enslaved people articulated diasporic collectivities based on forces that included the impact of transatlantic trade, Spanish colonial slavery, and multicultural adaptations such as those from Guinea-Bissau. Just like modern transnational subjects, enslaved men called bran seized on multiple influences to create new identities.

By showing how Brames adapted their Guinea-Bissaun identities to build alliances or fuel conflict in coastal Peru, this essay also offers a corrective to African diaspora histories. First, their allegiances demonstrate that population majorities were not critical for Atlantic Africans to express a coherent diasporic identity. Articulated identity expression was related to the kind of society from which people were displaced, since, in the case of those from Guinea-Bissau, members of village-based societies integrated themselves into Spanish America. In fact, exiled men from politically decentralized communities may have had the cultural, social, and political tools necessary to adapt to a colonial slavery environment where patronage and performance trumped law and citizenship. Second, these adaptations can reflect conflict as much as alliance. Colonial documents are limited, cryptic, and coercive, yet the categories of Spanish notaries and Jesuit missionaries can be read within the context of Atlantic African agency to understand the complex articulation of identities. This work, however, is possible only when Latin American historians fully integrate the conclusions of Africanists into the analysis of local contexts in the Americas in a transnational spirit of investigation. Guinea-Bissaun men articulated coherent identities that called on previous skills or experiences. Yet their identities relied not on a unified origin, but on common experiences that continued into their enslavement in the Americas.

Notes

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1. Archivo Departamental de La Libertad (ADL), Cabildo (Ca.), Criminales (Cr.), Legajo (Leg.) 80, Expediente (Exp.) 1400, “Expediente seguido por don
Francisco Gutierrez de Espinoza, alcalde provincial de la Santa Hermandad de Trujillo contra Gaspar Bran negro esclavo de don Albaro Cavero Tinoco y otros esclavos sobre haber dado muerte a Hernando de Atalia, negro” (1662), f. 7. Note: de Atalia is given the surname Dávila in the text of this case.


16. Frederick Bowser, The African Slave in Colonial Peru, 1524–1650 (Stan-


19. ADL, Ca., Cr., Leg. 80, Exp. 1400 (1662), f. 7v.

20. ADL, Ca., Cr., Leg. 80, Exp. 1400 (1662), ff. 15, 17.


22. ADL, Ca., Cr., Leg. 80, Exp. 1400 (1662), ff. 1v, 3.


27. Sandoval, *De instauranda*, 92. The Jesuits were slaveholders and the Cartagena house owned slaves, including those who served as translators and assistants to Sandoval. See Margaret Olsen, *Slavery and Salvation in Colonial Cartagena de Indias* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 16.

28. Sandoval, *De instauranda*, 73.

29. Sandoval, *De instauranda*, 92.

30. ADL, Corregimiento (Co.), Cr., Leg. 240, Exp. 2258, “Tambo del valle de Chicama. Auto de Juan de Grado Calderón, teniente corregidor que se haga información de la pendencia entre Hernando Cacho esclavo de Andres Careaga y Juan Bran, esclavo de Juan Hernández” (1614).


34. Sandoval, *De instauranda*, 92–93.

35. Sandoval, *De instauranda*, 92.

36. Archivo Arzobispal de Lima (AAL), Causas de negros, Leg. 2, Exp. 2, “Autos que se llevan de oficio contra Vicente Polco, por hacer trabajar a sus esclavos negros de la chacra nombrada Camarena, en días de fiesta y sin dejarlos oir misa” (1610).

37. For example, see AAL, Causas de negros, Leg. 15, Exp. 2, “(Lima) Autos de la demanda que sigue Juan Bautista de Escobar, procurador general de pobres, en nombre de Pedro Julián Romero, negro criollo, contra el padre fray Baltazar
Jara, de la Orden de la Merced; sobre que se le conceda la libertad, por ser libre de
toda sujeción desde mucho tiempo atrás, cuando fue esclavo de Pascuala Naray
india natural de la isla de la Puná” (1668).

38. For other examples of enslaved men asserting their rights as Catholics,
see Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico*, 80–81; and Javier Villa-Flores,” “To Lose
One’s Soul: Blasphemy and Slavery in New Spain, 1596–1669,” *Hispanic Ameri-

39. AAL, Causas de negros, Leg. 2, Exp. 2 (1610).

40. Brooks, *Eurofricans*, 73–74; Peter Mark, “Portuguese” Style and Luso-Afric-


42. ADL, Protocolos, Francisco Paz, Leg. 202, #84, “Venta de solar los
mayordomos el Sr. Nicolas” (1637), ff. 117v–118v.

43. Nicole von Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers: Confraternities and Social
Mobility for Afro-Mexicans* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 188.

44. Brooks, *Eurofricans*, 73; Rodney, “Portuguese Attempts at Monopoly,”
312.

45. ADL, Co., Cr., Leg. 241, Exp. 2342, “Expediente seguido por Joan Pérez
de Marquina, contra Pasqual de Mora, mulato, por haber herido a Joan Bran, su
esclavo con una tacana” (1622), ff. 2v–3.

46. Linda Heywood, “Introduction,” in *Central Africans and Cultural Trans-
formations in the American Diaspora*, ed. Linda Heywood (Cambridge: Cambridge

47. ADL, Ca., Cr., Leg. 79, Exp. 1350, “Expediente seguido por don Andrés
de Careaga, Provincial y Alcalde de la Santa Hermandad de Trujillo contra unos
negros de Francisco Benites llamados Gabriel y Domingo . . .” (1641), ff. 19, 25.

48. Rachel Sarah O’Toole, “‘In a War against the Spanish’: Andean Protec-
tion and African Resistance on the Northern Peruvian Coast,” *The Americas* 63,

49. ADL, Ca., Cr., Leg. 79, Exp. 1350 (1641), f. 20v.


51. AAL, Causas de negros, Leg. 9, Exp. 27, “Autos de la solicitud elevada
por Bartolomé Congo, esclavo de Juan Rodríguez Lozano, para que el señor
Miguel Gaspar indio, amo de Cecilia Angu, no le saque no embarque fuera de la
ciudad, y no impida que lleven vida maridable” (1645), ff. 2–2v.

52. ADL, Ca., Cr., Leg. 79, Exp. 1351, “Expediente seguido por don Andrés
de Careaga Provincial y alcalde de la Santa Hermandad de Trujillo ciudad contra
don Francisco Núñez de Balsera y Juan Quespo sobre ocultación de negros eslavos
y no entregarlos” (1641), ff. 2–2v.

53. AAL, Causas de negros, Leg. 11, Exp. 20, “(Lima) Causa de demanda
que sigue Diego Rodríguez de Guzmán, procurador general de pobres en nombre
de Lorenzo, zambo, contra el bachiller Juan de Funes, presbítero; sobre que se le
declare por libre al ser hijo natural mayor de Magdalena, india del pueblo de San
Jerónimo, provincia de Oropesa, y de Diego Bran, esclavo de Cristóbal de Ijar y
Mendoza” (1654), f. 1.

54. Bowser estimates Central Africans were 33 percent of the African popu-
Peru*, 40–43. On the northern Peruvian coast, I found a slightly higher number
of Central Africans compared to those from Upper Guinea. O’Toole, “Inventing Difference,” appendix C.


57. Matory, Black Atlantic Religion, 2, 4.