

Converging on Cannibals: Terrors of Slaving in Atlantic Africa, 1509–1670. By Jared Staller. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019. Pp. ix, 256. \$75.00 cloth, \$28.95 paper.

Scholars have long debated the origin of the Jaga. The term first appeared to refer to a group of warriors who invaded the Kongo in 1568 from the east, forcing the manikongo D. Álvaro I to abandon his capital, and seek the assistance of the Portuguese. Later on, the term was used for another band of warriors who raided the interior of Angola in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Both had a fearsome reputation, and were said to engage in anthropophagy. Joseph Miller, however, confirmed that these were separate groups, and that the “Jaga” who raided Angola were actually the Imbangala.¹

Although this distinction has been widely accepted in the scholarship, the origin of the Jaga continues to capture the attention of historians. In 1973, Miller argued that they were a fabrication, and attributed the Kongo invasion of 1568 to an internal uprising.² Soon afterwards, John Thornton countered that the Jaga were real, and that there was no reason to doubt the invasion, a view shared by Anne Hilton.³ In this volume, Jared Staller returns to the Jaga debate, exploring depictions of cannibalism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Angola, and placing them within the context of the Atlantic slave trade. Through a close reading of European texts, Staller argues that Africans and Europeans created stories about the terrors of the Jaga to facilitate slaving practices, and make sense of their world.

References to a marauding group of cannibals first appear in a 1591 report from the Italian humanist Filippo Pigafetta. Based on the testimony of the Portuguese trader Duarte Lopes, who lived in the Kongo from 1578 to 1584, it alleges that Jaga cannibals invaded through the province of Mbata, and drove the manikongo into refuge. Questioning this claim, Staller points out that Lopes never witnessed the invasion, and turns to an unpublished petition from the Jesuit Priest João Ribeiro Gaio, who lived through the violence, and identified the Jaga as having “risen up” from within the Kongo (p. 56). Staller also denies allegations of anthropophagy, arguing that people engaged in “cannibal talk” (p. 8). In Staller’s view, the manikongo deflected internal conflict onto outsiders to escape the consequences of “devouring” his people through the slave trade, while the Portuguese blamed cannibals to justify greater intervention in Kongo affairs.

After attributing the 1568 invasion to a local uprising, Staller then explores how individuals adopted Jaga tactics, including mobile raiding, “cannibal talk,” and enslaving others. When Andrew Battel lived among the Imbangala in the early seventeenth century, he alleged that they engaged in ritualized acts of violence, particularly the eating of human

¹ See Joseph C. Miller, “The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central African History,” *Journal of African History* 13, 4 (1972), 549–74; Joseph C. Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen: Early Mbundu States in Angola* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

² Joseph C. Miller, “Requiem for the Jaga,” *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 13, 49 (1973), 121–49.

³ For a response to Miller, see John K. Thornton, “A Resurrection for the Jaga,” *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 18, 69/70 (1978), 223–27; Anne Hilton, “The Jaga Reconsidered,” *Journal of African History* 22, 2 (1981), 191–202.

flesh. However, Staller argues that the Imbangala primarily used the threat of cannibalism to instill fear in their enemies, while their victims would have viewed the Imbangala as “devourers” of local communities. Staller also points out that Battel’s account was written and published by the Anglican minister, Samuel Purchas, who radically altered the narrative over time, and reframed what he heard for theological purposes.

Next, Staller looks at Queen Njinga of Matamba through the work of the Capuchin priest Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo. While living in her court from 1660 until her death in 1663, Cavazzi claimed that Njinga adopted the violent tactics of her Imbangala allies before converting to Catholicism. Again, Staller refutes allegations of anthropophagy, arguing that demonizing images of Njinga served the Portuguese in justifying their military struggle against her. By resurrecting the image of Jaga cannibals, Njinga, on the other hand, was able to overcome the political liabilities of her gender, ensure loyalty among her followers, and keep the Portuguese at bay.

Written largely for students, Staller’s book demonstrates that European sources can be used effectively to write African history. However, an additional chapter on the historiography might have been beneficial for students who are less familiar with the Jaga. Moreover, Staller urges researchers to refer to the primary text instead of relying on later translations. Yet the primary source excerpts in his appendix are largely translations of Portuguese documents, which are not included in the book. This omission makes it impossible for readers to compare his translations with the original text. Nonetheless, his work is a welcome addition to the literature. Not only does he dispel myths about the Jaga, he demonstrates that Europeans and Africans played a key role in creating them.

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A History of the Present: A Biography of Indian South Africans, 1990–2019. By Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. 391. \$20.80 cloth.

In *A History of the Present* Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, two of South Africa’s foremost scholars on the history of the South African Indian community, draw upon much of their previous work to provide an overview of the past 150 years of South African history. Despite the title of the book, implying a Foucauldian analysis of the community’s trajectory, the book instead conveys a traditional line of inquiry, broaching the fundamental question as to how a formerly disadvantaged minority racial group can fit into South Africa’s nonracial society.

The most moving chapters in the book detail the lives of Indians during the pre-1994 period, from the abject poverty of many Indian households as told through interviews with women, the humiliating treatment of Indian waiters at the white hotels and clubs, and even the discrimination against the legendary cricketer Hashim Amla. And the courage of the early politicians of the Natal Indian Congress who risked their lives along with their