



# Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery

*Jason R. Young*

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## **Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery** Jason R. Young

In *Rituals of Resistance* Jason R. Young explores the religious and ritual practices that linked West-Central Africa with the Lowcountry region of Georgia and South Carolina during the era of slavery. The choice of these two sites mirrors the historical trajectory of the transatlantic slave trade which, for centuries, transplanted Kongolese captives to the Lowcountry through the ports of Charleston and Savannah. Analyzing the historical exigencies of slavery and the slave trade that sent not only men and women but also cultural meanings, signs, symbols, and patterns across the Atlantic, Young argues that religion operated as a central form of resistance against slavery and the ideological underpinnings that supported it.

Through a series of comparative chapters on Christianity, ritual medicine, burial practices, and transmigration, Young details the manner in which Kongolese people, along with their contemporaries and their progeny who were enslaved in the Americas, utilized religious practices to resist the savagery of the slave trade and slavery itself. When slaves acted outside accepted parameters—in transmigration, spirit possession, ritual internment, and conjure—Young explains, they attacked not only the condition of being a slave, but also the systems of modernity and scientific rationalism that supported slavery. In effect, he argues, slave spirituality played a crucial role in the resocialization of the slave body and behavior away from the oppressions and brutalities of the master class. Young's work expands traditional scholarship on slavery to include both the extensive work done by African historians and current interdisciplinary debates in cultural studies, anthropology, and literature.

Drawing on a wide range of primary sources from both American and African archives, including slave autobiography, folktales, and material culture, *Rituals of Resistance* offers readers a nuanced understanding of the cultural and religious connections that linked blacks in Africa with their enslaved contemporaries in the Americas. Moreover, Young's groundbreaking work gestures toward broader themes and connections, using the case of the Kongo and the Lowcountry to articulate the development of a much larger African Atlantic space that connected peoples, cultures, languages, and lives on and across the ocean's waters.

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