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MANNING, Patrick. – *The African Diaspora : A History Through Culture*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2009, 394 p., bibl., ill.

- 1 Patrick Manning's *The African Diaspora : A History Through Culture* summarizes seven centuries of black history in the African continent and beyond. This impressive book is primarily intended for an English-speaking undergraduate audience but will also be a useful tool for professional historians at the graduate and postgraduate levels. The book contains six chapters, including an introduction discussing the idea of diaspora, thirteen maps, two graphs, and twenty-six paintings, sculptures, and photographs, mostly produced by black individuals. Relying on the idea of African diaspora all over the globe, the book is organized chronologically, and divided into five main themes : connections, survival, emancipation, citizenship, and equality. The introduction "Diaspora : Struggles and Connections", discusses the book's framework, by conceptualizing, and retracing the history of the idea of African diaspora. Manning introduces crucial questions in his book, such as the growth of world slavery in the modern era ; the social contribution of black communities ; the creation of cultural advances by black communities ; the achieving of social equality ; the reparations for past wrongs ; the end of racism, and the future of black identity.
- 2 Manning divides the diaspora into three distinct categories : the diaspora in sub-Saharan Africa, the old diaspora, and the Atlantic diaspora. Despite considering the diaspora's existence prior to the fifteenth century, Manning establishes the Atlantic slave trade as a turning point in the history of African diaspora. Chapter Two "Connections to 1600" examines the development of African societies and interactions with other societies within and outside the continent. Manning shows how the

development and the expansion of slavery and the slave trade on African soil were crucial elements in the interaction among different societies, and also determinant in establishing the place of black people in the world. Chapter Three “Survival, 1600-1800” deals with the struggle for survival in Africa and the diaspora from 1600 to 1800. Starting with enslavement of Africans on the continent, the chapter considers different aspects of African slavery systems in the Americas until the abolition of slavery that put the system into crisis. Chapter 4, “Emancipation, 1800-1900”, focuses on the struggle for emancipation during the nineteenth century and the anti-slavery movements in the Americas. The chapter follows the continuation of slavery and especially the Muslim slave trade in Africa until the beginning of the twentieth century. Chapter 5 “Citizenship, 1900-1960” surveys the struggle for citizenship and civil rights in the twentieth century until the 1960s. The last chapter “Equality, 1960-2000” discusses the quest of black people for equality (in education, political power, and political representation) in Africa, the Americas, and in other parts of the world. The book has an index, but no general bibliography. However, at the end of each chapter, there is a short list of suggested readings divided according to the various themes examined.

- 3 Written by a renowned Africanist scholar who is deeply committed to developing world history as a field of the discipline of history, *The African Diaspora : A History Through* is the only book to cover the history of the African diaspora from the period before the African dispersion through the Atlantic slave trade until the present. Indeed, despite its broad scope, Manning primarily focuses on slavery and the Atlantic slave trade. The book has numerous strengths. Manning brilliantly explains the dynamics of the Atlantic slave trade in Africa and beyond, by focusing on the human experiences that resulted from war, captivity, deportation and forced labor. He also details the dynamics of adaptation, and resistance in Africa, and the Americas. Despite referring to few select historical works on Brazil in the English language, Manning still covers the most important aspects of the African-Brazilian experience during the period of the Atlantic slave trade. Of particular interest and beautifully written is the overview of the Palmares quilombo that opens the third chapter. Focusing on human experiences, and material and immaterial culture rather than on economic factors, Manning has a fresh approach which enables an often rich analysis that sheds light on the complexity of African migrations and exchanges with other continents and human groups. Among other successful features of the book, the reader is able to follow the historical circulation of artifacts and musical instruments, such as xylophones, and drums in Africa, and from there outside the continent. It is also important to notice that in the various chapters Manning gives great attention to the experience of African diaspora women. Although the short descriptions that cry for more detailed comment, the images illustrating the book are impressive.
- 4 Despite these numerous strengths there are some weaknesses worth mentioning. If the introduction looks in detail at the notion of culture and its various nuances, the idea of African diaspora is not deeply discussed. Manning seems to limit the scholarship on African diaspora to a very limited number of works produced by scholars such as Paul Gilroy and John K. Thornton- who essentially study the Atlantic world- as well as Molefi Kete Asante. Indeed, the focus of the book on the different experiences of peoples of African descent requires a much richer discussion of the history and construction of notions such as African diaspora and black identity. These concepts are not problematized in the introduction or in the various chapters. The suggested

bibliographies at the end of each chapter very often overlook recent scholarship. Except for Cuba, Manning mentions few works focusing on the experience of Africans and their descendants in Spanish America, for example. The bibliography on racism and the demands for civil rights in countries such as Brazil, and the discussion about the claims of people of African descent in European countries, such as France and Britain are also limited.

- 5 Despite these shortcomings, Manning is successful in bringing African culture to the center of the discussion about the African diaspora, while avoiding the trap of Afrocentrism that usually characterizes this kind of work. Manning must also be praised for according Brazil a place of choice in the book, Brazil, the country that received the largest number of Africans during the period of the Atlantic slave trade, and which today has the largest population of people of African descent outside Nigeria. For all these reasons, *The African Diaspora : A History Through Culture* will be much appreciated by instructors, graduate and undergraduate students studying African diaspora.