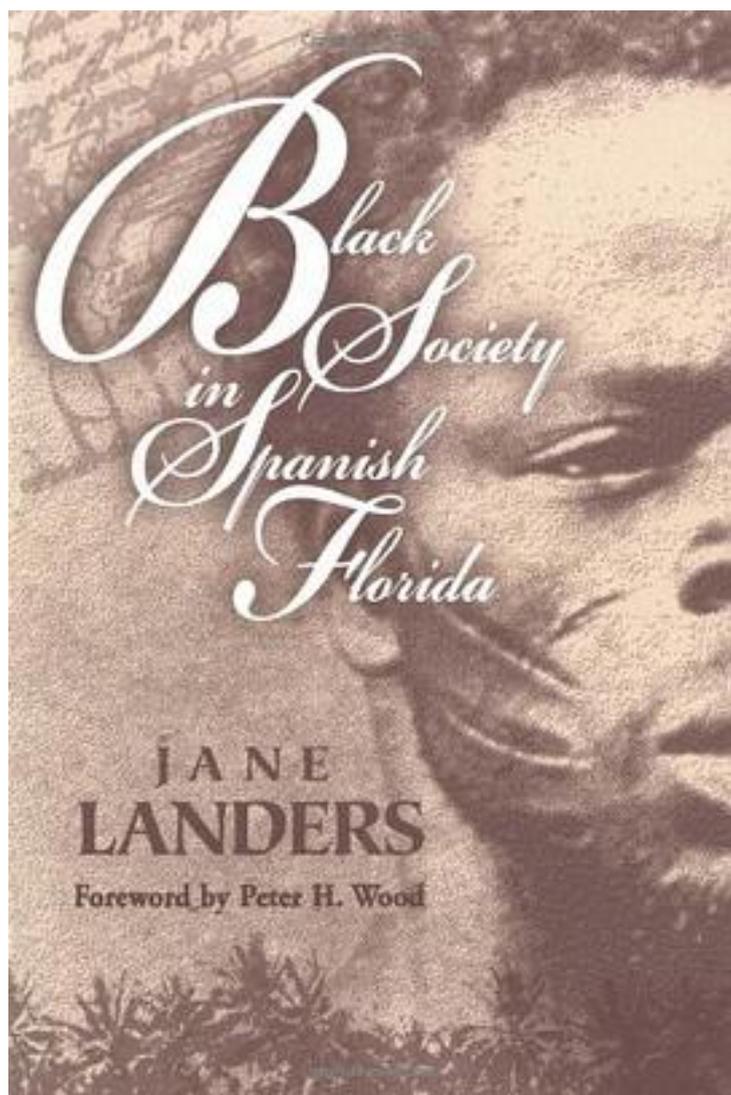


Black Society in Spanish Florida



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The first extensive study of the African American community under colonial Spanish rule, "Black Society in Spanish Florida" provides a vital counterweight to the better-known dynamics of the Anglo slave South. Jane Landers draws on a wealth of untapped primary sources, opening a new vista on the black experience in America and enriching our understanding of the powerful links between race relations and cultural custom. Blacks under Spanish rule in Florida lived not in cotton rows or tobacco patches but in a more complex and international world that linked the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and a powerful and diverse Indian hinterland. Here the Spanish Crown afforded sanctuary to runaway slaves, making the territory a prime destination for blacks fleeing Anglo plantations, while Castilian law (grounded in Roman law) provided many avenues out of slavery, which it deemed an unnatural condition. European-African unions were common and accepted in Florida, with families of African descent developing important community connections through marriage, concubinage, and godparent choices. Assisted by the corporate nature of Spanish society, Spain's medieval tradition of integration and assimilation, and the almost constant threat to Spanish sovereignty in Florida, multiple generations of Africans leveraged linguistic, military, diplomatic, and artisanal skills into citizenship and property rights. In this remote Spanish outpost, where they could become homesteaders, property owners, and entrepreneurs, blacks enjoyed more legal and social protection than they would again until almost two hundred years of Anglo history had passed.

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