

Black Tudors: The Untold Story

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A Book of the Year for the Evening Standard and the Observer A black porter publicly whips a white Englishman in the hall of a Gloucestershire manor house. A Moroccan woman is baptised in a London church. Henry VIII dispatches a Mauritanian diver to salvage lost treasures from the Mary Rose. From long-forgotten records emerge the remarkable stories of Africans who lived free in Tudor England... They were present at some of the defining moments of the age. They were christened, married and buried by the Church. They were paid wages like any other Tudors. The untold stories of the Black Tudors, dazzlingly brought to life by Kaufmann, will transform how we see this most intriguing period of history. Miranda Kaufmann is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of London's Institute of Commonwealth Studies. She has appeared on Sky News, the BBC and Al Jazeera, and she's written for The Times, Guardian and BBC History Magazine. She lives in Pontblyddyn in North Wales. Black Tudors, by Miranda Kaufmann (Oneworld). Seeking to overturn the common assumption that there were no black communities in Britain before Caribbean immigration after the Second World War, Kaufmann presents characters such as John Blanke, a trumpeter at the court of Henry VIII, and Reasonable Blackman, a London silk weaver who lost two children in the plague of 1592. Many slaves fled Spanish or Portuguese territories in the New World, boarding ships bound for England after hearing rumors that all men there were free; one helped Sir Francis Drake recruit Africans for attacks on the Spanish. Kaufmann speculates about cultural aspects: three decades after Drake's ship abandoned a pregnant African woman on an island, Shakespeare created Sycorax, the mother of Caliban. (The New Yorker)

"Splendid...an excellent study of this hitherto silent minority." (- Sunday Times (UK))

"The very concept of black Tudors may sound unlikely, but in this highly readable yet intensively researched book, Kaufmann, senior research fellow at the University of London's Institute of Commonwealth Studies, makes clear that people of African descent were residing in England centuries before the postwar Windrush generation and were not necessarily enslaved. By examining in detail the lives of 10 previously obscure men and women, Kaufmann depicts the great diversity of their experiences in 16th- and early-17th-century England. John Blanke, a trumpeter to Henry VII, lived at the Tudor court and earned twice the annual wage of a white agricultural laborer, while mariner John Anthony's travels took him to Virginia just as the first enslaved Africans arrived in the colony. The exotically named Cattelena of Almondsbury was an unmarried African woman who managed to make a life for herself in rural Gloucestershire. Kaufman also persuasively argues that the enslavement of Africans emerged as a response to the socioeconomic conditions of England's Caribbean and North American colonies, rather than as an inevitable result of a supposedly inherent racism within early modern English culture. Kaufmann's crucial contention, in conjunction with her lively prose and fascinating microhistories, should draw some well-deserved attention." (- Publishers Weekly, Starred Review)

"[The] audience will find itself in the hands of a historian of excellent investigative skills, who shows attention to detail, uses evidence with appropriate caution, and has the sensibility of a scholar." (- Times Literary Supplement)

"Miranda Kaufmann's intricately researched and brilliantly written new book pieces together fragments from the archives to reconstruct the lives of ten black Tudors. And what lives they are: a sailor, a silk weaver and a salvage diver who swam to the wreck of the Mary Rose. Then there is John Blanke, a trumpeter to the Tudor court who was witness to the coronation of Henry VIII. Through these biographies Kaufmann paints a wider panorama of a Renaissance England that was globally aware and in contact with Africa and her people. This is history on the cutting edge of archival research, but accessibly written and alive with human details and warmth. Black Tudors is a critical book that allows us to better understand an era of our national past that fascinates us like no other." (-David Olusoga, author of Black and British: A Forgotten History)

"Tudor England's legendary history is a rich locus in the popular imagination. Full of pageantry and larger-than-life personalities, the period is a favorite of the Anglophilic world. But what if that seemingly monolithic world was also black? Miranda Kaufmann's THE BLACK TUDORS: The Untold Story combs historical records and reveals that, in fact, it was. Kaufmann looks at surviving documentation and reveals the African men and women who were present in England as full members of society, filling a variety of roles, collecting wages, and functioning autonomously. Over ten chapters, Kaufmann's vignettes interpret individuals' lives within their historical moments. Yet, the historical record is not limited to Kaufmann's ten; appearing alongside the chapters' main characters are others whose presence is no less fascinating for only appearing scantily in historical records. For a modern audience acculturated to thinking of Africans in the West as either enslaved or altogether absent, the picture that emerges challenges the centrality of whiteness and slavery in the Tudor period. Kaufmann takes pains to situate England on the national stage as a minor nation emerging from civil war and fighting to be acknowledged at the international level. Tudors were fascinated with North Africa and heavily invested in trading alliances and cultural exchange with African sovereigns, she reveals. Although hierarchical and heavily dependent on servants, Tudor society didn't have slaves, a precedent so well known that slaves of several nations schemed their way to England in a bid for freedom. Whether with Edward Swarthy, a black porter, delivering Tudor justice when he whips a white servant, or the suggestion that Anne Cobbe, the "tawny moor with soft skin," might have been a literary inspiration, Kaufmann's THE BLACK TUDORS concentrates on individuals who are enmeshed in the historical narrative and effectively places them right back where they've always belonged." (- Foreword Reviews)

"A thought-provoking account of 10 remarkable people, and a valuable corrective to some unthinking assumptions about both Tudor society and the role of racial minorities in English history." -- Times Higher Education (UK)

"Who knew that a diver from West Africa worked to salvage Henry VIII's flagship the Mary Rose? Based on a wealth of original research, Miranda Kaufmann's Black Tudors restores the black presence to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England in all its lively detail. Africans lived and worked not as slaves but as independent agents, from mariners to silk weavers, women and men, prince and prostitute. Black Tudors challenges assumptions about ethnic identity and racism in Tudor England. It will be required reading for anyone interested in new directions in Tudor history." (- Dr John Cooper, Senior Lecturer in History,

University of York, and author of *The Queen's Agent*)

"The industry and skill with which Miranda Kaufmann has hunted for these sources and teased out their meanings are exemplary... Kaufmann's greatest skill is her ability to fill in the background on every topic that arises, from piracy to silk-weaving to brothels to Anglo-Moroccan diplomacy...In the hands of a lesser writer this would be mere padding with secondary material, but she investigates every subject in the same depth... a fascinating book, which brings a sadly neglected part of our history to life, and grinds no ideological axes in the process. Five Stars." (-- Sunday Times (UK))

"Miranda Kaufman's *The Black Tudors*, grounded in extensive and impeccable archival research, presents an evocative and convincing picture of the lives of real men and women of black African descent in Renaissance England. Concentrating on ten strikingly varied individuals - from a royal trumpeter to a silk-weaver - Kaufman persuasively argues that Africans who came to England this era were able to find a meaningful place in English society, not only in London, Southampton, and Bristol but also in rural areas. Drawing on parish records, legal cases, letters, visual images, and her broad knowledge of Tudor-era economic history and global mercantile expansion, Kaufman dispels the myth that the black Britons of this era existed only at the very upper or lower margins of society. Each of her ten individuals, who are cleverly linked to the records of many others, is vividly brought to life through a discussion of their goals, their labor, and their vicissitudes, and set within the complex social, political, economic, and religious history of the period. The book is a brilliant example of how to use the most detailed kind of archival data to present a broadly accessible picture of the past, and one which has enormous relevance to the present controversies about immigration and diversity." (-Paul Kaplan, Professor of Art History at SUNY, Purchase)

Other Books

Reel Resistance, Weaving together critical analysis and a filmic conversation, this book journeys through the multiple layers of Cameroonian filmmaker Jean-Marie Teno's thematically and aesthetically challenging body of work, framed here as a form of decolonial cinematic resistance.

Black Tudors: The Untold Story . London: Oneworld Publications, 2017. Kisukidi, Nadia Yala.'Laetitia Africana - philosophie, décolonisation et mélancolie', *Ecrire l'Afrique monde*, ed. Achille Mbembe & Felwine Sarr."