

# Changó, Decolonizing the African Diaspora (Decolonizing the Classics)

*by*

Manuel Zapata Olivella

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## Synopsis

The crowning achievement of Afro-Colombian author Manuel Zapata Olivella, *Changó, Decolonizing the African Diaspora* depicts the African American experience from a perspective of gods who stand over the world and watch. The centennial anniversary release of this groundbreaking postcolonial text remains a passionate tour de force to make sense of our past, present, and future. A new introduction by Professor William Luis positions the book in contemporary politics and reasserts this book's importance in Afro-Spanish American literature. Ranging from Brazil to New England but centered in the Caribbean, where countless enslaved people once arrived from West Africa, this book recounts scenes from four centuries of involuntary displacement and servitude of the muntu, the people. Through the voices of Benkos Biojo in Colombia, Henri Christophe in Haiti, Simon Bolivar in Venezuela, Jose Maria Morelos in Mexico, the Aleijadinho in Brazil, or Malcolm X in Harlem, Zapata Olivella conveys, in luminous verse and prose, the breadth of heroism, betrayal, and suffering common to the history of people of African descent in the Western hemisphere. Readers and critics of postcolonial literatures will relish the opportunity to experience Zapata Olivella's masterpiece in English; students of world cultures will appreciate this extraordinary tapestry, woven from equal strands of myth and history.

## Sort review

Superbly translated, Manuel Zapata Olivella's Afro-centric magnum opus begins with the origins of African spiritual culture and tells of the African diaspora in all of the Americas. This magnificent novel is not only about slavery but also about the difficult yet exemplary liberation of the black race. Michael Palencia-Roth, Trowbridge Scholar and Emeritus Professor of Comparative and World Literature, The University of Illinois, Past President, International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations--This text refers to the paperback edition. About the Author Manuel Zapata Olivella (1920–2004), hailed by critic Richard Jackson as “the dean of Black Hispanic writers,” was the author of more than a dozen novels as well as numerous essays and short stories, including *A Saint Is Born in Chimá* and *Chambacú*, *Black Slum*. One of six children in a Colombian literary family, Zapata Olivella initially pursued medical training at the National University of Bogotá but interrupted his studies to write and travel. From the 1940s through the 1990s he explored not only the folklore and ethnography of his native country but an expansive range of international social and political themes. His work garnered prestigious literary awards worldwide, including the *Símon Bolívar Prize*, the *Casa de las Américas Prize*, and the *Parisian Human Rights Prize*. Jonathan Tittler is Professor Emeritus of Hispanic Studies at Rutgers University–Camden. He holds a Ph.D. in Hispanic literature from Cornell University and is the author of four books, including the political-literary biography *El verbo y el mando: Vida y milagros de Gustavo Alvarez Gardeazábal* (*Language and Power: The Life and Times of Gustavo Alvarez Gardeazábal*) and numerous articles in the field of contemporary Latin

American literature. He has previously translated two Afro-Hispanic novels into English: Juyungo, by Adalberto Ortiz, and Chambacú, BlackSlum, also by Zapata Olivella. A previous edition of this translation (Chango, the Biggest Badass, Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2010) was awarded Honorable Mention in the 2011 competition for the MLA Lois Roth Prize for Translation of a Literary Work.--This text refers to the paperback edition.

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