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978-1-316-62895-9 — The Atlantic Slave Trade from West Central Africa, 1780–1867
Daniel B. Domingues da Silva
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The Atlantic Slave Trade from West Central Africa, 1780–1867

The Atlantic Slave Trade from West Central Africa, 1780–1867 traces the inland origins of slaves leaving West Central Africa at the peak period of the transatlantic slave trade. Drawing on archival sources from Angola, Brazil, England, and Portugal, Daniel B. Domingues da Silva explores not only the origins of the slaves forced into the trade, but also the commodities for which they were exchanged and their methods of enslavement. Further, the book examines the evolution of the trade over time, its organization, the demographic profile of the population transported, the enslavers' motivations to participate in this activity, and the Africans' experience of enslavement and transportation across the Atlantic. Domingues da Silva also offers a detailed "geography of enslavement," including information on the homelands of the enslaved Africans and their destination in the Americas.

Daniel B. Domingues da Silva is Assistant Professor of African history at Rice University.

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The Atlantic Slave Trade from West Central Africa, 1780–1867

DANIEL B. DOMINGUES DA SILVA

Rice University



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To Livia

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Preface

The Atlantic Slave Trade from West Central Africa, 1780–1867 traces for the first time the origins of slaves leaving West Central Africa at the peak period of the transatlantic slave trade. West Central Africa was one of the principal sources of slaves for the Americas. During the nineteenth century, the importance of the region as a supplier of slaves increased as a result of the suppression of the trade north of the Equator. Although some nations retreated from the business early in that century, others remained active, expanding their activities along the coast of West Central Africa. Some scholars of the slave trade claim that a quest for political power motivated Africans to sell one another into the transatlantic commerce as prisoners of war. They argue that the expansion of the slave trade from West Central Africa in the nineteenth century increased the incidence of warfare in the region, which in turn spread the enslaving frontiers further into the region's interior. However, as this book demonstrates, the rate of slaves leaving from West Central Africa remained relatively constant from the late eighteenth until the mid-nineteenth century, with slaves originating from places much closer to the coast than previously thought. Moreover, the book shows that cultural and economic motivations were also important factors shaping the participation of Africans in the slave trade. More Africans engaged in this activity than a handful of rulers and warlords, but their participation depended significantly on the ability of merchants in Europe and the Americas to deliver the goods required for exchanging for slaves.

Daniel B. Domingues da Silva is Assistant Professor of African history at Rice University. He received his Ph. D. in history in 2011 from Emory University, Atlanta, and previously taught at the University of Missouri,

Columbia. His research focuses on the slave trade between West Central Africa and the Americas, especially Brazil and Cuba. It received funding from several institutions, including the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and the Luso-American Foundation for the Development of Portugal. Domingues is co-manager of “Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database” and his research is available to the public in peer-reviewed journals in English and Portuguese, such as *Journal of African History*, *Slavery and Abolition*, and *Revista Afro-Ásia*.

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This book grew out of my Ph.D. dissertation, “Crossroads: Slave Frontiers of Angola, c.1780–1867,” developed with support from the Andrew W. Mellon, the Calouste Gulbenkian, and the Luso-American foundations, and presented at Emory University, Atlanta, in 2011. The book could not have been possible without the generous support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Research Council of the University of Missouri, where I held an appointment as assistant professor of African history until recently. I am also in debt to several colleagues, friends, and family members. I wish to thank first my mentors, David Eltis, Kristin Mann, and Clifton Crais, and my colleagues from the University of Missouri History Department, specially Mark Smith and Robert Smale, who read the manuscript, offered suggestions for improvement, and released me from part of my teaching obligations to revise the manuscript in 2015. My colleagues from the Black Studies Department, Afro-Romance Institute, and the newly established African Interdisciplinary Studies Hub, all at the University of Missouri, created an engaging environment for intellectual exchange.

The work of historians is often a lonely enterprise, but I am fortunate to have counted on the support and encouragement of many friends and colleagues. John Thornton, Walter Hawthorne, and Douglas Chambers read earlier drafts of the manuscript and offered important criticisms. Joseph Miller, Roquinaldo Ferreira, Mariana Cândido, Jelmer Vos, Stacey Sommerdyk, and Vanessa Oliveira lent their expertise in the field of West Central African history. Alex Borucki, Alexandre Veira Ribeiro, Ana Lúcia Araújo, Carmen Alveal, Kalle Kananoja, Paulo Teodoro de Matos, and Warren Whatley helped me test and publicize some of my

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I have been living abroad for a little over a decade now and, since my research is largely based outside my country of origin, I have had few opportunities to return and see my family. Although my life as a migrant is of course incomparable to that of thousands of Africans forced into the transatlantic slave trade, it allowed me to reflect on their experiences and on the lives of the people that they left behind. I am now acutely aware of not only the challenges of moving into a different culture, but also of the impact that the absence of a loved one has on those who stayed home. I am thus grateful for my family's understanding and support throughout these years. More difficult is to seek the understanding and thank the support of the person who followed me during this period with no guarantee of success. Livia, you left your family behind and abandoned an otherwise successful career to accompany me in this adventure. I am afraid I will never be able to repay you, but I will remain forever grateful for your sacrifice. This, my first book, is dedicated to you.

Abbreviations

AHI	Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
AHNA	Arquivo Histórico Nacional de Angola, Luanda, Angola
AHU	Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, Portugal
ANRJ	Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
BNA	British National Archives, Kew, England
BNRJ	Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Cod.	Codice
CU	Conselho Ultramarino, Lisbon, Portugal
Doc.	Document
FO	Foreign Office Series, London, England
SEMU	Secretaria de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar, Lisbon, Portugal