

AFRICAN
STUDIES

FROM AFRICA TO BRAZIL

Culture, Identity, and
an Atlantic Slave Trade,
1600–1830



WALTER HAWTHORNE

From Africa to Brazil

*Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic
Slave Trade, 1600–1830*

WALTER HAWTHORNE

Michigan State University



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Abbreviations Used in Notes

AAM	Arquivo da Arquidiocese do Maranhão (São Luís)
AHMF	Arquivo Histórico do Ministério das Finanças
AHU	Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (Lisbon)
AJ	Arquivo Judiciário
ANRJ	Arquivo Nacional do Rio de Janeiro
ANTT	Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Lisbon)
APEM	Arquivo Publico do Estado do Maranhão (São Luís)
BNA	British National Archive (Kew)
BNP	Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (Lisbon)
CGPM	Companhia Geral do Grão-Pará e Maranhão
CO	Colonial Office
MISD	Maranhão Inventories Slave Database
TJEM	Tribunal de Justiça do Estado do Maranhão (São Luís)
TSTD	<i>The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM</i>
TSTD ₂	Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database

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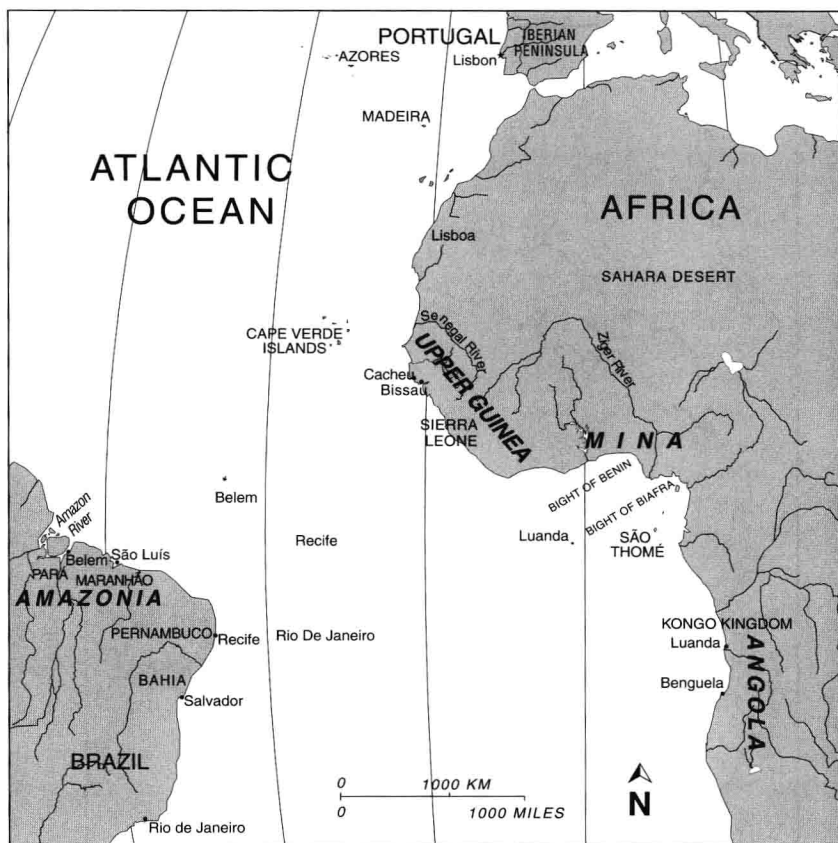
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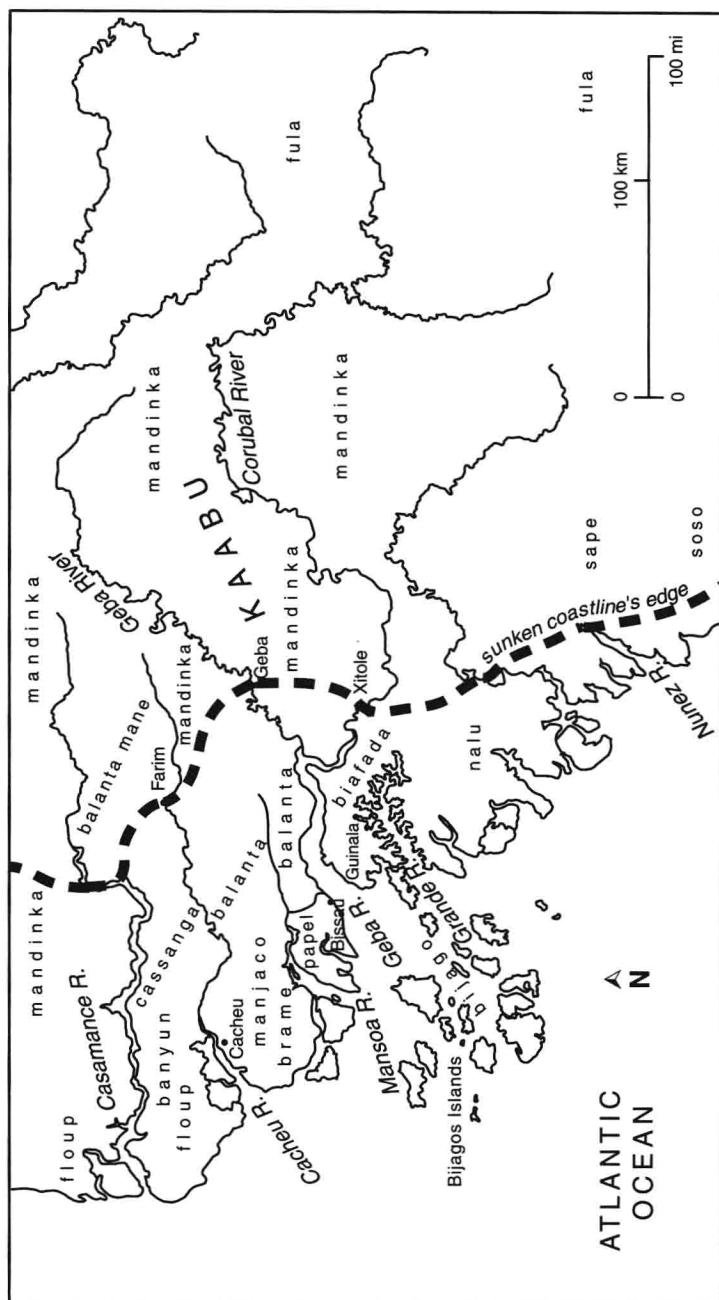
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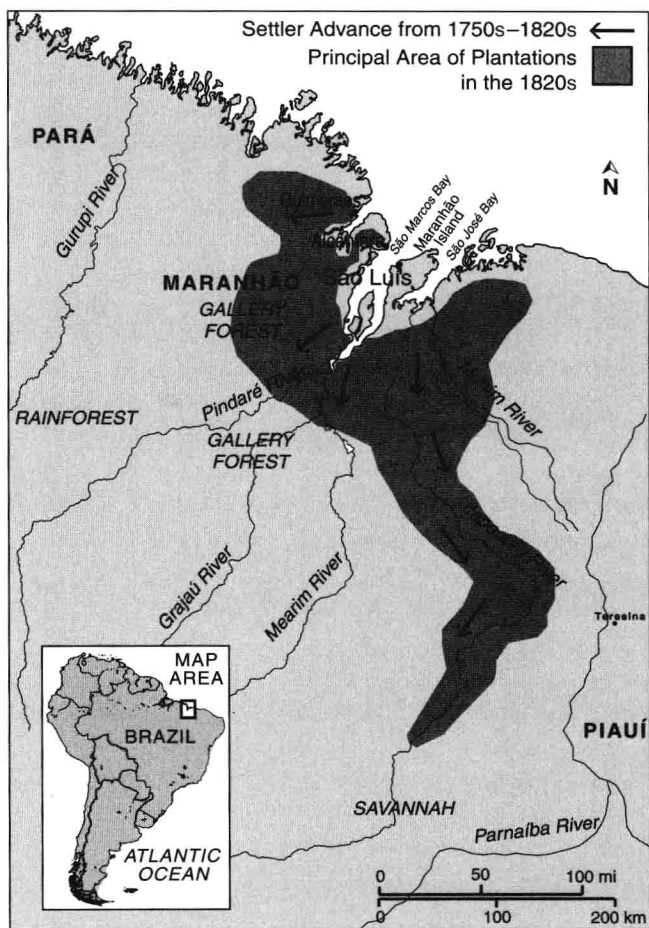
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MAP O.I. The Atlantic, Upper Guinea, and Amazonia.
Courtesy of Jackie Hawthorne.



MAP 0.2. Upper Guinea Ethnic Groups around Bissau and Cacheu.



MAP 0.3. Amazonia, 1750s-1820s.
Courtesy of Jackie Hawthorne.

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Introduction

In 1492, the Early Modern Atlantic was born. After that date, sailing ships connected distant parts of the Atlantic in new and dynamic ways. As people, trade goods, and ideas flowed across the ocean, African, American, and European cultures and economies were radically reshaped. For several hundred years, American Indians would die in tremendous numbers from diseases that white explorers and settlers introduced and wars they waged; Europeans would colonize much of the Americas and establish plantations that produced exports for Old World metropolises; and blacks would labor on those plantations as Europe shipped what ultimately was about 12.5 million enslaved Africans from coastal ports in the largest forced migration in human history. To illustrate the magnitude of this migration, before 1820 about three-quarters of all people arriving in the Americas hailed from Africa.¹

It is only over the past several decades that studies using the Early Modern Atlantic as a unit of analysis have become popular. Many scholars who examine Atlantic history see Europeans as dominating Atlantic interactions and shaping transformations. They equate the Atlantic basin with European civilization. These scholars marginalize Africa and reduce Africans' contributions to the construction of an Atlantic World to merely labor alone.² However, historians who reject Eurocentric approaches to

¹ David Eltis and David Richardson, "A New Assessment of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," in *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, eds. David Eltis and David Richardson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 1–2, 37.

² See, especially, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, "Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?" *American Historical Review* 112 (2007), 794; Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *American Historical Review* 111 (2006), 741–57.

the past see considerable African and Afro-American agency. That is, they view Africans and their descendants in the Americas as controlling some of the processes that led to the creation and metamorphosis of an Atlantic economic and cultural system. Following John Thornton, “Africans were active participants in the Atlantic world, both in African trade with Europe ... and as slaves in the New World.”³

This book focuses squarely on people from Africa. In simplest terms, it traces the flow of enslaved Africans from identifiable points in Upper Guinea (what the Portuguese came to call *Guiné*) to plantations in Amazonia, Brazil. It is concerned with the period from about Portugal’s establishment of a colony in Amazonia in 1621 to the legal abolition of the oceanic slave trade into the region in 1830. I am particularly interested in how Upper Guineans effected change in the Atlantic economic and cultural network that connected the Upper Guinea ports of Bissau and Cacheu – cities in the present-day country of Guinea-Bissau – to the ports of São Luís and Belém in the captaincies of Maranhão and Pará, which together comprised Amazonia. In the period covered by this book, captains of sailing ships embarked slaves at Bissau and Cacheu and disembarked iron, cloth, beads, guns, gunpowder, rum, tobacco, and other trade items. The vessels were mostly Portuguese-owned. The enslaved were shipped, for the most part, to Amazonia.

The slave trade from Upper Guinea to Amazonia reached its zenith in the second half of the eighteenth century. Before then, Amazonia was an underdeveloped backwater of the Portuguese empire. Few whites were settled there, and over a period of about 150 years, fewer than 3,500 African slaves (mostly Upper Guineans) had been shipped there. In 1755, Portugal sought to stimulate Amazonia’s economy by encouraging increased levels of African slave imports. For this, the crown granted a monopoly on shipments from Bissau and Cacheu and into São Luís and Belém to a joint stock company called the Company of Grão Pará and Maranhão (*Companhia Geral do Grão Pará e Maranhão*, or CGPM). High volumes of trade from Bissau and Cacheu to São Luís resulted in an Upper Guinean majority emerging in colonial-controlled rural areas of Maranhão. Parts of Pará, too, saw the emergence of an Upper Guinean majority. However, fewer slaves went to Pará than went to Maranhão (and many who went to Pará were traded elsewhere), so the bulk of my analysis focuses on Maranhão. Trade from Bissau and Cacheu declined

³ John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1680* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 6–7.

sharply after 1815 when Portugal, under pressure from Britain, forbade its nationals from engaging in the transoceanic shipment of slaves north of the equator. From 1755 to 1815, about 70,000 Upper Guineans entered Amazonia, and most of those entered before 1800.

With those 70,000 and the hundreds of thousands more in the communities from which they were taken as its subject, this study makes several historiographical contributions. First, this is one of a handful of accounts of Upper Guineans in diaspora and is the only book-length examination of African slavery in Maranhão before the early nineteenth century. Second, this is one of few studies to identify with precision from where members of a large diaspora in the Americas hailed in Africa. Finally, this book proposes new directions for scholarship focused on how immigrant groups who crossed the Atlantic in the Early Modern period created new or re-created old cultures in the Americas. I will expand on each of those points.

AN UNDERSTUDIED DIASPORA IN AN UNDERSTUDIED PART OF BRAZIL

This book fills large voids in scholarship about slavery and the Atlantic slave trade. It is one of few works to examine the cultural linkages between Upper Guinea and its diaspora in the Americas. Considerable research has traced flows of captives from West Central Africa (especially the Kongo and Angola areas) and the Bights of Benin and Biafra (what the Portuguese called Mina). Scholars have been especially concerned with the degree to which slaves from West Central Africa and Mina re-created in the Americas aspects of the cultures from which they came.⁴ However,

⁴ On West Central Africans: Linda M. Heywood, ed., *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundations of the Americas, 1585–1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441–1770* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Roquinaldo Ferreira, “Atlantic Microhistories: Slaving, Mobility, and Personal Ties in the Black Atlantic World (Angola and Brazil),” in *Cultures of the Lusophone Black Atlantic*, eds. Nancy Naro, Roger Sansi and David Treece (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 99–128; On Minas: Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Douglas B. Chambers, *Murder at Montpelier: Igbo Africans in Virginia* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2005); York/UNESCO Nigerian Hinterland Project, <http://www.yorku.ca/nhp/areas/nhp.htm>.

only a handful of studies focused on the transfer of rice-growing techniques and one looking at the transfer of an architectural aesthetic have considered Upper Guinean cultural contributions anywhere in the New World.⁵ Several notable studies explore the economic links between Upper Guinea and Amazonia in the era of the CGPM. But beyond speculating about the ethnic groups to which slaves arriving in Amazonia belonged, no single work pays attention to the cultural implications of the trade.⁶

⁵ Peter Mark, *"Portuguese" Style and Luso-African Identity: Precolonial Senegambia, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 59–80; Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Judith A. Carney, "'With Grains in Her Hair': Rice in Colonial Brazil," *Slavery and Abolition* 25, 1 (2004), 1–27; Judith A. Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 2010); Edda L. Fields-Black, *Deep Roots: Rice Farmers in West Africa and the African Diaspora*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); David Eltis, Philip Morgan, and David Richardson, "Agency and the Diaspora in Atlantic History: Reassessing the African Contribution to Rice Cultivation in the Americas," *American Historical Review* 112, 5 (2007), 1329–58; Reinaldo dos Santos Barroso Júnior, "Nas rotas do atlântico equatorial: tráfico de escravos rizicultores da Alta-Guiné para o Maranhão (1770–1800)," (Ph.D. thesis: Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2009); S. Max Edelson, "Beyond 'Black Rice': Reconstructing Material and Cultural Contexts for Early Plantation Agriculture," *American Historical Review* 115, 1 (2010), 125–35; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, "Africa and Africans in the African Diaspora: The Uses of Relational Databases," *American Historical Review*, 115, 1 (2010), 136–50; Walter Hawthorne, "From 'Black Rice' to 'Brown': Rethinking the History of Risiculture in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Atlantic," *American Historical Review*, 115, 1 (2010), 151–64; David Eltis, Phip Morgan, and David Richardson, "Black, Brown, or White? Color-Coding American Commercial Rice Cultivation with Slave Labor," *American Historical Review* 115, 1 (2010), 164–71. Also, Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformations of African Identities in the Colonial Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

⁶ António Carreira, *As companhias pombalinas de navegação, comércio e tráfico de escravos entre a costa africana e o nordeste brasileiro* (Bissau: Centro de Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa, 1969); Manuel Nunes Dias, *Fomento e mercantilismo: A Companhia Geral do Grão Pará e Maranhão (1755–1778)* (São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo, 1971); Ilídio Baleno, "Reconversão do comércio externo em tempo de crise e o impacto da Companhia do Grão-Pará e Maranhão," in *História geral de Cabo Verde*, ed. Maria Emília Madeira Santos (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos de História e Cartografia Antiga, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 2002), III: 157–233; Daniel B. Domingues da Silva, "The Slave Trade to Maranhão, 1680–1846: Volumes, Routes and Organization," *Slavery and Abolition* 29, 4 (2008), 477–501; Rafael Chambouleyron, "Escravos do Atlântico equatorial: Tráfico negroiro para o estado do Maranhão e Pará," *Revista brasileira de história* 26, 52 (2006), 79–114; Jeronimo de Viveiros, *História do comércio do Maranhã (1755–1778)* (Belém: Universidade Federal do Pará, 1963); Benedito Carlos Costa Barbosa, "Em outras margens do Atlântico: Tráfico negroiro para o Estado do Maranhão e Grão-Pará (1707–1750)" (Ph.D. thesis, Universidade Federal do Pará, 2009).