

would not only improve American farming but also would also renew friendly ties with the English nation.

By 1793, the difficulties of implementing the New Husbandry with enslaved laborers, argues Ragsdale, inspired Washington to attempt a final transformation of Mount Vernon: leasing his farms to knowledgeable European tenants who would continue his innovative practices. One motive behind this scheme, Washington privately wrote, was “to liberate a certain species of property which I possess” (p. 239). Despite assistance from British agriculturalists, Washington failed to locate suitable tenants to lease his Mount Vernon farms. This circumstance convinced Washington to postpone the emancipation of his enslaved people until after his and his wife’s death.

Meticulously researched and well-written, *Washington at the Plow* sheds considerable new light on the political/economic thought of the first president—a much more sophisticated, intellectual, and complex man than most people realize: he possessed an enlightened vision in which the U.S. engaged in international free trade and exchanged agricultural information for the betterment of mankind. Domestically, he advocated the dissemination of best practices to common farmers by disinterested elite agriculturalists like himself. On a personal level, Washington exhibited an obsessive concern for his reputation. Wishing to separate himself from the taint of slavery, he freed his enslaved people in his last will and testament after the failure of plans to emancipate them during his lifetime. He micromanaged his farm and utilized science, experiments, record keeping, and managers to maximize efficiency and profits. As one contemporary noted, Washington’s “greatest pride . . . is to be thought the first farmer in America” (p. 172).

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Slave Trade and Abolition: Gender, Commerce, and Economic Transition in Luanda. By Vanessa S. Oliveira. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2021. xii + 173 pp., figures, maps, tables, glossary, index. Cloth, \$75.95. ISBN: 978-0-299-32580-0.

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Luanda, in present-day Angola, was probably the largest slaving center in history. Estimates indicate that as many as 2.8 million enslaved Africans were transported across the Atlantic from Luanda alone between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, about 22 percent of the total number of captives embarked from Africa to the New World. However, compared to other ports, historians have dedicated remarkably little attention to Luanda. Vanessa Oliveira's book is about to change that situation. It provides an analysis of the slave trade from Luanda during the nineteenth century, when it evolved from a legal to an illegal activity, suppressed not until the late 1860s.

The book's main point is not exactly new. It argues that the merchant community of Luanda adjusted to the commercial changes brought by the traffic's suppression and shifted to an economy geared mainly to the export of natural produce. The book's innovative strength lies in the approach to that issue. It views commerce in Luanda as a gendered activity. As a consequence, it pays particular attention to the role women merchants played in that transition. Although fewer in numbers, and not as wealthy as their male counterparts, businesswomen were quite influential in Luanda, especially those born from European and African unions. These women often acted as cultural brokers, facilitating transactions between traders of indigenous and foreign backgrounds. When they managed to accumulate resources, they protected their wealth through the registration of dowries. Additionally, they multiplied their assets by marrying influential partners and diversifying their investment portfolios. These strategies allowed them to overcome challenges unknown to their male counterparts. For example, women were ineligible to hold office in the government or to apply to honorific titles, such as the Order of Christ, which provided men with clout, prestige, and commercial advantages. However, women's business tactics allowed them to survive the suppression of traffic and to move to a new economic model centered on the growth and export of natural produce.

Researchers in the field may be familiar with many of the sources cited in the book, but the publication also brings new or rarely accessed archival materials. Sources from the Biblioteca Municipal de Luanda (Municipal Library of Luanda) allow us to trace the investments businesswomen made in the local economy, particularly in the supply of food to the city's granary, in riverine and coastal shipment, and in the development of plantations. Records from the Bispado de Luanda (Bishopric of Luanda) provide information on the baptisms, deaths, and marriages of both the free as well as the enslaved population. They are helpful, for example, to bring businesswomen's marital strategies into light. Evidence from the Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo

(Tombo Tower National Archive) document the precautions these women took in protecting their wealth from their husbands and sons through the registration of dowries. Finally, material from the Arquivo Nacional de Angola (National Archive of Angola) and the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (Overseas Historical Archive) of Portugal contain an abundance of official correspondence about the political and economic status of Luanda during the nineteenth century.

The book is short, well-organized, and carefully researched. It explains the economic transition Luanda experienced with the suppression of the slave trade and makes a convincing argument about the role local women merchants played in that process. The book provides several examples drawn from the lives of women such as Dona Ana Joaquina dos Santos Silva, also known as “Queen of Bengo” or “Baroness of Luanda;” Dona Ana Ifigénia Nogueira da Rocha; and Dona Ana Francisca Ubertali de Miranda. However, an analysis about where these women stand in relation to other Luanda women and the city’s broader society is lacking. By all accounts, they seem to have been more exceptions than a rule. Additionally, it is unclear how successful exactly their businesses were following the traffic’s suppression. The book suggests that they continued to be vigorously active, but many of their endeavors failed to produce the desired outcome. During that period, European men began arriving in Luanda in larger numbers, some of them accompanied by their spouses. As the book implies, it is possible that the local women’s role as cultural brokers diminished over time, undermining their economic power and giving way to a new era of European imperialism and colonialism.

Slave Trade and Abolition provides an important contribution to the study of ports and societies involved in the transatlantic traffic. It focuses on the largest slaving center of the time, paying particular attention to the role of women merchants involved in that infamous trade. The book is ideal for graduate seminars on the history of the slave trade, the Atlantic World, early Africa, gender, business, and economy studies. Given its length, it would also fit well in upper undergraduate courses addressing similar topics and issues.

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