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*Atlantic Microhistory: Slaving and Cultural Exchange in Angola
(ca.1700-ca.1850)*

Roquinaldo Ferreira, University of Virginia

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Introduction: Microhistory and the Angolan Slave Trade

Two hundred years ago in the Angolan city of Benguela, a free black woman named Francisca da Silva was enslaved after being accused of murdering Diniz Vieira de Lima, a slave dealer with a long-term illness who died while seeking medical assistance in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Dona Maria Ferreira da Silva, the wife of the deceased merchant, ordered Francisca's arrest and accused her of using witchcraft to commit the crime. Dona Maria was probably born in Benguela or a nearby region and she was one of the "*donas*" of Benguela—women who commanded prestige and social standing in the city. Prior to the incident, Francisca had a close relationship with Dona Maria, worked as a servant in her house, and was even her goddaughter. When Vieira de Lima died, however, Dona Maria declared that Francisca was a witch and enslaved her.

The scholarship on Angolan relations with the Atlantic has largely been framed around macro-structural assessments of the close commercial links that this former Portuguese colony held with Brazil, also a former Portuguese colony and the destination of the vast majority of the captives shipped from Angola. Unfortunately, this approach has left several crucial questions unanswered, mostly relating to the socio-cultural and legal dynamics of Luanda and Benguela and their environs during the era of the transatlantic slave trade. As literary historian William

Boelhower has stated, “reliance on structure is equivalent to promoting a view from nowhere”.¹ In contrast to a macro-structural approach to examining Angolan links to the Atlantic world, this book proposes a microhistory of the Atlantic world that reduces the scale of analysis from macro-structure to microscopic observation.²

The life stories of Francisca da Silva and the other protagonists in the remarkable drama that led to the loss of Francisca’s freedom have much to teach us about the multi-layered cultural and social landscapes of Angolan coastal cities, the close ties between coastal Angola and Brazil, and the ways that enslavement became an intrinsic part of social relations in Portuguese Angola. Francisca’s ordeal and ultimate triumph against enslavement also sheds light on the critical importance of legal mechanisms as a way to resist slavery/enslavement. Recently, the history of the Atlantic world has been refocused around life stories, part of a trend towards micro-history that highlights personal trajectories and the ways people experienced everyday life.³ By “tracing individual paths and analyzing either their individual social relations, political, economic or social strategies”, biographical studies provide an entry point into the visceral and sometimes poignant ways in which people like Francisca lived their lives.⁴

¹ William Boelhower, “The Rise of the New Atlantic Studies Matrix”, *American Literary History*, 2007, 91. For another critique of the structural approaches, see Herman Bennett, *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 29.

² Carlos Ginzburg, “Latitude, Slaves, and the Bible: An Experiment in Microhistory”, *Critical Inquiry*, 2005, 665. See also Carlos Ginzburg and Carlo Poni, “The Name and the Game: Unequal Exchange and the Historiographic Marketplace”, in Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (eds.), *Microhistory and the Lost People of Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 8; Giovanni Levi, “On Microhistory”, in Peter Burk (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 93-114; Jacques Revel, “Microanalysis and the Construction of the Social”, in Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt (eds.), *Histories: French Constructions of the Past* (New York: New Press, 1995), 493 -502; Justo Serna y Anacleto Pons, *Cómo se Escribe la Microhistoria: Ensayo sobre Carlo Ginzburg* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2000); Justo Serna y Anacleto Pons, “Formas de Hacer Microhistoria”, *Àgora, Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 7, 2002; Sigurdur Magnússon, “The Singularization of History: Social History and Microhistory within the Postmodern State of Knowledge”, *Journal of Social History*, 36, 3, 2003, 701-735; Sigurdur Magnússon, “Social History as ‘Sites of Memory’? The Institutionalization of History: Microhistory and the Grand Narrative”, *Journal of Social History*, 39, 3, 2006, 891-913; Justo Serna y Anacleto Pons, “Nota sobre a Microhistoria ¿No Habrá Llegado El Momento de Parar? *Pasado y Memoria*, 3, 2004, 255-263.

³ João José dos Reis, Flávio dos Santos Gomes & Marcus de Carvalho, “África e Brasil entre Margens: Aventuras e Desventuras do Africano Rufino José Maria, c. 1822-1853”, *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos*, 26, 2, 2004, 257-302; Rae Kea, “From Catholicism to Moravian Pietism: The World of Marotta/Magdalen, a Woman of Popo and St. Thomas”, in Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas (ed.), *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 115-139; Randy J. Sparks, *The Two Princes of Calabar: An Eighteenth Century Atlantic Odyssey* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Robin Law and Paul Lovejoy (eds.), *The Biography of Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua: his Passage from Slavery to Freedom in Africa and America* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2003); Jon Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Rebecca Scott, “Public Rights and Private Commerce” A Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Creole Itinerary”, *Current Anthropology*, 48, 2, 2007, 237-256; João José dos Reis, *Domingos Sodré, Um Sacerdote Africano: Escravidão, Liberdade e Candomblé na Bahia do Século XIX* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2008); James Sweet, “Mistaken Identities? Olaudah Equiano, Domingos Álvares, and the Methodological Challenges of Studying the African Diaspora”, *American Historical Review*, 114, 2, 2009, 279-306. See also Lara Putnam, “To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World”, *Journal of Social History*, 2006, 615-630.

⁴ Simona Cerutti, “Microhistory: Social relations versus Cultural Models?”, in A. Castren (ed.), *Between Sociology and History: Essays on Microhistory, Collective Action, and Nation-Building* (Helsinki: S.K.S., 2004), 20. See also Giovanni Levi, “Les Usages de la Biographie”, *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 44, 6, 1989, 1325-1336.

As Alison Games observes, “with enough such [biographical] stories, we might piece the Atlantic together in new, richly detailed, complex ways, putting people in the middle of a chaotic kaleidoscope of movement”.⁵ An analysis of small-scale events and a sharp examination of individual agency offer the best strategy to broaden understanding of the complex social and cultural contours of Angola during the era of the transatlantic slave trade. For example, several months prior to holding Francisca in custody, Dona Maria petitioned the Benguela administration for permission to travel to Brazil to join her husband in Rio de Janeiro, a request that reflected the intense pattern of mobility across the Atlantic by wealthy residents of Benguela, a city from which approximately five hundred thousand Africans were shipped as slaves to Brazil between the early eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries.

Dona Maria stated in her request that she wanted to travel with her son Thomas and two domestic servants, one of whom was Francisca da Silva.⁶ She would have traveled to Brazil on one of the several ships that carried slaves from Benguela to Rio de Janeiro, which was the primary destination of slaves shipped from Benguela. Often times, these slave ships were co-owned by merchants in Benguela and Rio de Janeiro, which shows the high degree of business interaction between individuals residing in the two cities. After being informed of the passing of her husband in Rio, however, Dona Maria cancelled her trip and turned against Francisca. In a petition sent to the Benguela administration, Francisca stated that Dona Maria had accused her of “witchcraft, saying that she [Francisca] had thrown a spell [*enfeitiçado*] on a young black boy to kill the brother-in-law of Diniz and that the soul [*zambi*] of the brother-in-law killed her [Dona Maria’s] husband in Rio de Janeiro”.⁷

This accusation provides a window into the religious fabric of coastal Angola, since it exposed the widespread belief among the free and enslaved that the souls of the deceased (*zambi*) could take actions against or effect change in the lives of the living.⁸ A few years before the incident that culminated in the loss of Francisca’s freedom, a report stated that Africans “give the name of *zambi* to all people who die and say that these are the souls of the deceased, which can be brought to earth through magical arts performed by some slave or even a relative of the deceased”.⁹

While in custody, Francisca sought to defend herself by saying that instead of harming Dona Maria’s husband, she had in fact attempted to cure his illness. Francisca added that Dona Maria herself had been deeply involved in the healing ceremonies, reflecting the fact that African customs also prevailed among members of the social elite in the city. As Francisca explained to authorities, the widow had “ordered the sale of a cow to make traditional medicine”. Although Francisca never used the expression *ganga*, this was the term that Africans used to refer to traditional healers. James Sweet has written that “there was fluidity between the two worlds that

⁵ Alison Games, “Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges and Opportunities”, *The American Historical Review*, 2006, 30.

⁶ “Petição de Maria Ferreira da Silva” on September 13, 1828, AHNA, cód. 7182, fol. 105.

⁷ “Petição de Francisca da Silva” on March 20, 1829, AHNA, cód. 7182, fol. 137.

⁸ John Thornton, “Religious and Ceremonial Life in the Kongo and Mbundu Areas, 1500-1700”, in Linda Heywood (ed.), *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 75.

⁹ “Memória dos Usos, Ritos e Costumes dos Sobas e mais Povos desta Jurisdição” in 1820, IHGB, lata 347, pasta 30.

allowed ancestral spirits to remain engaged in the everyday lives of their surviving kinsmen”.¹⁰ Aided by chanting and dancing, *gangas* like Francisca were charged with the task of transcending the boundaries of the temporal and spiritual worlds through ceremonies that involved spiritual possession and animal sacrifices.

In this book, the South Atlantic is conceived as a zone of cultural and social exchange between Angola and Brazil that was not exclusively confined to the business dimensions of the slave trade. In addition to revealing key aspects of the religious and cultural milieu of Benguela, the incident with Francisca also highlights individual mobility across the Atlantic and the ways that local societies in Luanda, Benguela and their environs were deeply influenced not only by elements of African culture, but also by the constant arrival of criminal, religious and political exiles – *degreddados* -, as well as soldiers, administrators and merchants. While constantly reshaped by the flow of outsiders from Portugal and, mainly, Brazil, these societies were also continually changed by caravans of African traders from the Angolan interior – *sertões*. As a result, coastal Angola and its immediate environs hosted multi-layered cultural milieus that, though undeniably mostly African, incorporated elements of European culture.

In these Afro-Atlantic communities, much of the so-called European culture arrived to Angola via Brazil, and Brazilian mediation was another key element in the cultural and social landscapes of coastal Angola. The two Portuguese colonies were deeply connected by more than three hundred years of slave trade, and this relationship was so strong that developments in Brazil could potentially reverberate across the Atlantic. Due to the intensity of the multi-dimensional ties between Angola and Brazil, this relationship offers perhaps the best example of the utility of an Atlantic history framework to study long-distance social and commercial interactions. Particularly significant were the economic, social and cultural dynamics engendered by the transatlantic slave trade.¹¹

The relationship between Angola and Brazil developed in the early seventeenth century after the establishment of the city of Luanda by the Portuguese in 1576.¹² Luanda was the largest slave port in the era of the slave trade and the capital city of the Portuguese colony of Angola, and Benguela was the second largest slave port. Except for a relatively brief period of Dutch occupation between 1641 and 1648, these coastal enclaves were solidly under Portuguese and Brazilian influence throughout the history of the slave trade between the late sixteenth and mid-nineteenth century. If there was any threat to Portuguese control, it was from Brazil, the single largest American destination of enslaved Africans during the era of the slave trade. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, almost five million people were brought to the former Portuguese colony, mostly from Angola and Congo.¹³

¹⁰ James Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 104. For Jamaica, see Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and power in the world of Atlantic Slavery* (New York: Harvard University Press, 2008), 5.

¹¹ Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *O Trato dos Videntes: Formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul*, (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000); Jaime Rodrigues, *De Costa a Costa: Escravos, Marinheiros e Intermediários do Tráfico Negro de Angola ao Rio de Janeiro (1780-1860)* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2005).

¹² Joseph Miller, “Central Africa during the Era of the Slave Trade, c. 1490s-1850s”, in Linda Heywood, *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21-71.

¹³ David Eltis, “The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment”, *William and Mary Quarterly*, LVIII, 2001, 17-42; David Eltis, “The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment based on the Second Edition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Dataset”. Unpublished paper.

These ties became multi-dimensional due to the intense back-and-forth movement of merchants, administrators, free and unfree people, and military personnel. Portuguese control over Luanda was reclaimed from the Dutch in 1648 because of a flotilla sent from Rio de Janeiro, signaling the strategic importance of Angola in the southern Atlantic, and later many of the troops deployed against the kingdom of Congo in the 1660s hailed from Brazil. Troops from Brazil also played a pivotal role in the Portuguese victory over the Ndongo kingdom, in 1672, which redrew the internal boundaries of Portuguese Angola. Brazilian troops also advanced Portuguese geopolitical interests in the development of slaving in Benguela in the early eighteenth century. In addition to soldiers, Luanda and Benguela would frequently rely on Brazil for food supplies, military hardware, and the funding for the slave trade.

Brazilian supremacy in Angola derived not only from Brazil's insatiable demand for an enslaved labor force but also from broader transformations in the economy of the southern Atlantic in the seventeenth century, which placed the Brazilian city of Salvador and later Rio de Janeiro as hubs of the Indian textile trade. These textiles were the most sought after commodities used to purchase slaves in the Angolan *sertões*.¹⁴ By the early eighteenth century, the trade between Angola and Brazil had blossomed to its fullest and Rio de Janeiro had become Angola's primary commercial partner. This trade was mostly conducted within a bilateral framework, notwithstanding Portuguese protectionist policies to bolster metropolitan commercial supremacy in the colony, first at the end of the eighteenth century and then after Brazil achieved independence from Portugal in 1822. Despite continuing trade with the Brazilian cities of Salvador and Recife, Rio's ties with Angola would remain the strongest until the end of shipments of slaves from the city in the 1840s.

In Benguela, the city where Francisca da Silva lived and almost lost her freedom altogether, Brazilian hegemony was perhaps more pronounced than in Luanda. In the 1730s, merchants from Rio de Janeiro played a pivotal role in the expansion of the Benguela slave trade. Benguela then became a focal point of shipments of slaves to Brazil, developing lasting links with Rio de Janeiro in the wake of the discovery of gold in Minas Gerais in the early eighteenth century, which drove up the demand for labor in Brazil and added significant momentum to slaving in southern Angola. Between 1796 and 1828, at least 80 percent of the slave ships that set sail from Benguela were bound for Rio de Janeiro.¹⁵ Not surprisingly, Benguela accounted for approximately half of the slave ships entering the port of Rio de Janeiro between 1795 and 1811. In the early 1810s, all ships used to transport slaves from Benguela to Brazil were owned by merchants based in Brazil.¹⁶

Brazilian influence in Angola was not confined to the commercial aspects of the trade in slaves and actually extended to the social and cultural milieus of both Luanda and Benguela. "The lifestyle of wealthy Luanda residents resembles that of a Brazilian city. Their foodways are as full of strong ingredients as in Brazil. The dialect that they use in the domestic affairs is the

¹⁴ Roquinaldo Ferreira, "Transforming Atlantic Slaving: Trade, Warfare, and Territorial Control in Angola, 1650-1800", PhD Dissertation, UCLA, 2003; Joseph Miller, "Imports at Luanda, Angola: 1785-1823," in Gerhard Liesegang, Helma Pasch, and Adam Jones, eds., *Figuring African Trade: Proceedings of the Symposium on the Quantification and Structure of the Import and Export and Long Distance Trade of Africa in the 19th Century (c. 1800-1913)* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1986), 165-246.

¹⁵ Joseph Miller, "Legal Portuguese Slaving from Angola. Some Preliminary Indications of Volume and Direction, 1760-1830", *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, LXII, 1975, 145.

¹⁶ "Ofício do Desembargador Fiscal" on April 10, 1811, IHGB, DI 1132, 05.

Brazilian language”.¹⁷ The few Luanda women who could fluently speak Portuguese did so with a distinct Brazilian accent, due to exposure to Brazilian culture during travels to Brazil and interactions with individuals born and raised in Brazil.¹⁸ In the interior, Africans referred to Brazil as *mueneputo pequeno*, a term that mirrored *mueneputo grande*, generally used to refer to continental Portugal. This suggests that even outside Luanda and Benguela, Africans were cognizant of the deep ties that linked Angola to Brazil.¹⁹

Much of the relationship between the two Portuguese colonies was made possible by the social and cultural connections that individuals built across the ocean. The trajectory of the Vieira de Lima family provides insight into how interactions with the Atlantic shaped the social and cultural milieu of coastal Angola. The first member of this wealthy and influential family came to Benguela in the early eighteenth century. In 1748, a member of the family – Francisco Vieira de Lima – was appointed the highest colonial authority (*capitão mor*) of Caconda, a key region for the slave trade to Benguela.²⁰ By the time Diniz was “murdered” by Francisca’s “witchcraft”, the Vieira de Lima family was probably even more influential in Benguela, where its members were traders and held positions in the local administration. For example, Diogo Vieira de Lima, Diniz Vieira de Lima’s brother, was a *capitão mor* in Quilengues, another internal region that supplied slaves to Benguela.²¹

Meanwhile, Diniz Vieira de Lima seems to have focused primarily on the coastal trade in Benguela, signing a petition in 1821 with the city’s other leading merchants requesting permission to pay only half of the customary taxes paid on slaves shipped from Benguela. To increase liquidity, the merchants suggested that they would like to pay the other half of these taxes in Brazil, Benguela’s primary commercial partner and the place of origin of several members of the top echelon of the local trading community.²² The peak of Diniz Vieira de Lima’s trading activities came when Benguela was being convulsed by echoes of the process of Brazilian independence from Portugal in 1822 as will be further discussed in chapter three. Indeed, a few years prior to his death, the decision makers (*junta*) of the Government of Benguela were said to have sent a delegation to Rio de Janeiro to request the annexation of Benguela to independent Brazil – an extremely bold move in an especially tumultuous decade in Benguela history. Diniz signed a petition declaring his loyalty to Portugal together with other top merchants.²³

Vieira de Lima’s attempt to seek medical care in Rio de Janeiro further illustrates the multifaceted connections that Angola held with Brazil. Since 1766, Benguela had had a hospital maintained with donations from local merchants and administered by the brotherhood of *Nossa Senhora de Pópulo* from the local church.²⁴ In 1784, however, the hospital had no trained

¹⁷ José Joaquim Lopes de Lima, *Ensaio sobre a Statistica das Possessões Portuguezas na Africa Occidental e Oriental; na Asia Occidental; na China e na Oceania* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1846), 206.

¹⁸ Anônimo, *Quarenta e Cinco Dias em Angola* (Porto: Typographia de Sebastião José Pereira, 1861), 80.

¹⁹ Antonio Gil, “Considerações sobre Alguns Pontos mais Importantes da Moral Religiosa e Sistema de Jurisprudência dos Pretos do Continente da Africa Occidental Portugueza”, in *Memorias das Academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa* (Lisboa: Typographia da Academia, 1854), 14.

²⁰ “Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino” on August 13, 1748, AHU, Angola, cx. 36, doc. 39.

²¹ “Offício do Governador de Benguela” on August 4, 1825, AHNA, cód. 449, fls. 49-50.

²² “Requerimento dos Negociantes de Benguela” in 1821, AHU, Angola, cx. 140, doc. 83.

²³ “Conferência da Câmara de Benguela” on January 3, 1823, AHU, Angola, cx. 142, doc. 44.

²⁴ “Carta de Francisco Xavier de Mendonça” on October 31, 1765, AHU, cód. 408, fls. 98v.-99 ; “Receita do Tesoureiro do Hospital de Benguela” in 1774, AHU, Angola, cx. 61, doc. 39.

physician and was badly dilapidated. This situation led wealthy Benguela merchants to blame the small size of the population on the “lack of adequate means to a healthy life and adequate medical treatment”.²⁵ Despite being recently renovated, the Benguela hospital was badly damaged by heavy rains in 1797.²⁶ By the time Diniz Vieira de Lima became ill, the chronic absence of proper medical care commonly forced wealthy merchants to travel to Rio de Janeiro for medical treatment.²⁷

The multilayered cultural and social milieus of coastal Angola raises key questions pertaining to how this region relates to other African regions affected by the slave trade. Robin Law and Kristen Mann have coined the term “Atlantic Community” to refer to the intense commercial and cultural ties between Bahia and the Bight of Benin.²⁸ Law and Mann’s focus on Africa and African agency in the development of the Diaspora differs from Paul Gilroy’s North American-oriented understanding of the black Atlantic.²⁹ According to Law and Mann, the slave trade between Bahia and West Africa was characterized by highly fluid cross-cultural communities that grew out of the key role played by culturally mixed individuals – mostly merchants – who build connections across the Atlantic between Bahia and the Bight of Benin.³⁰

²⁵ “Representação dos Oficiais da Câmara de Benguela” on July 28, 1784, AHU, cx. 69, doc. 17.

²⁶ “Portaria para o Sova do Tombo” on May 24, 1794, AHU, cód. 1634; “Mapa dos Enfermos no Hospital da Capitania em 1796”, IHGB, DL 81, 02. 28; “Carta do Governador de Angola” on May 11, 1797, AHU, cód. 1632. In that year, the wealthy merchant António José da Costa retired to Rio de Janeiro and bequeathed fifty thousand *cruzados* to restore the hospital. See “Relatório do Governador de Benguela” on December 24, 1798, AHU, Angola, cx. 89, doc. 70.

²⁷ In 1824, José Apolinário Alves, a resident of Rio de Janeiro who was a merchant in Benguela, alleged medical reasons to request a license to travel to Rio. See “Carta do Conde de Suberra” on October 26, 1824, AHU, cód. 542. In the following year, António Francisco Ribeiro and José Polilo “requested license to travel to Rio de Janeiro to undertake medical treatment”. See “Despacho do requerimento de António Francisco Ribeiro on January 29, 1828, AHNA, cód. 7182, fl. 80v.; “Despacho do requerimento de José Polilo” on July 8, 1828, AHNA, cód. 7182, fl. 95v. Also in 1828, Francisco José Gomes “requested a one-year license to go to Rio de Janeiro to undertake medical treatment”. See “Despacho do requerimento de Francisco José Gomes Guimarães” on December 12, 1828, AHNA, cód. 7182, fl. 121v. In the same year, “José Pedro de Andrade, a soldier in Dombe Grande, requested a license to travel to Rio de Janeiro to undertake medical treatment”. See “Despacho do requerimento de José Pedro de Andrade” on June 21, 1828, AHNA, cód. 7182, fl. 94. For a report from the 1840s on the state of medical facilities and health care in Angola, see José Joaquim Moreira, “Memória sobre as Moléstias Endêmicas da Costa Occidental d’ Africa”, *Jornal da Sociedade das Sciencias Medicas de Lisboa*, tomo XV, 1842, 124.

²⁸ Robin Law and Kristin Mann, “West Africa in the Atlantic Community: the Case of the Slave Coast”, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 56, 2, 1999, 307-331.

²⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). For alternative and critical views, see Lorand Matroy, “The English Professors of Brazil: On the Diasporic Roots of the Yorubá Nation”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41, 1, 1999, 72-103; Herman Bennett, “The Subject in the Plot: National Boundaries and the ‘History’ of the Black Atlantic”, *African Studies Review*, 43, 2000, 101-124; Charles Piot, “Atlantic Aporias: Africa and Gilroy’s Black Atlantic”, *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 100, 2001, 155-170; Patrick Manning, “Africa and the African Diaspora: New Directions of Study”, *Journal of African History*, 44, 2003, 487-506.

³⁰ Indeed, the Atlantic commerce fueled the appearance of culturally mixed communities elsewhere in Atlantic Africa as well. For Senegambia, see Walter Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003); Peter Mark, “Portuguese” *Style and Luso-African Identity: Pre-Colonial Senegambia, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Philip Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975); José da Silva Horta, “Evidence for a Luso-African Identity in ‘Portuguese’ Accounts on ‘Guinea of Cape Verde’ (sixteenth-seventeenth centuries)”, *History in Africa*, 27, 2000, 99-130; George Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth Century to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003). For the

In Angola, however, Law and Mann argue that no Atlantic community developed because Portugal dictated policies in the region as a colonial power.³¹ In fact, even in the first half of the seventeenth century, when Euro-African forces established an area of Portuguese influence in the Luanda hinterland, their achievements were largely as result of alliances with local Imbangala groups.³² As noted above, Portuguese military achievements were also due to military aid provided by Brazil. More importantly, Portuguese capacity to influence events in the interior of Angola dwindled dramatically in the second half of the seventeenth century, when the consolidation of the kingdom of Casanje established a political and military counterpoint to the Portuguese government in Luanda that seriously undermined Luanda's capacity to conduct military operations in the region. Thus, in lieu of a strict colonial regime, the social, cultural and legal landscapes in Luanda, Benguela and their respective hinterlands were marked by a highly amalgamated cultural and social dynamic.

In this environment, Africans would seize upon elements of European culture to create and reinforce social hierarchies among themselves, and key elements of the bureaucratic and legal apparatus of the colonial administration derived from African social, cultural and legal institutions.³³ Understandably, Diniz Vieira de Lima would not have objected to his wife hiring a *ganga* to cure him. As will be further discussed in chapter one, despite repeated admonitions in colonial reports, free and enslaved residents of Luanda and Benguela widely believed in

Gold coast, see Harvey Feinberg, *Africans and Europeans in West Africa: Elminians and Dutchmen on the Gold Coast during the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 1989); Rebecca Shumway, "Between the Castle and the Golden Stool: Transformations in Fante Society in the Eighteenth Century", PhD Dissertation, Emory University, 2004; Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*; David Northrup, "West Africans and the Atlantic, 1550-1800", in Philip Morgan and Sean Hawkins (eds.), *Black Experience and the Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 35-57. For the Bight of Benin, see Robin Law, *Ouidah: the Social History of a West Africa Slaving Port* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004); Robin Law, "Yoruba Liberated Slaves who returned to West Africa", in Toyin Falola and Matt Childs (eds.), *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 340-365; Robin Law, "The Evolution of the Brazilian Community in Ouidah", *Slavery and Abolition*, 2001, 23-41; Elisée Soumonni, "Afro-Brazilian Communities of the Bight of the Bight of Benin in the Nineteenth Century", in Paul Lovejoy and David Trotman (eds.), *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora* (London: Continuum, 2003), 181-193. For the Bight of Biafra, see Sparks, *The Two Princes of Calabar*; Paul Lovejoy & David Richardson, "Trust, Pawnship, and Atlantic History: The Institutional Foundations of the Old Calabar Slave Trade", *The American Historical Review*, 104, 1999, 333-355; David Richardson, "Background to Annexation: Anglo-Africa Credit Relations in the Bight of Biafra, 1700-1891", in Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau (ed.), *From Slave Trade to Empire: Europe and the Colonization of Black Africa, 1780s-1880s* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 47-69; Paul Lovejoy & David Richardson, "Letters of the Old Calabar Slave Trade, 1760-1789", in Vincent Carreta & Philip Gould (eds.), *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 89-116; Paul Lovejoy & David Richardson, "This Horrid Hole: Royal Authority, Commerce and Credit at Bonny, 1690-1840", *Journal of African History*, 45, 2004, 363-392; Paul Lovejoy & David Richardson, "From Slaves to Palm Oil: Afro-European Commercial Relations in the Bight of Biafra, 1741-1841", in David Killingray, Margarette Lincoln & Nigel Rigby (eds.), *Maritime Empires: British Imperial Maritime Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2004), 13-29.

³¹ Law and Mann, "West Africa in the Atlantic Community", 334. For a similar view, see Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*; David Eltis, "African and European Relations in the Last Century of the Transatlantic Slave Trade", in Pétré-Grenouilleau (ed.), *From Slave Trade to Empire*, 24.

³² Jan Vansina, *How Societies are Born: Governance in West Central Africa before 1600* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004). See also Joseph Miller, "The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central African History", *Journal of African History*, 13, 4, 1972, 549-574; Joseph Miller, "Nzinga of Matamba in a New Perspective", *Journal of African History*, 16, 2, 201-216; John Thornton, "Legitimacy and Political Power: Queen Njinga, 1624-1663", *Journal of African History*, 32, 1, 25-40.

³³ Linda Heywood, "Portuguese into African: The Eighteenth-Century Central African Background to Atlantic Creole Cultures", Heywood, *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, 99-113.

traditional healing power and participated in healing ceremonies. In fact, a few decades after Diniz resorted to a *ganga* in Benguela, a Portuguese *sertanejo* – an itinerant trader in the Angolan *sertões* - did the same in Luanda. After becoming “tired of health care provided by [a Luanda] *botica* (western medicine)”, this unnamed *sertanejo* turned to traditional doctors brought from the *sertões* specifically to help him. The leader of these *gangas* was a ten-year old girl, “who commanded everybody’s respect and who performed the ceremony”. In this ceremony, the young *ganga* used a sword and chanted in Quimbundo, the African language widely spoken in Luanda.³⁴

In stark contrast to the deference with which *gangas* were usually treated by the general populace, Francisca was stripped of her freedom and found herself fighting against the prospect of being shipped to Brazil as a slave. While her fate underscores the extent to which allegations of witchcraft were often used to enslave freeborn individuals, it also highlights how public ceremonies in which *gangas* exerted their power were perceived as threatening and generally described as witchcraft by colonial officials. “No one dies due to natural causes, to which all human beings are subjected, but only due to witchcraft, which they say someone else cast on them”.³⁵

Despite the fact that Francisca da Silva was able to regain her liberty, the episode that led to her temporary captivity illustrates the role that everyday enslavement played in the overall process of generating captives in Angola. Historians have remarked on the relevance of systems of supply of captives in Central Africa, a statement/argument made all the more important by the fact that Angola and Congo accounted for approximately half of the number of enslaved Africans taken to the Americas. In an analysis of the relationship between Africa and the Atlantic world, Philip Morgan writes that “the sophisticated delivery systems that Africa developed in this region [Central Africa] were also important, as was the centralized, unified character of the region”.³⁶

Angola’s ability to generate slaves for the Atlantic trade reflected the fact that Africans who lived in regions closer to the coast in the Luanda and Benguela hinterlands, and not only those who lived in the distant interior, were still vulnerable to enslavement, as demonstrated by Francisca’s case. More importantly, although scholars have acknowledged the importance of everyday enslavement, they still place more emphasis on warfare as the driving force behind the production of captives in Angola. In the conventional wisdom, the rise of warfare stemmed from state policy dictated by the Portuguese administration in the early seventeenth century.³⁷ Sometimes, military violence was related to foreign trade and debt, which would drive “area after area toward chaotic violence as the politicians sought to generate the people necessary to pay for imports”.³⁸ Recently, scholars have also hypothesized that the enslavement of freeborn individuals increased “perhaps as a response to the vicious, protracted competition among the elites”.³⁹

³⁴ Gil, “Considerações sobre Alguns Pontos mais Importantes da Moral Religiosa”, 11.

³⁵ “Notícias da Cidade de Benguela e Costumes dos Gentios Habitantes naquele Sertão”, BNRJ, doc. I-28, 28, 29.

³⁶ Philip Morgan, “Africa and the Atlantic, c. 1450 to c. 1820”, in Jack Greene and Philip Morgan, *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 223-248.

³⁷ John Thornton and Linda Heywood, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 110.

³⁸ Joseph Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 127.

³⁹ Linda Heywood, “Slavery and its Transformation in the Kingdom of Kongo: 1491-1800”, *Journal of African History*, 50, 2009, 16.

The best way to further the understanding of the mechanisms of enslavement is by concentrating on people's everyday lives and by seeking to assess the impact of the commercialization of the Angolan slave trade on African social relations. To begin with, everyday enslavement had several advantages over warfare-driven enslavement. In addition to implying a high level of organization, warfare could only be waged during specific times of the year and might not generate a large number of prime captives. In contrast, everyday enslavement produced a steady flow of slaves, which made up the majority of the captives shipped from Angola by the end of the eighteenth century, as pointed out by Governor of Angola Miguel Antonio de Mello.⁴⁰

More importantly, the reliability of everyday enslavement derived from the fact that everyday enslavement became an intrinsic part of social relations in Angola. To understand this development, one needs to look at the demand for imported goods and Angola's commercial exchanges with the Atlantic. African demand for imported goods, as Joseph Miller has analyzed, derived from the key roles that these goods played in the symbolic and material politics of clientele in African. In other words, Africans made borrowing decisions based on the need to build political clientele. Effectively, slave sellers functioned as lenders who underwrote the innerworkings of African politics.⁴¹

This political arrangement was transformed by the rise of the demand for labor in Brazil in the wake of the discovery of gold in Minas Gerais in the late seventeenth century. With the gold boom in Brazil, the Angolan credit system experienced a phenomenal growth as the spread of highly itinerant trading networks [led by traders known as *sertanejos* and *pumbeiros*] further facilitated access to imported goods and catapulted the Angolan trade to a fully-fledged commercialized phase. As these very opportunistic trading networks metastasized in the Angolan *sertões*, this process led to rising debt and pressure to produce slaves to settle financial commitments with *sertanejos* and *pumbeiros*. The debt burden assumed by Africans was transformed into slavery for Africans. In the context of the rise of commercial slaving, everyday enslavement became a centerpiece of African social norms, mostly through judicial enslavement and abductions based on debt and false accusations of witchcraft, thus giving Angola the ability to yield a constant number of captives to the Atlantic slave trade.

As opposed to the large number of Africans who found themselves on slave ships headed to Brazil after being falsely accused of witchcraft, Francisca was eventually able to extricate herself from slavery. Her victory speaks to the fact that, despite considerable odds, free and enslaved residents of Luanda and Benguela were able to sustain meaningful and long-term social, religious and cultural relations that transcended the boundaries of bondage.⁴² Furthermore, it highlights the institutional mechanism that Africans utilized to protect their liberty in Portuguese Angola. The existence of this mechanism – known as the *tribunal de mucanos* – demonstrates that the societies of coastal Angola that emerged from the interaction between Africans, Brazilians and Europeans were far from being modeled around rigidly hierarchical colonial societies, as well as the fact that a central part of the legal system of Portuguese Angola was built upon elements of African customary law.

Recent scholarship dealing with the use of legal systems by native peoples elsewhere in the Atlantic world points to the fact that these systems were sufficiently responsive to local

⁴⁰ “Ofício do Governador de Angola” on February 3, 1800, AHNA, cód. 6, fls. 56-60.

⁴¹ Miller, *Way of Death*, 97.

⁴² For Mexico, see Herman L. Bennett. *Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570-1640* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

complaints that they prompted indigenous groups to adopt litigation as a tool to protect and defend social and financial interests.⁴³ In Angola, enslaved and free Africans came to understand relatively quickly that legal mechanisms provided them with a chance to challenge enslavement and the constraints that slavery – or the threat of slavery – exerted on their lives. Paraphrasing Herman Bennett’s analysis of Mexico, “rather than striving for freedom by fleeing or resisting, many Africans and even more creoles came to experience freedom as the product of legal proceedings or as their birth legacy”.⁴⁴

The *tribunal de mucanos*, which restored Francisca’s status as a free individual, was derived from the Ambundo judicial system and it had become part of the colonial judicial system in the regions of Angola under Portuguese control in the seventeenth century, well before Francisca’s time. By the 1820s, this court was being used not only by Africans like Francisca who felt they had been unjustly enslaved but also by individuals seeking to address a wide array of disputes, including commercial disputes, disagreements stemming from land conflicts, and even the possibility of achieving freedom through manumission. Remarkably, as will be discussed in chapter six, the expansion of the jurisdiction of the *tribunal de mucanos* derived to a large degree from Africans’ ability to shape this legal system through their own volition and agency.⁴⁵

Because of the complaint filed by Francisca, Benguela authorities ordered “the return [to freedom of] the slave [Francisca] that she [the Diniz widow] had in her possession”. False accusations of witchcraft, as pointed out earlier and as will be further discussed in chapter five, were key to the machinery of enslavement that engulfed Africans in coastal and interior Angola. However, admonishing Dona Maria, Benguela authorities reminded the widow that it was “very strange that a civilized lady [Dona Maria] who lives under the law of her majesty [of Portugal] would use African laws in the city [of Benguela] in violation of Portuguese laws and despite the presence of authorities responsible for the enforcement of these laws [of her majesty of Portugal]”.

⁴³ Carlos Aguirre, “Working the System: Black Slaves and the Courts in Lima, Peru, 1821-1854”, in Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLeod (eds.), *Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora* (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), 202-221; Eduardo França Paiva, “Revendicações de Direitos Coutumiers et Actions en Justice des Esclaves dans les Minas Gerais du XVIIIe Siècle”, *Cahiers du Brésil Contemporain*, 53/54, 2003, 11-29; Jener Cristiano Gonçalves, “Justiça e Direitos Costumeiros: Apelos Judiciais de Escravos, Forros e Livres em Minas Gerais (1716-1815)”, MA Thesis, UFMG, 2006.

⁴⁴ Bennett, *Colonial Blackness*, 166.

⁴⁵ For Cuba, see Alejandro de la Fuente, “Slaves and the Creation of Legal Rights in Cuba: Coartación and Papel”, *HAHR*, 87, 4 2007, 659-692.