



ARTICLE

Luso-African Islands and Spanish Archipelagos in the Rise of the Atlantic Slave Trade, ca. 1519–1545

David Wheat 

Michigan State University, USA
Email: d wheat@msu.edu

Abstract

Drawing on sources produced in the Spanish Caribbean and Canary Islands, this article reconstructs the chronology of the earliest known slaving voyages from Arguin, São Tomé, and the Cape Verde Islands to the Americas. As a corrective to narratives characterizing the early Atlantic slave trade as an exclusively “Portuguese” enterprise driven largely by the priorities and directives of Iberian monarchs, it argues that the incipient traffic from Africa to the Caribbean may also be viewed as an adaptation of older Mediterranean and trans-Saharan slaving practices; as a key component of a broader slaving industry centered in the Gulf of Guinea; and as a manifestation of integrated maritime circuits linking Portuguese and Castilian archipelagos in the North Atlantic. Peninsular Iberian monarchs and financiers benefited substantially from the early sixteenth-century traffic and attempted to control it, but closer attention to Spanish Caribbean and Luso-African contexts reveals the multiple genealogies of the Atlantic slave trade.

Keywords: Atlantic Slaving; Transregional Commerce; Atlantic Islands; Caribbean; 16th Century

Introduction

In 1525, Inquisition officials in Gran Canaria produced a list of 355 “Moriscos, Jews, and new Christians” residing on the island, accompanied by descriptions indicating whether individuals were enslaved or free, whether they could competently perform Christian rites and prayers, and in some cases, the approximate dates and locations of their baptisms. Many were described as *moriscos* or *moriscas*, and a few as Jews or indigenous Canary Islanders, but over half were described as ‘black.’ Although some had been baptized in the Canary Islands, several indicated that their initial experiences of Christianity took place elsewhere. An enslaved woman owned by a tavernkeeper and identified only as “Catalina negra” had been baptized in the Azores fourteen years earlier, in approximately 1511; other enslaved black women were baptized in Madeira in ca. 1515 and 1520. A twenty-year-old woman named Catalina had been baptized twice: first as a child in São Tomé, and the second time on the island of Gran Canaria. Enslaved women named Leonor and Madalena had been baptized in the Cape Verde Islands in ca. 1512 and 1520, respectively, and an enslaved man named Juan had likewise become a Christian in the Cape Verde Islands five years earlier at the age of 35.¹

¹ Fernando Bruquetas de Castro, *Libro I de genealogías del tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición de Canarias* (Las Palmas: Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 2017), 234–80. For a comparably diverse enslaved population

This vignette provides a brief glimpse of Africans and people of African descent in the early sixteenth-century Canary Islands who had previously resided in one of the Portuguese Atlantic archipelagos. From the vantage points of these women and men – and presumably those of the merchants and mariners who had transported them – these insular Atlantic spaces were contiguous and overlapping, linked by commercial activities that included the traffic of enslaved Africans.² Previous studies of Atlantic slaving during the early 1500s often emphasize the degree to which it served as a precursor or differed from the transatlantic slave trade in later periods.³ But in addition to its function within slaving historiographies, this sixteenth-century traffic can inform microhistories addressing contemporaneous events, processes, and individual trajectories of transregional or even global scope; it also offers a useful framework for comparing and connecting the histories of maritime spaces claimed by Iberian monarchs within a period widely understood as the beginning of the early modern (or colonial) era.⁴ As the above example from Gran Canaria suggests, attention to the sixteenth-century slave trade can provide considerable insight into the formation of Iberian Atlantic societies and economies not only in relation to the objectives of European monarchs and administrators, but also in relation to one another.

Complicating linear narratives of imperial expansion, the traffic of black Africans during the early 1500s created multiple points of connection between territories claimed by the Portuguese and Castilian crowns, often involving actors of diverse origin.⁵ Sources generated in the Caribbean and Canary Islands substantially improve our knowledge of this transimperial and multinational traffic. First, they reveal that the earliest slaving voyages to sail directly from Africa to the Americas departed from Arguin in present-day Mauritania in the late 1510s and early 1520s.⁶ Although these ships were probably fitted out in Seville or the Bay of Cádiz, and embarked captives in Arguin (rather than Lisbon) by order of Portuguese monarch Manuel I, these little-known voyages indicate that the transatlantic slave trade was initially rooted in older forms of commerce between Christians and Muslims. Secondly,

in Tenerife, see María Isidra Coello Gómez, Margarita Rodríguez González, and Avelino Parrilla López, *Protocolos de Alonso Gutiérrez (1522-1525)* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Instituto de Estudios Canarios, 1980), 34-48.

² Manuel Lobo Cabrera, “Gran Canaria y los contactos con las islas portuguesas atlánticas: Azores, Madera, Cabo Verde y Santo Tomé,” in *V Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americano*, coord. Francisco Morales Padrón (Las Palmas: Cabildo de Gran Canaria, 1982), vol. 4: 311-34; Germán Santana Pérez and Juan Manuel Santana Pérez, *La puerta afortunada. Canarias en las relaciones hispano-africanas de los siglos XVII y XVIII* (Madrid: Catarata, 2002), 101-53.

³ António de Almeida Mendes, “The Foundations of the System: A Reassessment of the Slave Trade to the Spanish Americas in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, eds. David Eltis and David Richardson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 63-94; Marc Eagle and David Wheat, “The Early Iberian Slave Trade to the Spanish Caribbean, 1500-1580,” in *From the Galleons to the Highlands: Slave Trade Routes in the Spanish Americas*, eds. Alex Borucki, David Eltis, David Wheat (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2020), 47-72.

⁴ Bethany Aram, “Entre dos mares? Reflexiones a partir de la Historia Atlántica y hacia tres conceptos de la Historia Global,” *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* (2019) (online), <https://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/76702>.

⁵ See notably Iván Armenteros Martínez, *Cataluña en la era de las navegaciones. La participación catalana en la primera economía atlántica (c.1470-1540)* (Barcelona: Milenio, 2012).

⁶ Approximately one third of the voyages discussed in this article currently appear in *Slave Voyages: Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* [hereafter TSTD] and are cited here by their corresponding Voyage ID numbers. Some of the initial research for this essay was previously shared with the TSTD project team and already appears on the website; the updated and more extensive information presented here will likewise be shared after publication. Whereas TSTD also contains information on voyages that may have embarked or disembarked captives in Europe, and voyages for which pre-departure registration constitutes the only available information, the present article only addresses those known to have embarked captives in Africa and arrived in the Americas; for TSTD voyages that meet these criteria see <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/078fbf9a> (accessed Dec. 21, 2025).

Spanish-language records demonstrate that the slave trade from the Gulf of Guinea to the Caribbean was more expansive and began several years sooner than previously believed. They show that the early São Tomé-Caribbean traffic thrived in tandem with parallel circuits in the eastern Atlantic, rather than developing later as an offshoot of older slave routes. The Cape Verde Islands' extensive maritime connections to both the Canary Islands and the Caribbean represent a third pattern attesting to the collaborative and transimperial nature of the Atlantic slave trade. Hispanic merchants and mariners were often involved in the organization and operation of slaving voyages from the Cape Verde Islands, and Spanish records depict multistage itineraries involving the transportation of merchandise from the Canaries to Santiago Island, Upper Guinean captives from the Cape Verde Islands to the Caribbean, and Caribbean products to Iberia. Such voyages amply illustrate the slave trade's integration into maritime and commercial circuits spanning both Portuguese and Castilian jurisdictions. Iberian monarchs and administrators certainly contributed to, and heavily benefited from, the rise of the transatlantic slave trade, but royal agendas pertaining to the commerce in enslaved Africans should also be seen in light of these older and broader trends. To treat this early Atlantic traffic as an exclusively "Portuguese" or "Spanish" enterprise stemming chiefly from crown directives would be a vast oversimplification.

Arguin

Arguin Island, immediately off the northern coast of present-day Mauritania, played a little-known but important role in the origins of the transatlantic slave trade to the Americas. First established in the 1440s, Arguin (or Arguim) was the first Portuguese *feitoria* in West Africa; forming part of the diocese of Funchal (Madeira), it predated Portuguese settlement in the Cape Verde Islands and served as a model for São Jorge da Mina.⁷ The Arguin outpost's main objective was to access trans-Saharan trade, diverting merchandise – particularly gold – from inland caravan routes towards the coast.⁸ Over the following century, mariners from western Europe and the Cape Verde Islands would transport wheat, textiles, garments, coral beads, silver, utensils, and other commodities to the fortress at Arguin. In exchange, merchants typically described in European sources as 'Moors' provided gold, gum, other goods, and African captives.⁹ It quickly became clear that the most profitable trade at Arguin was not in gold, but in slaves.¹⁰ The east-west route linking Arguin to Waddan (Ouadane), which was located on a major trans-Saharan thoroughfare, was of interest to both Portuguese and Mauritanian merchants, and many captives leaving Arguin may have been siphoned off from the trans-Saharan trade.¹¹ Others were likely Wolofs, Serers, and

⁷ Florinda Alves Marques Azinhaga, "A Feitoria de Arguim e a Expansão Portuguesa" (Dissertação de licenciatura, Universidade de Lisboa, 1965), 90-7, 188-9.

⁸ Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Os descobrimentos e a economia mundial*, 2nd ed. (Lisbon: Editorial Presença, 1981-1983), vol. 1: 145-51. See also E. Anne McDougall, "The Caravel and the Caravan: Reconsidering Received Wisdom in the Sixteenth-Century Sahara," in *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 144-69; Francisco Freire, "Poder e cultura nos iniciais encontros luso-saarianos: apontamentos etnográficos do sudoeste da Mauritânia (Trarza)," *Revista de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos* 21 (2016): 81-91.

⁹ On traditional accounts' erasure of the region's indigenous populations, see Francisco Freire, "The 'Narziguas,' Forgotten Protagonists of Saharan History," *Islamic Africa* 2:1 (2011): 35-65.

¹⁰ John W. Blake, *Europeans in West Africa, 1450-1560* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1942), 22-7; Azinhaga, "A Feitoria," 99-105, 149-52. See also Eduardo Aznar Vallejo and Antonio Correia e Silva, "Aculturación y frontera marítima. La evolución de las márgenes meridionales del Reino de Fez (Berbería y Canarias)," *Estudios Canarios* 61 (2017), 207.

¹¹ Azinhaga, "A Feitoria," 93-6; Blake, *Europeans*, 23-5; John Wright, *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 43-5; Mendes, "Foundations," 65; Armenteros Martínez, *Cataluña*, 69, 91-2.

Mande peoples brought directly from the Jolof empire in Senegambia by “Azenegue” (e.g. Sanhaja, most likely Zwaya) merchants, who acquired them in exchange for horses.¹² A large share of enslaved Africans arriving in Lisbon, Valencia, Seville, and Barcelona prior to 1540 were trafficked from Arguin, and by the 1520s–1530s, an estimated 2,000 captives reached Portugal from Arguin annually.¹³

Activities undertaken by residents of the Canary Islands could alternately challenge or complement Portuguese commercial influence in Arguin. In 1478 the *señor* of Lanzarote built the small castle of Santa Cruz de Mar Pequeña on the Moroccan coast near Fuerteventura, perhaps aiming to compete with Portuguese trade farther south during the War of Castilian Succession; the tower was reestablished by Gran Canaria’s governor in 1496 but abandoned by the 1520s.¹⁴ Yet throughout the 1500s, vessels departing from the Canaries sailed to Arguin Island and the surrounding coast to fish and trade, occasionally supplying Arguin with bread and cereals – some re-exported from Madeira or the Azores – in exchange for captives.¹⁵ Although they usually refrained from conducting slaving and plundering expeditions known as *cabalgadas* in the vicinity of the Portuguese fortress, Canary Islanders frequently carried out these raids elsewhere, often in violation of the Iberian monarchs’ agreement to limit Castilian presence in Africa to areas north of Cape Bojador.¹⁶ As late as 1549, a letter written by Arguin’s chief administrator noted that local inhabitants known as Narziguas complained about continual raids launched from the Canary Islands, and that in exchange for protection, they were willing to offer the Portuguese 1,000 cows per year. He also requested that a patrol ship be sent from Portugal, observing that the Canary Islanders were heavily involved in coastal trade throughout the region.¹⁷

Although they were preceded by voyages from Seville that carried small numbers of enslaved people along with merchandise and passengers, the Arguin-Caribbean itineraries of four vessels in 1519–1521 constitute our earliest evidence of slave ships sailing directly

¹² Jean Boulègue, *Le Grand Jolof (XIIIe–XVIe siècle)* (Blois: Éditions Façades, 1987), 86–90; António de Almeida Mendes, “Eslavages et Traites Ibériques. Entre Méditerranée et Atlantique (XVe–XVIIe siècles). Une histoire globale” (Thèse de doctorat, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2007), 450. Valentim Fernandes uses the term “Azenegues”; “Descriptio Africae,” München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, BSB Cod.hisp.27 (1507), <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/en/view/bsb00007891?page=174>. For discussion of Azenegues as Znaga tributaries subjected to both Banu Hassan elites and Zwaya merchant-scholars (who may have also been viewed by Europeans as Azenegues) during this period, see Sean M. Kelley, “Re-reading Zurara: Portuguese Captive Raiding, the ‘Berbers,’ and the ‘Origins’ of Atlantic Slavery” (unpublished paper shared with the author on 6 May 2024).

¹³ For discussion of over 90 voyages embarking captives in Arguin for transportation to Lisbon between 1505 and 1520, see Azinhaga, “A Feitoria,” 152–61; António de Almeida Mendes, “Portugal e o tráfico de escravos na primeira metade do século XVI,” *Africana Studia* 7 (2004), 20–1, 26–30; Mendes, “Eslavages,” 444–61. See also Ivana Elbl, “The Volume of the Early Atlantic Slave Trade, 1450–1521,” *Journal of African History* 38 (1997), 43–4, 63–6; Armenteros Martínez, *Cataluña*, 104–5. On trade linking Arguin to São Jorge da Mina, see Robert Ricard, *Études sur l’histoire des Portugais au Maroc* (Coimbra: Universidade de Coimbra, 1955), 99–100.

¹⁴ Iván Armenteros Martínez, “The Canary Islands as an Area of Interconnectivity between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic (Fourteenth–Sixteenth Centuries),” in *Entre mers-Outre-mer: Spaces, Modes and Agents of Indo-Mediterranean Connectivity*, eds. Nikolas Jaspert and Sebastian Kolditz (Heidelberg: Heidelberg University, 2018), 208–9. See also Djinn Jacques-Meunié, *Le Maroc saharien des origines à 1670* (Paris: Librairie Klincksieck, 1982), vol. 1: 311–22; Aznar Vallejo and Correia e Silva, “Aculturación,” 217.

¹⁵ Juan Manuel Santana Pérez and Germán Santana Pérez, *La pesca en el Banco Sahariano siglos XVII y XVIII* (Madrid: Catarata, 2014), 127–37; Gabriel de Avilez Rocha, “The Pinzones and the coup of the *acedares*: fishing and colonization in the fifteenth-century Atlantic,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 28: 4 (2019), 434–7.

¹⁶ Manuel Lobo Cabrera, *La esclavitud en las Canarias orientales en el siglo XVI (negros, moros y moriscos)* (Las Palmas: Cabildo de Gran Canaria, 1982), 61–98.

¹⁷ Freire, “The ‘Narziguas.’” See also Azinhaga, “A Feitoria,” 108–9, 238–40.

from Africa to the Americas.¹⁸ These voyages were associated with Charles V's grant of 4,000 "licenses" in August 1518 to Laurent de Gorrevod, who ultimately subcontracted the *asiento* to a consortium of Genoese merchants (Vivaldi, Fornari, Centurión, and others) based in Seville. The Genoese group worked closely with Burgalese merchant Juan Fernández de Castro, who on their behalf secured permission from the Portuguese crown to buy 4,000 or 4,300 captives from the *feitoria* at Arguin Island, but would later complain that he was only able to obtain approximately 700.¹⁹ In 1520 for example, according to Fernández de Castro, the four ships *Santa María de la Luz*, *Santi Spiritus*, *San Miguel*, and *Santa Cruz* were sent to Arguin to embark 800 captives but received a total of only 105 (in groups of 61, 31, and 13).²⁰ Understandably, some historians have expressed doubt as to whether the planned traffic from Arguin to the early Spanish Caribbean ever took place.²¹

But accounts kept by Puerto Rico's officials and by slave trade factor Francisco de Toro confirm that 116 or 117 "*piezas de esclavos de Argin*" were disembarked on the Caribbean island in 1519 and 1520, and that at least seven captives died soon after arrival.²² De Toro, who had previously spent nine years as Fernández de Castro's factor "in Arguin and Guinea and Cabo Verde in the traffic of slaves and other things," was described in Puerto Rico as having "come to this island and brought blacks from Arguin."²³ He continued to work for Fernández de Castro until 1526, and during this time, three ships in addition to his first voyage (presumably in 1519) transported enslaved Africans from Arguin to Puerto Rico. Sailing from Arguin on the caravel *Santa María de la Luz*, on 15 November 1520, shipmaster Francisco or Fernando de Rosa disembarked 44 captives in San Juan, where import taxes were paid on behalf of Fernández de Castro. De Rosa landed ten additional captives in San Germán in 1521, either early that year on the same voyage or on a separate, second voyage "from Arguin" that returned to San Juan with an unspecified number of captives on 10 October 1521.²⁴ In between de Rosa's voyages, the caravel *San Miguel* "came from Arguin" and docked in San Juan on 9 May 1521. Its shipmaster Martín de Urquiza disembarked at least 79 captives on behalf of Juan Fernández de Castro and Gaspar Centurión.²⁵

¹⁸ Jalil Sued Badillo and Ángel López Cantos, *Puerto Rico Negro* (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, 1986), 66-71; Eagle and Wheat, "Early Iberian," 51-2; Rafael M. Pérez García, "El mercado de esclavos de Puerto Rico y los comienzos del tráfico negrero transatlántico, 1509-1523," in *Tratados atlánticos y esclavitudes en América siglos XVI-XIX*, coords. Manuel Fernández Chaves and Rafael Pérez García (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2021), 155-61.

¹⁹ The initial version of Fernández de Castro's contract stipulated that captives were to be embarked in Lisbon; according to Fernández de Castro the Portuguese crown had unilaterally and abusively altered their arrangement, first ordering that captives be embarked in Arguin (instead of Lisbon), then directing factors at Arguin to provide only a limited number of captives; Archivo General de Indias (Seville, Spain) [hereafter AGI], Justicia 711, n.9, pieza 2. See also Ruth Pike, *Enterprise and Adventure: The Genoese in the Opening of the New World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 55-60; Armenteros Martínez, *Cataluña*, 117; Manuel F. Fernández Chaves and Rafael M. Pérez García, "La elite mercantil judeoconversa andaluza y la articulación de la trata negrera hacia las Indias de Castilla, ca. 1518-1560," *Hispania* 76, n.253 (2016), 388-90; Eagle and Wheat, "Early Iberian," 54-5.

²⁰ AGI-Justicia 711, n.9, pieza 2, sin folio [PARES images 117, 127, 138].

²¹ Mendes, "Foundations," 65.

²² AGI-Justicia 731, n.2, pieza 1, fols. 49v-50r; pieza 2, fol. 112r.

²³ AGI-Justicia 731, n.2, pieza 3, fols. 3v, 7r. On de Toro's prominence in San Juan during the 1530s-1540s, see Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico Negro*, 76-7.

²⁴ AGI-Contaduría [hereafter Ctdra] 1073, n.3, fol. 139r; AGI-Patronato 175, r.9, fols. 141r, 150r, 155r; AGI-Justicia 711, n.9, pieza 2, sin folio [image 127]; Eagle and Wheat, "Early Iberian," 51; Pérez García, "El mercado," 177, 182. See also TSTD voyage 42987.

²⁵ AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.3, fol. 138r; AGI-Patronato 175, r.9, fol. 152v; Eagle and Wheat, "Early Iberian," 51; Pérez García, "El mercado," 179.

Although they or other vessels may have taken additional captives to Hispaniola, these voyages from Arguin to Puerto Rico were few in number and took place within the space of just three years or less. But despite its ephemeral nature, this Arguin-Caribbean traffic raises significant new possibilities for understanding the origins of the transatlantic slave trade. First, it indicates that the earliest slaving voyages from Africa to the Americas could have redirected captives away from trans-Saharan routes, an eventuality that would be highly unlikely in later centuries due to Islam's role in limiting the spread of the Atlantic slave trade in West Africa.²⁶ Secondly, the 1519-1521 voyages are significant as an outcome of interfaith commercial relations and coexistence, which may have been an aspect of everyday life at Arguin. Some of the island's original inhabitants were killed or enslaved when the Portuguese first arrived, but many of those who fled may have returned soon afterwards; by the dawn of the sixteenth century, the island contained "some 70 or more houses of Moors... known as Azenegues" in addition to the Portuguese outpost.²⁷ Monod notes that the *feitoria* itself may have been under "Muslim" control at one point later, and that while no Christian tomb has yet been found on the island, there were two cemeteries, including a Muslim burial ground near the fortress.²⁸

Portuguese *feitoria* officials' evident cooperation with Mauritanian merchants in the trafficking of enslaved black Africans at Arguin – despite Muslim-Christian conflict and Iberian conquests of coastal towns in nearby Morocco during the same period – strongly echoes the "common culture of slavery" shared by Christians and Muslims in the late medieval Mediterranean.²⁹ In addition to representing the birth of the transatlantic slave trade, these Arguin-Caribbean voyages provide grounds for viewing the early Atlantic traffic as an extension or adaptation of Mediterranean slaving practices. Although these contexts differed in several important ways, the comparison can be extended beyond this trade's transconfessional nature. Not unlike those of the western Mediterranean, enslaved populations in the Spanish Caribbean had been ethnically diverse during the late 1400s and early 1500s, including not only black Africans, people of African descent, and very small numbers of Iberian *moriscos* and North African *berberiscos*, but also Amerindian captives of widely different origins.³⁰ Taking place almost precisely during a period in which

²⁶ Jennifer Lofkrantz and Paul E. Lovejoy, "Maintaining Network Boundaries: Islamic Law and Commerce from Sahara to Guinea Shores," *Slavery & Abolition* 36:2 (2015): 211-32.

²⁷ Azinhaga, "A Feitoria," 46-7, 79.

²⁸ Théodore Monod, *L'île d'Arguin (Mauritanie). Essai Historique* (Lisbon: IICT, 1983), 15, 24.

²⁹ Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260-1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019). Evidence of diplomacy, ransom, slave trafficking, and other commercial exchanges between Christian and Muslim polities in the western Mediterranean despite geopolitical rivalry and military conflict is extensive. See for example Eloy Martín Corrales, "Exportaciones españolas al Mediterráneo musulmán (siglos XVI-XVIII)," in *Circulación de personas e intercambios comerciales en el Mediterráneo y en el Atlántico (siglos XVI, XVII, XVIII)*, ed. José Antonio Martínez Torres (Madrid: CSIC, 2008), 191-214; José Miguel Escribano Páez, "Negotiating with the 'Infidel': Imperial Expansion and Cross-Confessional Diplomacy in the Early Modern Maghreb (1492-1516)," *Itinerario* 40:2 (2016): 189-214; Roser Salicrú i Lluch, "Fronteras que no son frontera: musulmanes a norte y sur del estrecho de Gibraltar en el siglo XV," *Vegueta* 18 (2018): 257-77; Rafael M. Pérez García, *El tráfico de personas entre Ceuta y la Península Ibérica en el siglo XVI: esclavos africanos y cautivos europeos* (Ceuta: Instituto de Estudios Ceutíes, 2022).

³⁰ Among other works, see Julio Damiani Cósimi, *Estratificación social, esclavos y naborías en el Puerto Rico minero del siglo XVI* (Río Piedras: Universidad de Puerto Rico Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, 1993); Ida Altman, "Marriage, Family, and Ethnicity in the Early Spanish Caribbean," *William & Mary Quarterly* 70:2 (2013): 225-50; Erin Woodruff Stone, *Captives of Conquest: Slavery in the Early Modern Spanish Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021); Ernesto Mercado-Montero, "Indigenous Raiding, Captive Taking, and the Politics of Maritime Violence in the Long Sixteenth-Century Lesser Antilles," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 105:1 (2025): 1-34.

enslaved populations in western Mediterranean ports such as Barcelona were becoming less diverse and more prominently comprised of enslaved black Africans, the Arguin-Caribbean voyages of 1519–1521 marked the beginnings of a similar transformation in the Greater Antilles.³¹

São Tomé

By 1526 the reconfigured Genoese consortium had not managed to deliver 4,000 captives to the Caribbean, ostensibly due to a lack of supply in Arguin, but arranged to embark enslaved Africans on the island of São Tomé instead.³² As part of this arrangement, shipmaster Polo de Spíndola, a Genoese resident of Málaga, was hired to transport 300 captives.³³ Many aspects of his voyage to São Tomé, Puerto Rico, and Hispaniola on the ship *Santa María de Begoña* are richly documented in Spanish-language records. After embarking at least 333 enslaved Africans in São Tomé in early 1527, Spíndola sailed for the Caribbean, disembarking several captives in Puerto Rico before finally entering the harbour of Santo Domingo on 15 June in the same year.³⁴ In a subsequent legal suit, Genoese merchant Agustín de Vivaldo complained that Spíndola had delivered only 257 captives; Spíndola's receipts confirm that only 278 Africans had been embarked on behalf of the voyage backers, while over 50 additional captives were earmarked for Spíndola, other mariners, or Spanish Caribbean officials. When questioned in Santo Domingo, crew members could not state with precision how many enslaved Africans they had brought from São Tomé because some had died of illness, and others “fell and threw themselves intentionally into the sea.”³⁵

Known to historians since the 1960s, the *Santa María de Begoña* was until recently considered the earliest slaving voyage to sail directly from Africa to the Americas, and one of eight described in Portuguese sources as transporting captives from São Tomé to the Caribbean during the late 1520s and 1530s.³⁶ Shipping, tax, and judicial records from the Caribbean indicate that this traffic was at least twice as large as previously believed. A minimum of eight additional ships arriving in the Greater Antilles before 1542 had sailed from São Tomé, with the first, as documented by Jalil Sued Badillo and Ángel López Cantos, landing 139 enslaved Africans in Puerto Rico in 1522.³⁷ The *Cuerpo Santo* (or *Corpo Santo*), a second vessel which “came from the island of Santo Tomé loaded with blacks” (and civet cats, parrots, rice, textiles, sugar, and furniture), docked in Puerto Rico in May 1524.³⁸ Recent research by Rafael Pérez García shows that this vessel had embarked no less than 360 captives, six of whom managed to escape in São Tomé prior to its departure. At least 37 died at sea, and 67 were sold or entrusted to royal officials in Puerto Rico; the remaining 251 African women,

³¹ Iván Armenteros Martínez, *Lesclavitud a la Barcelona del Renacimiento (1479–1516). Un port mediterrani sota la influència del primer tràfic negrer* (Barcelona: Fundació Noguera, 2016), 97–155.

³² Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Lisbon, Portugal), Corpo Cronológico, Parte II [hereafter ANTT-CC-2], maço 131, n.154; Fernández Chaves and Pérez García, “La élite mercantil,” 395. On this merchant consortium's evolution, see Rafael M. Pérez García, “El capitalismo de Génova y Burgos y la apertura de la ruta negrera de Santo Tomé al Caribe en la década de 1520,” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 79:2 (2022), 421–8.

³³ ANTT-CC-2, maço 133, n.115. Spíndola or Espíndola were Spanish-language versions of the surname Spinola.

³⁴ AGI-Justicia 7, n.3; AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, f. 408r. See also Eagle and Wheat, “Early Iberian,” 59; Pérez García, “El capitalismo,” 437–42.

³⁵ AGI-Justicia 7, n.3, fol. 57r. “Algunos de los dichos negros se cayeron e echaron por su voluntad a la mar.”

³⁶ Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, rev. 2nd ed. (Paris: A. Colin, 1966), vol. 1: 134; Mendes, “Portugal,” 23–4; Mendes, “Foundations,” 71; David Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), xii, 197, 297.

³⁷ Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico Negro*, 74.

³⁸ AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.2, r.2, fols. 81r, 95r–96r; Eagle and Wheat, “Early Iberian,” 53.

men, and children were disembarked in Santo Domingo.³⁹ These three São Tomé voyages were followed by at least 13 others arriving in Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, or Jamaica in 1528–1541 (Table 1). Although slaves continued to arrive in accordance with the 4,000 “licenses” acquired by the Genoese consortium, others were transported under the auspices of a 1528 *asiento* undertaken by agents of the Welser family, often described in Caribbean sources as “the Germans.”⁴⁰

Cooperation between the Castilian and Portuguese crowns in the transatlantic slave trade during this period was largely tacit, with merchants of diverse European origin making separate arrangements within the administrative apparatus of each monarch. In the 1530s, Spanish royal directives concerning the Casa de la Contratación’s limited ability to control voyages moving between ostensibly Castilian and Portuguese jurisdictions provide further details about vessels arriving in the Caribbean from São Tomé. In October 1533, Charles V notified the Audiencia of Santo Domingo that ships “from the kingdom of Portugal and elsewhere” had been taking enslaved Africans to Hispaniola to sell them in exchange for “gold and other merchandise,” then returning to Europe without stopping in Seville to register their voyage or pay taxes. According to this decree and a second *cédula* issued in 1534, from that time forward shipmasters were required to pledge that they would sail directly from Hispaniola to Seville, providing insurance equal in value to their profits; otherwise they would face arrest and confiscation of any merchandise or proceeds. In response, Santo Domingo officials presented evidence of their implementation of the new policy, including a petition by João Eanes, captain and pilot of the *Santo António*, who in May 1534 had requested clearance for departure. Having arrived from São Tomé with 187 captives less than two weeks earlier, he aimed to return to Lisbon, then “bring slaves to this city again” on a new voyage. In order to bypass the stricter departure requirements, his ship would leave carrying only ballast.⁴¹

But the *oidores*’ report also indicated that enforcement of the policy was hampered by local resistance based on logistical considerations. Departure requests submitted in 1535 by João Guizado and Vicente Rodrigues, captain and *maestre* of the *nao San Miguel* which had brought 173 captives from São Tomé that year, indicate that slaving voyages also allowed Spanish Caribbean merchants to export products to Iberia. Petitioning to sail to Castile with merchandise and passengers “just like the other ships that go to Spain,” Guizado observed that there was no comparably-sized Castilian vessel in Santo Domingo’s port capable of making the journey at that time. Guizado’s petition was reinforced by a statement signed by six merchants, five of whom – García de Báscones, Diego de Toledo, Álgar Arias, Pedro Hernández de Utrera, Juan de Jaén – bore surnames suggesting Spanish origins. They requested authorization for “the Portuguese ship named *San Miguel*, of which Vicente Rodrigues is shipmaster” and Guizado was captain, to depart for Seville with its cargo of “much sugar, hides, and other merchandise” already loaded on their behalf.⁴² Their requests evidently swayed Audiencia officials; Rodrigues arrived in Seville on the *San Miguel* later that year.⁴³

³⁹ Pérez García, “El capitalismo,” 433–7.

⁴⁰ Fernández Chaves and Pérez García, “La élite mercantil,” 397–8; Marc Eagle, “The Early Slave Trade to Spanish America: Caribbean Pathways, 1530–1580,” in *The Spanish Caribbean and the Atlantic World in the Long Sixteenth Century*, eds. Ida Altman and David Wheat (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 141–2.

⁴¹ AGI-Santo Domingo [hereafter SD] 10, n.12, fols. 1r–5r.

⁴² *Ibid.*, fols. 4r–6r.

⁴³ Huguette Chaunu and Pierre Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique (1504–1650)* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1955), vol. 2: 262–3.

Table 1. Slaving Voyages from Africa arriving in the Spanish Caribbean, 1519-1545

	Date of Arrival	Vessel	Shipmaster	Port of Departure	Arrival Port(s)	Known Captives
1	1519-?-?	?	?	Arguin	PR	62
2	1520-11-15	<i>Santa María de la Luz</i>	Francisco de Rosa	Arguin	PR	54
3	1521-05-09	<i>San Miguel</i>	Martín de Urquiza	Arguin	PR	79
4	1521-10-10	?	Francisco de Rosa	Arguin	PR	?
5	1522-?-?	?	?	São Tomé	PR	139
6	1524-05-03	<i>Cuerpo Santo</i>	Pero Fernandes	São Tomé	PR, Hisp.	312
7	1526-?-?	?	Bartolomé Carreño	Cabo Verde	Cuba	40
8	1526-?-?	?	Bartolomé Carreño	Cabo Verde	Cuba	75
9	1527-?-?	?	Cristóbal Sánchez	Cabo Verde	Cubagua, Hisp.	17
10	1527-?-?	?	Gonzalo de la Peña	Cabo Verde	PR	6
11	1527-06-15	<i>Santa María de Begoña</i>	Polo de Spíndola	São Tomé	PR, Hisp.	263
12	1527-12-20	<i>Concepción</i>	Alonso Díaz	Cabo Verde	PR	46
13	1528-12-13	<i>Los Reyes Magos</i>	Pedro Monteiro	São Tomé	Hisp.	?
14	1529-05-22	<i>Concepción</i>	Juan Rodrigo	Cabo Verde	Hisp.	?
15	1529-07-10	?	Diego García	Cabo Verde	PR	25
16	1529-10-?	?	Francisco Ferreira	São Tomé	Hisp.	248
17	1529-10-06	<i>Santa María Concepción</i>	Francisco Rodríguez	Cabo Verde	Hisp.	?
18	1529-10-27	<i>Santa María de la India</i>	Roque Hernandes	São Tomé	Hisp.	?
19	1530-06-29	<i>Tres Reyes Magos</i>	Antonio Martín	São Tomé	Hisp.	231
20	1531-?-?	<i>San Juan</i>	Juan de Urrutia	Cabo Verde	ND	19
21	1532-?-?	<i>San Salvador</i>	Pedro Monteiro	RG	PR	140
22	1532-01-12	<i>Santa Ana</i>	Jorge Yañes	São Tomé	Hisp.	?
23	1532-06-17	<i>Santa María de Regla</i>	Francisco Galdamez	Cabo Verde	PR	?

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued.)

	Date of Arrival	Vessel	Shipmaster	Port of Departure	Arrival Port(s)	Known Captives
24	1532-07-05	?	Martín de [?]chez	Cabo Verde	PR	14
25	1532-11-07	<i>San Juan</i>	Fernan Diaz	São Tomé	Hisp.	198
26	1533-01-18	<i>Santo Antonio</i>	Martín Alfonso	São Tomé	PR, Hisp.	175
27	1533-03-15	<i>San Pedro</i>	Jorge Yañes	Cabo Verde	PR	?
28	1533-04-20	<i>Santa Maria de Luz</i>	Juan Guisado	São Tomé	Hisp.	202
29	1534-?-?	<i>Conceição</i>	Pedro Monteiro	São Tomé	Jamaica	167
30	1534-04-26	<i>Santo António</i>	Diego Correa	São Tomé	Hisp.	187
31	1535-?-?	<i>Rosario</i>	?	Cabo Verde	TF	53
32	1535-?-?	<i>San Francisco</i>	Francisco Rodrigues	Cabo Verde	Hisp.	?
33	1535-09-?	?	?	Cabo Verde	Hisp.	80
34	1535-?-?	<i>São Miguel</i>	Vicente Rodrigues	São Tomé	Hisp.	173
35	1536-?-?	?	Bernaldo de Mesa	Cabo Verde	PR	7
36	1538-09-?	?	?	São Tomé	Hisp.	?
37	1538-10-?	<i>Santisteban</i>	Sebastián Eanes	Cabo Verde	Hisp.	116
38	1539-?-?	?	Diego de Padilla	Cabo Verde	Hisp.	8
39	1539-01-03	<i>San Anton</i>	Diego González	Cabo Verde	PR	40
40	1541-01-19	<i>Santa María de las Raices</i>	Antonio Carvalho	São Tomé	PR	150
41	1542-11-03	<i>San Juan</i>	Ambrosio Pérez	Cabo Verde	Hisp.	?
42	1542-11-10	<i>San Vicente</i>	Diego Pérez	Cabo Verde	Hisp.	?
43	1543-06-05	<i>Corpus Cristi</i>	Cristóbal García	Cabo Verde	Hisp.	2
44	1544-06-25	<i>Concepción</i>	Pantaleon Pires	Cabo Verde	Hisp.	?
45	1545-10-14	<i>San Cristóbal</i>	Antonio Feo	Cabo Verde, RSD	Hisp.	99

Hisp. = Hispaniola; ND = Nombre de Dios; PR = Puerto Rico; RG = Rios de Guinea; RSD = Rio de São Domingos; TF = Tierra Firme

Sources and Notes

1. AGI-Indiferente 1382A, s/n. At least two voyages from Arguin brought 116 captives to Puerto Rico in 1519 and 1520; Francisco de Rosa's voyage with 54 captives in 1520 was likely one of these. I assume the remaining 62 enslaved Africans from Arguin arrived on a single vessel in 1519. See also TSTD 43009.

2. AGI-Patronato 175, r.9, fols. 141r, 150r; AGI-Justicia 711, n.9, pieza 2, sin folio [image 127]; Eagle and Wheat, "Early Iberian," 50-51; TSTD 42987. This vessel disembarked 44 captives in San Juan, but de Rosa landed ten additional captives in San Germán on an unspecified date in 1521. I assume the ten captives arrived on this voyage, but they may have arrived on de Rosa's Arguin-Puerto Rico voyage in late 1521. If the latter case, ten additional captives should be added to the 1519 Arguin voyage (for a total of 72).

3. AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.3, fol. 138r; AGI-Patronato 175, r.9, fol. 152v; AGI-Justicia 711, n.9, pieza 2, sin folio [image 127]; Eagle and Wheat, "Early Iberian," 51.

- 4.AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.3, fol. 139r; AGI-Justicia 711, n.9, pieza 2, sin folio [image 127].
- 5.AGI-Indiferente 1382A, s/n, fol. 2v; Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico Negro*, 74.
- 6.AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.2, r.2, fols. 81r, 95r-96r; Eagle and Wheat, "Early Iberian," 53; Pérez García, "El capitalismo," 433-7.
- 7.Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud (volumen IV)*, 117; Pike, *Enterprise*, 172; TSTD 11297.
- 8.Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud (volumen IV)*, 117; Pike, *Enterprise*, 172; TSTD 11298.
- 9.AGI-Indiferente 421, L.12, fol. 277r; Eagle, "Caribbean Pathways," 156; Eagle and Wheat, "Early Iberian," 50, 68. Denied entry at Cubagua, the vessel went to Hispaniola instead.
- 10.AGI-SD 2280, L.2, fol. 16v.
- 11.AGI-Justicia, 7, n.3; ANTT-CC-2, maço 133, n.115; AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 408r; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 152; Braudel, *La Méditerranée*, vol. 1: 134; Mendes, "Foundations," 71; Eagle and Wheat, "Early Iberian," 59; Pérez García, "El capitalismo," 421-8; TSTD 46473.
- 12.AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.5, fols. 193r; 259v-260r; AGI-SD 2280, L.2, fols. 15v-16r; Tanodi, *Documentos*, vol. 2: 228; Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico Negro*, 75-6; TSTD 99027. See also AGI-Justicia 7, n.9, pieza 2, sin folio [image 143].
- 13.AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 421r; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 167. "Traxo negros." Rodríguez Morel lists arrival date as October 13.
- 14.AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 422v; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 168. Vessel brought "mercaderias e otras cosas y negros."
- 15.AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.6, fols. 345r; 678v, 679v-680r; AGI-SD 2280, L.2, fols. 10v, 14v-16v.
- 16.AGI-Justicia 973, n.1, r.1, fols. 4r-9r.
- 17.AGI-Indiferente 1962, L.4, fol. 13r; AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 426r; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 172; Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique*, vol. 2: 216-7.
- 18.AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 426r; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 172. "Vino con negros de los alemanes, de Santo Tomé."
- 19.AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 429r; AGI-Justicia 973, n.1, r.1, fols. 15v-22v; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 175. The sources provide two arrival dates: June 29 and July 1, 1530.
- 20.AGI-Panamá 234, L.5, fols. 111r, 197v.
- 21.AGI-SD 2280, L.1, fols. 155v, 163r, 167r-167v; *ibid.*, L.2, fol. 11r; Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico Negro*, 116 (citing AGI-SD 166); Eagle and Wheat, "Early Iberian," 58.
- 22.AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 443v; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 190. "Vino con negros de Santo Tome para los alemanes." See also Eagle, "Caribbean Pathways," 142.
- 23.AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.6, fol. 355r; Tanodi, *Documentos*, vol. 2: 287; TSTD 44292. This ship "arrived from Cabo Verde" with unspecified "merchandise" which may not have included enslaved Africans, but according to Seville notarial records it was supposed to have embarked 50 captives in the Cape Verde Islands; see Pérez García and Fernández Chaves, "Sevilla y la trata," 605.
- 24.AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.6, fols. 422v-423r; Tanodi, *Documentos*, vol. 2: 321-2; TSTD 28994.
- 25.AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 449r; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 195. See also ANTT-CC-2, maço 182, n.76; maço 205, n.13; Mendes, "Foundations," 71; TSTD 46478. Of 231 captives embarked, 33 died during the voyage.
- 26.AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 449v; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 196. See also ANTT-CC-2, maço 180, n.19 and 21; maço 205, n.13; Godinho, *Os descobrimentos*, vol. 4: 176-7; Mendes, "Foundations," 71; TSTD 11293. According to Godinho, 201 captives were embarked in São Tomé.
- 27.AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.6, fol. 358v; Tanodi, *Documentos*, vol. 2: 289; TSTD 28215.
- 28.AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 450r; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 197; Godinho, *Os descobrimentos*, vol. 4: 177. See also ANTT-CC-2, maço 181, n.67; maço 205, n.13; Mendes, "Foundations," 71; TSTD 46479. 38 captives died at sea.
- 29.ANTT-CC-2, maço 190, n.50; maço 209, n.85; Godinho, *Os descobrimentos*, vol. 4: 177; Mendes, "Foundations," 71; TSTD 46480. Monteiro evidently embarked 250 "peças" but 83 died before reaching Jamaica. This is the only voyage in this list that cannot yet be confirmed by corresponding Spanish-language sources.
- 30.AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 458r; AGI-SD 10, n.12; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 204. See also ANTT-CC-2, maço 187, n.82; maço 210, n.91, fol. 3r; Mendes, "Foundations," 71; TSTD 46476. I assume voyages ascribed to João Eanes (captain and pilot) and Diego Correa (maestre) are the same.
- 31.AGI-SD 2280, L.2, fol. 165v. Destination in "Tierra Firme" is not specified.
- 32.AGI-Indiferente 1092, n.118; Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique*, vol. 2: 262-3.
- 33.Altman, "Key to the Indies," 10 (citing AGI-SD 77, n.82). Since this ship reached Puerto Plata in September 1535, it likely is not the same as the *San Francisco*, which departed from Hispaniola, stopped in Lisbon, and arrived in Seville by November 17.
- 34.AGI-SD 10, n.12. The vessel's captain on this voyage was João Guizado. See also ANTT-CC-2, maço 196, n.147; maço 209, n.50; maço 210, n.91, fol. 4r; Godinho, *Os descobrimentos*, vol. 4: 177; Mendes, "Foundations," 71; TSTD 46477. 201 captives had been embarked in São Tomé.
- 35.AGI-SD 2280, L.2, fol. 95v; Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico Negro*, 99.
- 36.AGI-Justicia 16, n.1, r.1, fol. 1r.
- 37.AGI-SD 74, r.1, n.46; AGI-SD 868, L.1, fols. 154v-155r; AGI-Ctdra 1051, n.1, 152v. Date of arrival is approximate; alternate ship name was *San Sebastián*.
- 38.AGI-SD 868, L.1, fol. 158v.
- 39.AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.6, fols. 584v-585r; 680v-681r; Tanodi, *Documentos*, vol. 2: 442-3; TSTD 5085.
- 40.AGI-Justicia 991, n.1, r.4; AGI-SD 868, L.2, fols. 71v, 116r; Eagle, "Caribbean Pathways," 145-6; TSTD 42994.
- 41.AGI-Ctdra 1051, n.1, fols. 117r-117v.
- 42.AGI-Ctdra 1051, n.1, fols. 117r-117v.
- 43.AGI-Justicia 827, n.5, fols. 14r-17v.
- 44.AGI-Ctdra 1051, n.2, fol. 5r.
- 45.AGI-Justicia 1177, n.6, fols. 1r-2v.

Traffic toward the Caribbean was only one of several Sãotomean slaving routes during the early 1500s; others included the importation of captives from the Kingdoms of Benin and Kongo and elsewhere; slave exports to Lisbon; and the delivery of enslaved Africans to

São Jorge da Mina for sale to African buyers.⁴⁴ But these circuits should not be viewed as entirely separate. Some Iberian seafarers undoubtedly specialized in one route or another.⁴⁵ But others who transported captives from São Tomé to the Caribbean undertook multiple voyages; for example Fernán Díaz, pilot of the *Santa María de Begoña* in 1527, was likely the same Fernán Díaz who returned to Hispaniola as *maestre* and captain of the *San Juan* in 1532.⁴⁶ Although some cases may involve different individuals sharing the same name, abundant examples indicate that mariners also participated in multiple slaving circuits. Between his voyages from São Tomé to Santo Domingo (1528) and Jamaica (1534), Pero Monteiro transported captives to Lisbon in 1529.⁴⁷ The *Santa María de Begoña*'s *contra maestre* Juan do Porto may have been the same João do Porto who piloted a voyage from São Tomé to São Jorge da Mina in 1519.⁴⁸ "Diego Correa," who alongside João Eanes brought 187 enslaved Africans from São Tomé to Hispaniola in 1534 as *maestre* of the *Santo António*, was probably the same Diogo Correa who one year later piloted a vessel from São Tomé to Mpinda and back, returning with 369 captives.⁴⁹

Whereas scholars previously assumed that a "decline of the São Tomé-Elmina slave trade" led to "the shift in the traffic to direct shipment across the Atlantic,"⁵⁰ the chronological distribution of slaving voyages from São Tomé to the early Spanish Caribbean (1522-1541) closely matches the peak years of traffic from São Tomé to São Jorge da Mina (1520s-early 1530s) and available data for voyages from São Tomé to Lisbon (1519-1535). Differences in the frequency and volume of these circuits ensured their compatibility. Approximately one voyage per year carried captives from São Tomé to Lisbon, typically in addition to sugar and other commodities. On average these voyages embarked 65 captives but delivered only 45 or 46, with mortality rates often reaching 30% or higher.⁵¹ The São Tomé-São Jorge da Mina traffic was larger, with 48 vessels disembarking at least 3,631 enslaved Africans, along with blue beads known as *coris* and other merchandise, at Elmina between 1515 and 1536.⁵² Thus at least two ships per year took captives from São Tomé

⁴⁴ John L. Vogt, "The Early Sao Tome-Principe Slave Trade with Mina, 1500-1540," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6:3 (1973): 453-67; Maria Emília Madeira Santos, "Rotas atlânticas, o caso da carreira de S. Tomé," *Separata, Actas do II Colóquio Internacional de História da Madeira* (1989), 649-55 (Lisbon: IICT, 1990); J. Bato'ora Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, *São Jorge da Mina (1482-1637): la vie d'un comptoir portugais en Afrique occidentale* (Lisbon: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, 1993), 356-61; Elbl, "The Volume," 71-2; Mendes, "Portugal," 22-6; Amândio Barros, "Trato de escravos e economia atlântica. O contrato do navio Conceição, 1525-1526," in *Trabalho forçado africano. Articulações com o poder político* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2007), 15-46.

⁴⁵ Mendes, "Foundations," 69.

⁴⁶ Genaro Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas de las Cajas Reales de Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Archivo General de la Nación, 2020), vol. 2: 195; ANTT-CC-2, maço 182, n.76; maço 205, n.13; Mendes, "Foundations," 71.

⁴⁷ Mendes, "Portugal," 24-5. A pilot or pilots of the same name also completed the earliest known voyage from the Upper Guinea Coast ("Rios de Guinea") to the Caribbean on the ship *San Salvador*, disembarking 140 captives in Puerto Rico in 1532, and sailed from Portugal toward Flanders on the ship *Nossa Senhora de Varzim* later in the same decade; see Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico negro*, 116; Eagle and Wheat, "Early Iberian," 58; ANTT-CC-2, maço 209, n.26.

⁴⁸ AGI-Justicia 7, n.3, fols. 57r-57v; Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, *São Jorge da Mina*, 358-9 (insert), 530.

⁴⁹ Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 204; António Brásio (comp.), *Monumenta Missionaria Africana: Africa Occidentalis* [1ª série], vol. 15 (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1988), 98-102.

⁵⁰ Robert Garfield, *A History of São Tomé Island, 1470-1655: The Key to Guinea* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 47.

⁵¹ Calculated from Maria Manuel Torrão, *Dietas alimentares. Transferências e adaptações nas ilhas de Cabo Verde (1460-1540)* (Lisbon: IICT, 1995), 58, 81; Mendes, "Portugal," 24-6. See also Arlindo Manuel Caldeira, "The Island Trade Route of São Tomé in the 16th century: Ships, Products, Capitals," *Rivista dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea* 9:2 (2020): 55-76.

⁵² Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, *São Jorge da Mina*, 358-9 (insert). Ballong-Wen-Mewuda's larger total of 5,768 captives delivered during this period relies on additional sources that are not matched by voyage data, and are thus excluded from the estimate here. See also Vogt, "Early Sao Tome-Principe," 464-5.

to São Jorge da Mina, each landing an average of 75 or 76 captives (although this figure is probably low for the 1520s and early 1530s, when “three to six separate vessels were kept continually busy hauling slaves to Mina”).⁵³ With the exception of years in which two ships arrived – 1529, 1532, 1533 – slaving voyages from São Tomé to the Caribbean were staggered farther apart than those of the other slave routes, with one voyage every 15 months or so. But these were higher volume enterprises. Twelve known São Tomé–Caribbean voyages disembarked a total of 2,445 captives, suggesting an average of 203–204 surviving captives per voyage. The actual numbers may have been higher, since arrival information for all but two of these voyages is only available for a single port. Other ships’ itineraries may have resembled that of the *Cuerpo Santo*, which in 1524 landed 61 captives in Puerto Rico and then 251 in Hispaniola.

In short, while residents of São Tomé and Príncipe had participated in slaving voyages within the Gulf of Guinea since the 1490s, slaving circuits to Lisbon, São Jorge da Mina, and the Caribbean (especially the latter routes) flourished simultaneously in the 1520s and 1530s. In addition to commencing earlier than previously believed, the São Tomé–Caribbean traffic featured volume levels approaching that of the São Tomé–Mina traffic, with larger numbers of captives on fewer voyages. Compatible voyage frequencies, mariners’ familiarity with multiple routes to and from São Tomé, and Caribbean merchants’ reliance on ships arriving from São Tomé to send goods to Iberia all point to the São Tomé–Caribbean trade as one segment within a broader constellation of contemporaneous maritime circuits. The new Caribbean data also indicates that the total volume of slave exports from early sixteenth-century São Tomé must have been larger than previously estimated. That a multidirectional surge in trafficking from São Tomé took place precisely during the period associated with the rise of the island’s sugar industry – a development widely viewed as the origin of the Atlantic sugar complex⁵⁴ – not only suggests that these processes were closely related, but also raises questions about the relative importance of each within São Tomé’s contribution to the sixteenth-century global economy. While they undeniably complemented sugar cultivation in both the Gulf of Guinea and the Caribbean, these early São-Tomean slaving circuits also constituted an expansive industry in their own right.⁵⁵

The Cape Verde Islands

Despite Arguin and then São Tomé’s importance in the initial traffic of enslaved Africans to the Caribbean, after the mid-1530s this commerce was largely comprised of voyages from the Cape Verde Islands. Seville’s notarial records contain many references to arrangements between voyage backers and mariners who planned to embark captives in Santiago de Cabo Verde for transportation to New Spain or elsewhere; the Cape Verde Islands were also the intended embarkation site for the vast majority of outbound slaving voyages registered with the Casa de la Contratación during the 1540s and afterwards.⁵⁶ But data on

⁵³ Vogt, “Early Sao Tome-Principe,” 458.

⁵⁴ See for example Gerhard Seibert, “São Tomé & Príncipe: The First Plantation Economy in the Tropics,” in *Commercial Agriculture, the Slave Trade & Slavery in Atlantic Africa*, eds. Robin Law, Suzanne Schwarz, and Silke Strickrodt (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2013), 54–78. For an overview of the development of Luso-Atlantic sugar cultivation, see Joaquim Romero Magalhães, “O açúcar nas ilhas portuguesas do Atlântico séculos XV e XVI,” *Varia Historia* 25, n.41 (2009): 151–75.

⁵⁵ For the argument that slaving voyages may have been viewed by Iberian investors as a relatively short-term profit scheme in comparison to the capital and international contacts required to profit from sugar cultivation, see Arlindo Manuel Caldeira, “Learning the Ropes in the Tropics: Slavery and the Plantation System on the Island of São Tomé,” *African Economic History* 39 (2011), 42.

⁵⁶ Pike, *Enterprise*, 63–7, 76–7; Maria da Graça A. Mateus Ventura, *Negreiros portugueses na rota das Índias de Castela (1541–1556)* (Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 1999), 121–33; Rafael M. Pérez García and Manuel F. Fernández Chaves, “Sevilla

intended voyages, as opposed to information generated in American ports, usually provides little indication of actual itineraries or captives embarked.⁵⁷ This problem is especially relevant for our understanding of the early traffic from the Cape Verde Islands to the Americas. For example, although the Spanish crown's grant of 23,000 "licenses" to Basque official Fernando Ochoa in 1553 evidently "did not take effect," two of its administrators, the Genoese brothers Nicolás and Visconte Cataño, appointed agents in Santiago de Cabo Verde and authorized various shipmasters to transport captives from the Cape Verde Islands to New Spain and Nombre de Dios.⁵⁸ It is not yet known if most of these voyages ever materialized, or whether those that reached the Americas carried captives or not.⁵⁹

The timing of the earliest slaving voyages from the Cape Verde Islands to the Caribbean is even more speculative, with some historians arguing that this traffic began as early as 1514, if not sooner.⁶⁰ Future research may uncover evidence supporting this claim. Extant Santiago de Cabo Verde customs records from 1513-1515 indicate the presence of Spanish merchants and passengers on Portuguese ships arriving and departing from Ribeira Grande, and the regular arrival of vessels described as 'Spanish' or 'Castilian' which, upon departure, transported enslaved Africans, hides, and Portuguese passengers.⁶¹ This pattern had likely been established even earlier, given that Castilian ships and merchants from the Canary Islands were present in the Cape Verde Islands by the late 1470s.⁶² And in 1522, one Gran Canaria resident complained that thirteen years earlier (in 1509) her husband had travelled to the Cape Verde Islands but never returned.⁶³ Notarial records from Tenerife and Gran Canaria depict several voyages sailing from the Canaries to the Cape Verde Islands or vice versa in the 1520s and 1530s.⁶⁴ Voyages from La Palma to Santiago Island during the 1540s and 1550s are documented in some detail; these vessels typically carried wine, tar (*brea*), and foodstuffs, returning with enslaved Africans as well as hides and other merchandise.⁶⁵

y la trata negrera atlántica: envíos de esclavos desde Cabo Verde a la América española, 1569-1579," in *Estudios de Historia Moderna en Homenaje al profesor Antonio García-Baquero*, coord. León Carlos Álvarez Santaló (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 2009): 597-622. See also TSTD 41609-41679. This literature documents a number of voyages registered in Seville in 1544-1545 that are not included in Table 1 because I have not yet been able to determine whether they embarked captives in the Cape Verde Islands and transported them to American ports as intended. For the arrivals of two such voyages in Nombre de Dios in 1545 – the *Santa María de la Concepción* (TSTD 41611) and the *Buenaventura* (TSTD 41614) – but no indication of their African ports of embarkation or captives disembarked, see Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique*, vol. 2: 372-3, 376-7, 380-1.

⁵⁷ Eagle, "Caribbean Pathways."

⁵⁸ *Catálogo de los Fondos Americanos del Archivo de Protocolos de Sevilla* (Seville: Instituto Hispanocubano de Historia de América, 2014-2017), vol. 13: 239, 244, 271, 279, 282, 295-6; vol. 14: 317, 309, 312, 368 ("no tuvo efecto"); Pike, *Enterprise*, 79-80.

⁵⁹ For evidence of the *Nuestra Señora de Valverde*'s arrival in Veracruz in 1554 – but no indication of whether it delivered 180 captives from the Cape Verde Islands, as per voyage backers' agreement with *maestre* and owner Antonio Hernández Maraño, *vecino* of La Palma – see AGI-Ctdra 877, n.1, pliego 9; TSTD 42134.

⁶⁰ Trevor P. Hall, "The Role of Cape Verde Islands in Organizing and Operating Maritime Trade between West Africa and Iberian Territories, 1441-1616" (PhD dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1993), 439-42; Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 118, 192.

⁶¹ *História Geral de Cabo Verde: Corpo Documental* (Lisbon: Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical; Praia: Direcção-Geral do Património Cultural de Cabo Verde, 1988-90), vol. 2: 231-322; Hall, "The Role," 340-61.

⁶² Lobo Cabrera, "Gran Canaria," 324; Armenteros Martínez, *Catalunya*, 96-7.

⁶³ Coello Gómez et al., *Alonso Gutiérrez*, 236-7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 453; Delfina Galván Alonso, *Protocolos de Bernardino Justiniano (1526-1527)* (La Laguna: Instituto de Estudios Canarios, 1990), 8, 256, 768; Lobo Cabrera, *La esclavitud*, 106-7.

⁶⁵ Luis Agustín Hernández Martín, *Protocolos de Domingo Pérez escribano público de La Palma* (Santa Cruz de La Palma: Caja General de Ahorros de Canarias, 1999-2005), vol. 1: 199, vol. 2: 285-6; vol. 3: 115-7, 349-50, 453-4; vol. 4: 81-3, 161-2, 288; Luis Francisco Cumplido Mancera, "La exportación de la brea desde la Isla de La Palma en 1545-1570: un producto esencial para las relaciones comerciales palmeras con Portugal e Indias," in *Los caminos*

Interestingly, enslaved persons sometimes moved from Castilian towards Portuguese jurisdictions: in 1528, a “white slave” named Pedro Palmés, “branded on the face,” was taken from Gran Canaria and sold in Santiago de Cabo Verde.⁶⁶

Fragmentary evidence suggests that one vessel arriving in Puerto Rico in 1522 may have embarked captives in the Cape Verde Islands. Sailing from an unspecified port, shipmaster Bartolomé Carreño arrived in San Juan on the caravel *San Antón* on July 13, 1522, disembarking 159 captives.⁶⁷ Although the ship initially departed from Seville, it delivered the largest shipment of captives by far to have been transported to the Americas up to that point, and would not be superseded until the *Corpo Santo*’s arrival from São Tomé two years later, indicating that it likely stopped in São Tomé or the Cape Verde Islands en route to the Caribbean.⁶⁸ Evidence from later years suggests that Carreño was familiar with the Cape Verde Islands. According to his arrangement with Genoese merchant and Seville resident Pedro Benito de Basiniana in 1526, Carreño (who as noted by Ruth Pike was also known as “Esteban Carrega”) agreed to transport enslaved Africans from Santiago de Cabo Verde to Hispaniola or Cuba, possibly on multiple voyages.⁶⁹ According to José Antonio Saco, royal officials in Santiago de Cuba wrote in 1530 that “four years earlier” a certain “Carreño and Estéban Basiñana Ginoves brought forty registered blacks from Cabo Verde, then [another] 75 with license for only 40.”⁷⁰ Carreño’s subsequent voyage from the Cape Verde Islands to Santo Domingo in 1529 as captain of the ship *La Concepción* undoubtedly pertained to this agreement as well.⁷¹ As late as 1551, Carreño finally paid off an outstanding debt on two enslaved Africans purchased at an unspecified earlier date from a pilot who transported 90 captives from the Cape Verde Islands to Cabo de la Vela.⁷² Carreño evidently participated in multiple slave routes; for instance he also led an expedition to enslave Caribs in the late 1530s.⁷³ But if his 1522 journey to Puerto Rico involved a stopover in Santiago de Cabo Verde, this would make it the earliest direct slaving voyage from the Cape Verde Islands to the Americas, contemporary with the first São Tomé-Caribbean voyage.

Thus far, the earliest known slaving voyages from the Cape Verde Islands to the Caribbean are Carreño’s voyages to Cuba in 1526, but these were quickly followed by others. Sailing from “las yslas de Cabo Verde,” a different caravel delivered at least 17 captives to Hispaniola in 1527; *maestre* Cristóbal Sánchez and the ship’s owner, Juan de Urrutia, had previously attempted to dock in Cubagua but were turned away by the island’s officials.⁷⁴

de la Historia Moderna: Presente y porvenir de la investigación, coords. Ofelia Rey Castelao and Francisco Cebreiro Ares (Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2023), 883-5.

⁶⁶ Archivo Histórico Provincial de Las Palmas (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain), PN 739, fols. 8r-10r. For the case of Harmantala, a “white morisco slave” who was being taken from Tenerife to “Berbería” to be ransomed, but went ashore on São Nicolau Island to herd cattle and stayed there, see Galván Alonso, *Bernardino Justiniano*, 831.

⁶⁷ AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.3, fol. 158v; n.6, fols. 669r-669v.

⁶⁸ Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique*, vol. 2: 130-3; Eagle and Wheat, “Early Iberian,” 51-2.

⁶⁹ AGI-Justicia 11, n.3; Pike, *Enterprise*, 60-3; TSTD 11297, 11298.

⁷⁰ José Antonio Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud (volumen IV)* (Havana: Imagen Contemporanea, 2006 [Havana: Editorial Alfa, 1937]), 117; Pike, *Enterprise*, 172; TSTD 11297, 11298. As transcribed by Saco: “Un Carreño y Estéban Basiñana Ginoves trujeron de Cabo Verde 40 negros con licencia, luego 75 con licencia para solos 40.”

⁷¹ AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 422v; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 168. The ship’s *maestre* was Juan Rodrigo. Carreño also owned the ship *Santi Spiritus*, on which *maestre* Damián de Soria was to transport 60 enslaved Africans; the voyage was registered in Seville in 1534-1535 but its intended destination and outcome is unknown; AGI-Cttm 5760, Libro 1, fols. 43r, 65v; Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique*, vol. 2: 238-9, 252-3.

⁷² *Catálogo*, vol. 13: 59. By 1551, Carreño was a *vecino* of Triana in Seville. For reference to Bartolomé Carreño, possibly the same person, as general of a fleet in 1552, see Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique*, vol. 2: 488.

⁷³ Karen F. Anderson-Córdova, *Surviving Spanish Conquest: Indian Fight, Flight, and Cultural Transformation in Hispaniola and Puerto Rico* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2017), 137, 183.

⁷⁴ AGI-Indiferente 421, L. 12, fol. 277v. Urrutia returned in 1531 as *maestre* of the ship *San Juan*, which sailed from the Cape Verde Islands and disembarked at least 19 captives in Nombre de Dios; like Carreño he also trafficked enslaved Amerindians; AGI-Panamá 234, L.5, fols. 111r, 197v; Eagle and Wheat, “Early Iberian,” 50.

Also in approximately 1527, Gonzalo de la Peña transported at least six captives from the Cape Verde Islands to Puerto Rico.⁷⁵ A third ship from the Cape Verde Islands, *La Concepción*, arrived in Puerto Rico with 46 enslaved Africans on December 20, 1527.⁷⁶ In 1529 three additional voyages arrived in Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico from the Cape Verde Islands; two of them (including one captained by Carreño) were said to have carried “merchandise and other things and blacks.”⁷⁷ Throughout the 1530s and 1540s, voyages from the Cape Verde Islands docking in Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, or Nombre de Dios easily outnumbered those from São Tomé.⁷⁸

At the same time, voyages from the Cape Verde Islands appear to have consistently delivered far fewer captives, averaging only 43 per voyage.⁷⁹ Again it seems likely that some of these ships made multiple stops, and may have transported additional captives that were disembarked in other ports. Various qualitative sources describe voyages from the Cape Verde Islands bringing somewhat larger numbers of captives. As noted by Ida Altman, a ship from the Cape Verde Islands anchored on Hispaniola’s northern coast in September 1535 with merchandise and 80 enslaved Africans; the ship also carried a Portuguese *degredado* who hoped to settle on the island with ten slaves (who may not have been included in the 80 captives disembarked).⁸⁰ Likewise, a Burgalese merchant named Francisco de la Llana testified in Santo Domingo in 1538 that he had travelled to the Caribbean approximately four years earlier via the Cape Verde Islands, where he had purchased around 130 enslaved Africans, and that since then – between 1534 and 1538 – he had arranged for “two or three” additional shipments of captives (“*amazones desclabos*”) to be delivered to Hispaniola.⁸¹

Other Spanish sources provide further evidence of Caribbean residents’ participation in the planning and implementation of slaving voyages from the Cape Verde Islands during the early 1500s. In addition to working with Bartolomé Carreño and a Genoese *vecino* of Santo Domingo named Esteban Basiniana, Pedro Benito de Basiniana partnered with a clergyman named Álvaro de Castro who lived in Concepción (Hispaniola) and had received authorization to import enslaved Africans.⁸² On Gonzalo de la Peña’s voyage from the Cape Verde Islands in 1527, the transportation of several captives was financed by a *vecino* of Puerto Rico named Hernando de Lepe.⁸³ A more striking case is that of the caravel *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*, which sailed from Puerto Rico to Seville and the Cape Verde Islands, returning to Puerto Rico with captives in late 1552 or early 1553. While its *maestre* Domingos de Gaya was listed as “Portuguese,” the ship’s captain and proprietor was Amador González, a sugar mill owner and *vecino* of San Juan who argued that a royal decree authorizing the island’s residents to import 400 enslaved Africans justified the voyage.⁸⁴ But rather than making arrangements with the *Casa de la Contratación*, González evidently negotiated directly with Hernan Fiel de Lugo and Diego Caballero, elite residents of Santiago de Cabo Verde and

⁷⁵ AGI-SD 2280, L.2, fol. 16v.

⁷⁶ AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.5, fols. 193r; 259v–260r; AGI-SD 2280, L.2, fols. 15v–16r; Aurelio Tanodi, *Documentos de la Real Hacienda de Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2009), vol. 2: 228; Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico Negro*, 75–6; Eagle and Wheat, “Early Iberian,” 68; TSTD 99027. The ship was supposed to load “almost 200” captives in the Cape Verde Islands, but its *maestre* Alonso Díaz (“Afonso Diez”) was only able to embark 62; AGI-Justicia 7, n.9, sin folio [image 143].

⁷⁷ AGI-Indiferente 1962, L.4, fol. 13r; AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fols. 422v, 426r; AGI-Ctdra 1073, n.6, fols. 345r, 678v, 679v–680r; AGI-SD 2280, L.2, fols. 10v, 14v–16v. See also Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 168, 172.

⁷⁸ Eagle, “Caribbean Pathways,” 143–5.

⁷⁹ Calculated from Table 1.

⁸⁰ Ida Altman, “Key to the Indies: Port Towns in the Spanish Caribbean: 1493–1550,” *The Americas* 74:1 (2017), 10.

⁸¹ AGI-Justicia 16, n.1, r.1, fols. 9v–12r.

⁸² Pike, *Enterprise*, 60; AGI-Justicia 11, n.3.

⁸³ AGI-SD 2280, L.2, fol. 16v.

⁸⁴ AGI-Justicia 996, n.2, r.2; Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico Negro*, 116–7; Eagle and Wheat, “Early Iberian,” 61–2.

Seville.⁸⁵ Like early São Tomé-Caribbean voyages, vessels that brought captives from the Cape Verde Islands also provided Caribbean merchants a way to export American commodities. Following each of his voyages from the Cape Verde Islands to Hispaniola in 1529 and 1535, shipmaster Francisco Rodríguez set out for Seville with cargos of hides and sugar. He also delivered gold to the Portuguese royal factor in Seville, and on one trip was accused of making an unauthorized stop in Lisbon.⁸⁶

Other Cape Verde Islands voyages were organized in collaboration with residents of the Canary Islands, or featured itineraries involving stops in both archipelagos prior to landing captives in the Caribbean. In 1554, a *vecino* of Santa Cruz de La Palma named Juan Martín de Gallegos formed a partnership with Antón Rodríguez, a *vecino* of San Juan de Puerto Rico, according to which each owned one third of the caravel *El Patajox*; the other third was owned by a Portuguese resident of Tavira. Rodríguez was to sail the ship loaded with wine to the Cape Verde Islands, where he would trade for “slaves or other merchandise” and bring them back to La Palma (however, he died in Santiago de Cabo Verde, where the ship and wine were sold).⁸⁷ In somewhat different fashion, the 1557 voyage of the caravel *San Juan* from the Canaries to the Cape Verde Islands and Caribbean was planned in Lisbon. In accordance with the power of attorney for *maestre* Juan Salvador commissioned by *asentista* Manuel Caldeira in Lisbon on August 18 and transcribed in Santa Cruz de La Palma five weeks later, the caravel would sail from La Palma to the Cape Verde Islands to load captives for delivery to the “Indies of Peru.” Docking in Santo Domingo on December 23, it disembarked at least 40 captives in excess of the ship’s registration papers.⁸⁸ Multistage or “quadrangular” trajectories of this nature typically included financing or organization in an Iberian port such as Lisbon or Seville, a stopover in the Canaries to take on wine or other trade goods and supplies, a stopover in the Cape Verde Islands where merchandise was sold and captives embarked, and finally the transportation of enslaved Africans to the Caribbean.⁸⁹ Proceeds from the sale of captives might then be used to purchase hides, sugar, precious metals, or other commodities which could then be transported to Iberia.

Concluding Remarks

Among many other useful details, Spanish Caribbean sources provide information on African embarkation points for over forty slaving voyages arriving in the Caribbean between 1519 and 1545. Importantly, our improved understanding of the early transatlantic slave trade’s chronological development complicates narratives that assume a steady “expansion” of Iberian monarchical power over diverse peoples and territories during this period. To be clear, metropolitan agendas played important roles in the advent of the transatlantic slave trade; for example, the earliest slaving voyages from Africa to the Americas in 1519-1521 organized by Juan Fernández de Castro and his Genoese associates were initially supposed to embark captives in Lisbon, but Portugal’s monarch Manuel I altered the contract with instructions to load them in Arguin.⁹⁰ No less strikingly, the Portuguese crown promptly undermined the same agreement again by ordering

⁸⁵ *Catálogo*, vol. 13: 422-3; Maria Emília Madeira Santos and Iva Maria Cabral, “O nascer de uma sociedade através do morador-armador,” in *História Geral de Cabo Verde*, vol. 1, 2ª ed., coords. Luís de Albuquerque and Maria Emília Madeira Santos (Lisbon: IICT, 2001), 386-7.

⁸⁶ AGI-Indiferente 1092, n.118; AGI-Indiferente 1962, L.4, fol. 13r; AGI-Ctdra 1050, n.2, fol. 426r; Rodríguez Morel, *Cuentas*, vol. 2: 172; Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique*, vol. 2: 216-7, 262-3.

⁸⁷ Hernández Martín, *Domingo Pérez*, vol. 2: 75-6; vol. 4: 159-60.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 3: 330-3; AGI-Ctdra 1051, n.5, fols. 19v, 42v-43r.

⁸⁹ On quadrangular voyages, see Santana Pérez and Santana Pérez, *La puerta afortunada*, 138-43.

⁹⁰ AGI-Justicia 711, n.9, pieza 2.

Arguin factors to stop supplying captives to the contractors.⁹¹ Following a slave revolt in Hispaniola in late 1521, the Spanish crown's early 1522 directive prohibiting the importation of enslaved Wolofs to Spanish America may have also been a factor contributing to the rapid decline of the traffic from Arguin.⁹² Far from being irrelevant, Iberian royal objectives and decrees and efforts to enforce them unquestionably helped to shape the first iterations of the Atlantic slave trade; but they were only part of a bigger picture comprised of multiple precedents and patterns – such as Christian and Muslim collaboration in the traffic of enslaved black Africans in Mediterranean contexts – that were not necessarily centred in the Iberian peninsula, or subject to the authority of Iberian monarchs.

The commencement of slaving voyages from São Tomé to the Greater Antilles in 1522 may be understood as Genoese-Iberian financiers' reaction to the limited size and duration of the traffic from Arguin, or as an extension of pre-existing Gulf of Guinea traffic, but early São Tomé-Caribbean voyages were directly contemporaneous with the peak years of the São Tomé-Mina slaving circuit and the intensification of sugar cultivation on the island. These voyages may be read as indications that São Tomé's economy during the 1520s was even more robust – and even more reliant on slaving – than previously believed. To view these developments as simply an inexorable outcome of royal directives (while ignoring local and regional actors) would be to underestimate the dynamism and complexity of early sixteenth-century São Tomé's multi-directional slaving economy. Even the São Tomé-Caribbean traffic's decline, and the Cape Verde Islands' corresponding predominance in slaving voyages to the Caribbean after 1534, may have been caused by localized contingencies such as food shortages and the reallocation of resources for São Tomé's *guerra do mato*.⁹³ In other words, shifts in the importance of different slaving ports within the early Atlantic-oriented traffic can be understood not only in relation to Portuguese royal policy or the objectives of merchants based in Lisbon or Seville, but also in relation to economic and geopolitical dynamics in Luso-African spaces themselves.

From its beginnings, the transatlantic slave trade was integrated into broad commercial circuits that stretched between and beyond the jurisdictions claimed by either Portuguese or Castilian monarchs. Although the traffic of enslaved Africans obviously contributed to royal coffers and helped sustain Iberian settlements and industries overseas, imperial and nationalistic histories that sharply differentiate 'Portuguese' from 'Spanish' roles and trajectories within the early Atlantic slave trade tend to ascribe outsized power to Iberian rulers and centralized administrations. Complicating narratives that simply assume the outward projection of metropolitan royal power in radial fashion, or that portray Iberian expansion as a unidirectional or centrifugal force, insular Hispanic sources can also support interpretations that call attention to self-organized merchant networks, horizontal or trans-regional connections, and the global reach of local actors in non-metropolitan spaces.⁹⁴ In addition to impetuses from Iberian courts and financial capitals, early sixteenth-century Atlantic slaving voyages were shaped by precedents and developments in at least three different Luso-African contexts. Voyages from Arguin depended on transconfessional commerce echoing Christian-Muslim relations in the Mediterranean world, and may have

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Anthony Stevens-Acevedo, *The Santo Domingo Slave Revolt of 1521 and the Slave Laws of 1522: Black Slavery and Black Resistance in the Early Colonial Americas* (New York: CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, 2019). On the Arguin-Lisbon traffic's decline, see Godinho, *Os descobrimentos*, 150–1; Mendes, "Esclavages," 457; Mendes, "Portugal," 26.

⁹³ Gabriel de Avilez Rocha and David Wheat, "The Uncertain Atlantic: African and European Transformations of São Tomé Island, c.1533," *Culture & History Digital Journal* 12:2 (2023): 1–19.

⁹⁴ Cátia Antunes and Amélia Polónia (eds.), *Beyond Empires: Global, Self-Organizing, Cross-Imperial Networks, 1500–1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 278–80; Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla, "Early Modern Iberian Empires, Global History and the History of Early Globalization," *Journal of Global History* 17:3 (2022): 53

drawn on the older trans-Saharan trade. Comparable in volume to the coeval São Tomé-Mina circuit, and contemporaneous with the rise of sugar cultivation, vessels transporting captive Africans from São Tomé to the Caribbean were further manifestations of a flourishing regional economy based on slaving. Traffic from the Cape Verde Islands to the Caribbean provides our best evidence of slaving voyages organized in the Canary Islands and Greater Antilles, and of multistage voyages sailing from peninsular Iberian ports to the Canaries, Santiago Island, the Caribbean, and back to Lisbon or Seville. Separately and collectively, each of these genealogies contributed to the formation and consolidation of the transatlantic slave trade at the outset of a global era.

Acknowledgements. Many thanks to Gabriel de Avilez Rocha, José Pedro Paiva, Marc Eagle, and two anonymous peer reviewers for their helpful comments on previous drafts. I also benefited from useful feedback on earlier versions presented for the Universidade de Coimbra's Centro de História da Sociedade e da Cultura, the Institución Milá y Fontanals (CSIC) *Seminario de estudio de la esclavitud en el Mediterráneo* and the Yale Economic History Workshop. I am deeply grateful to Marc Eagle and Gabriel Rocha for sharing information on sources from the Archivo General de Indias and Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, and to Maria Manuel Torrão, Roger Lee de Jesus, Manuel Poggio Capote, Javier Luis Álvarez Santos, Luis Francisco Cumplido Mancera, and Sean Kelley for helping me access important secondary works.

Funding Information. Initial research for this article was conducted in 2015-2016 in collaboration with Marc Eagle under the auspices of an American Council of Learned Societies Collaborative Research Grant for the project "Iberian Slave Routes: The Transatlantic Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1500-1640." Additional research and elaboration of this article took place within the framework of the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities project "La esclavitud en el Mediterráneo medieval: de los mercados de aprovisionamiento a la ¿integración social?" (PID2022-138689NB-I00).

David Wheat is Associate Professor in the Department of History at Michigan State University (USA). He is the author of *Atlantic Africa in the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640* (Omohundro/UNC Press, 2016), and co-editor of two essay collections: *The Spanish Caribbean and the Atlantic World in the Long Sixteenth Century*, co-edited with Ida Altman (University of Nebraska Press, 2019), and *From the Galleons to the Highlands: Slave Trade Routes in the Spanish Americas*, co-edited with Alex Borucki and David Eltis (University of New Mexico Press, 2020).