

## The Uncertain Atlantic: African and European Transformations of São Tomé Island c. 1533

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**ABSTRACT:** As the first European colony to specialize in sugar cultivation using a labor force comprised exclusively of enslaved Africans, São Tomé island in the Gulf of Guinea is often considered the birthplace of the sugar plantation complex. But the rise of sugar cultivation there took place amidst deep uncertainties. This essay examines a previously unstudied sixteenth-century São Tomé estate inventory from the vantage points of merchants and officials on São Tomé and in Portugal, and to the extent possible, of the Africans they exploited. Without disputing the economic importance of sugar or that of key sites such as São Tomé for later Atlantic histories, we call attention to contingencies that included the waning fortunes of certain planters and their implications for the enslaved; slave routes' subordination to changing political dynamics on the African mainland; and evidence of African resistance ranging from litigation to escape to maroon wars that threatened sugar production, the slave trade, and the viability of Portuguese rule on the island. During the 1520s-1530s many parties had a stake in the island's future, and the rise of sugar was by no means a foreordained outcome.

**KEYWORDS:** São Tomé; Gulf of Guinea; Lisbon; Portugal; sixteenth century; Duarte Belo; sugar estates; African proveniences; *guerra do mato*.

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**RESUMEN:** *El Atlántico incierto. Transformaciones africanas y europeas de la isla de São Tomé, c. 1533.* – Habiendo sido la primera colonia europea en especializarse en el cultivo de azúcar a base de una mano de obra compuesta por africanos esclavizados, la isla de São Tomé en el Golfo de Guinea se suele considerar la cuna del complejo azucarero-esclavista. Sin embargo, el auge del cultivo de azúcar tuvo lugar en medio de profundas incertidumbres. Este ensayo examina un inventario de haciendas são-tomenses del siglo XVI desde los puntos de vista de comerciantes y oficiales en São Tomé y Portugal y, en la medida que sea posible, de los africanos explotados. Sin cuestionar la importancia económica del azúcar o de puntos claves como São Tomé para historias subsiguientes, señalamos a las contingencias como las fortunas en declive de algunos dueños de plantaciones y sus consecuencias para los esclavizados; la dependencia de las rutas esclavistas de las cambiantes dinámicas políticas en costas africanas; e indicios de resistencia africana, desde la litigación y la fuga hasta las guerras de cimarrones, que perjudicaron la producción azucarera, el tráfico de esclavos y la viabilidad del dominio portugués sobre la isla. En las décadas de 1520 y 1530, muchas partes tenían interés en el futuro de la isla y el auge del azúcar no era predeterminado.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** São Tomé; Golfo de Guinea; Lisboa; Portugal; siglo XVI; Duarte Belo; haciendas azucareras; procedencias africanas; *guerra do mato*.

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## INTRODUCTION

Nestled today in a touristic neighborhood of central Lisbon, the Rua da Bica de Duarte Belo, more commonly known as the Rua da Bica, rises steeply from the banks of the Tejo River. Its picturesque funicular, cobbled sidewalks, and colorful façade recently inspired Internet users to rank it as “one of the most beautiful” streets in the world.<sup>1</sup> Overlooking the shops and homes that flank the narrow thoroughfare, street signs placidly exhibit the name of Duarte Belo, a merchant who resided in lavish abodes in the area some five hundred years ago.<sup>2</sup> In addition to members of Belo’s family, enslaved Africans and Afro-descendants lived on the same property in the sixteenth century, including a young Black woman of fifteen known as Helena who was likely brought as a child to Lisbon from São Tomé, an island in Africa’s Gulf of Guinea. On the equatorial Atlantic island where Helena likely had been born, Duarte Belo owned two sugar plantations, and along with other merchants, facilitated the forced transportation of thousands of Africans in and out of the region. With hindsight, Belo and Helena’s historical moment appears to have been defined by expanding circuits of transatlantic enslavement and empires in formation. Yet in their lifetimes, Duarte Belo and Helena confronted in vastly different ways a critical juncture of early Atlantic history with outcomes that were, to them and their contemporaries in Europe and the Gulf of Guinea, far from evident.

It has nevertheless long appeared to scholars that São Tomé represents a key crossroads, spatially and temporally, for Atlantic histories of empire and slavery. Since the 1480s, around when it was first claimed by the Portuguese crown, the island served as a hub for human trafficking routes in the Gulf of Guinea (Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, 2001, p. 22). By the 1520s, Europeans invested heavily in the mass production of sugar on São Tomé, cultivated almost exclusively by enslaved Africans. To the extent that it prefigured developments in the colonial Americas – constituting, in other words, a foundational chapter in the history of transatlantic slavery and global capitalism – São Tomé’s emergence as a plantation colony appears most readily as an inexorable process driven by European objectives (Solow, 1987; Curtin, 1990; Blackburn, 1998). While there is much truth in this arch-narrative, diverse people directly involved in this process during the 1520s and 1530s were much more likely to have viewed São Tomé’s transformations within the unpredictable contexts of their day, as representing potential opportunities, intractable obstacles, or existential threats, depending on their standpoints. Closer attention to the experiences of those whose lives were affected by events unfolding in early sixteenth-century São Tomé enables us to interpret how their actions and potential motives in the face of the unknowable helped shape the early Atlantic.

This essay examines estate and administrative records belonging to none other than Duarte Belo, the namesake for Lisbon Street. Completed in 1533, and transcribed in the course of lawsuits in the late 1540s, the post-mortem

inventory of Belo’s estates on São Tomé provides an unusually detailed basis for reconstructing “microdynamics of the social, cultural, and commercial networks that underpinned slaving” in early sixteenth-century São Tomé (Ferreira, 2007, p. 99). Approached with due caution, the record affords key insights into the experiences of African people who made up the majority of the island’s labor force at a pivotal moment in the colony’s history. In enslavement and exile, many Africans on São Tomé suffered precarity, exploitation, and family separation; others, over the same years, fled, entered into open conflict with the island’s settler population, or used legal recourses in a bid to secure their manumission. Many of the linkages between São Tomé and other Atlantic islands, the African mainland, and spaces further afield were spearheaded by European and African merchants and political authorities who hoped to maintain the wealth and prestige they derived from the traffic in enslaved people, but Africans and African-descended peoples also exerted their own influences on broader economic processes (Sousa, 2008; Konadu, 2022). At the same time, the Iberian elites who invested in slaving and sugar cultivation saw their fortunes wax and wane at different moments; many, such as the Belos, strained to capitalize on moments of success experienced by their peers into the 1530s.

Our analysis of Belo’s estate inventory advances from the premise that the intensification of sugar cultivation in São Tomé in the 1520s and 30s took place within a horizon of change that was deeply ambiguous for most of the island’s inhabitants and absentee merchants. Among other contradictory developments, the consolidation of Eurocentric political and social hierarchies took place even as São Tomé’s white population formed an ever-smaller percentage of the population (Henriques, 2000; Sousa, 2008). As a corrective to teleological conceptualizations of São Tomé as a fully-formed, quintessential plantation colony, we argue for viewing events in the early sixteenth-century Gulf of Guinea with a stronger sense of contingency. Belo’s estate inventories and other contemporary sources confirm the sugar industry’s importance during this period but also point toward variegated social and economic realities, including multiple forms of slave labor that were ancillary or completely unrelated to sugar cultivation. The inventory also reveals the composite and rapidly evolving nature of trafficking routes that conveyed enslaved Africans of diverse linguistic, political, and geographical backgrounds to São Tomé. There was no way of knowing in 1533 that some of the markers of identity used in the inventory would disappear over time, while others would become some of the largest and most recognizable ethnolinguistic groups in Africa today. Similarly, widespread African resistance in São Tomé during the 1520s-1530s may justifiably be viewed as a precursor for subsequent maroon communities in the Americas, but can also be understood more specifically as a set of individual responses to enslavement and the threat of renewed exile, as collective bids to obtain greater autonomy and security within the local context of São Tomé, and as a causal factor influencing the shape and extent of the island’s trans-

formations. Although sweeping transhistorical narratives may trace the origins of the Atlantic plantation complex to the Gulf of Guinea, closer attention to sixteenth-century conjunctures reveals that the trade in enslaved people, sugar cultivation, and a multitude of struggles over the circumstances of enslavement and manumission in early colonial São Tomé both produced and intensified patterns of rapid change, conflict, and fundamental uncertainties on the island. If they influenced the rise of similarly oppressive regimes in the Americas, they also carried within them a host of inherent and unresolved contradictions that merit closer scrutiny.

### THE GULF OF GUINEA BEFORE 1533

Following the Portuguese crown's earliest claims to São Tomé in the 1470s, the island in the Gulf of Guinea began to function as a European entrepôt for the transshipment of prestige goods such as beads and textiles to the African sovereigns who would purchase them, often in exchange for captives (Fage, 1962; Alpern, 1995; Ogun-diran, 2002; Chouin and Lasisi, 2019, pp. 299-300). The Portuguese also trafficked enslaved Africans purchased from polities such as Benin and Ijebu in what is today southwestern Nigeria, or from the Kingdom of Kongo in West Central Africa. Between 1515 and 1536, slaving vessels carried nearly 6,000 captives on almost 50 separate voyages from São Tomé and nearby Príncipe island to the Portuguese fortress of São Jorge da Mina on the Gold Coast; some of the enslaved would serve at the castle, but most were sold to African merchants in exchange for gold (Vogt, 1973; Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, 1993, pp. 356-361). Larger numbers of African captives exported from São Tomé and Príncipe during the late 1400s and early 1500s were sold to European buyers in the Iberian Peninsula, the Atlantic Islands, and the Spanish Caribbean (Elbl, 1997, pp. 55, 59-63, 69-73). The traffic in people rapidly became a centerpiece of multiple trade circuits converging on the island (Santos, 1990; Caldeira, 2020).

The preponderance of African linguistic, social, and cultural influences on the early Portuguese colony is evident from extant sources. One São Tomé estate inventory from 1507 references belts and pants from Benin, watercrafts from the Niger Delta, textiles from Kongo, and a smattering of European-made objects including a Castilian jug of Portuguese olive oil and several Roman Catholic liturgical books.<sup>3</sup> Seafarers' presences on São Tomé also attest to the island's connections to societies within and beyond the Gulf of Guinea. Pero de Manicongo, a mariner from Kongo who had been enslaved in the 1490s to a Portuguese nobleman, worked for years aboard European vessels in the region. In 1499 he obtained manumission from the dying governor Álvaro Caminha, who also conferred to him legal ownership of an enslaved woman trafficked from Benin.<sup>4</sup> Estimates of the island's population likewise underscore its African configuration. The geographer Valentim Fernandes, whose 1506 account drew from mariners' reports, estimated that the islands at that time contained around 1000 Portuguese colonists

[*moradores*], most of whom were criminal exiles. As noted by Fernandes, royal legislation and funding had provided "a male or female black slave" for each Portuguese settler upon arrival; in the following decade, some of the surviving exiles had grown wealthy enough to possess "fourteen or more slaves." By 1506, Fernandes averred, the island's population included "at least" 2,000 enslaved people "who always clear [*roçã*] and dig and work." There were also as many as 5,000 or 6,000 captives brought from trade on the mainland, most of whom were likely to be reexported elsewhere. Their potential transience on the island nevertheless contributed to a large African demographic majority and carried its own impact on the course of the island's history.<sup>5</sup>

Duarte Belo figured among more distant merchants who, with the concerted support of the Portuguese crown, were committed to organizing and profiting from slaving voyages to and from São Tomé in the early sixteenth century. Not much is known about Belo's background, but family connections likely offered him inroads into the world of São Tomé. Inês de Paiva, who married Duarte Belo circa 1510, probably had some relation (perhaps as niece or granddaughter) to João de Paiva, who had served as governor of São Tomé in the 1480s.<sup>6</sup> By the 1510s, Belo enjoyed privileged access in Lisbon to key figures associated with the Casa da Mina, the royal Portuguese administrative organ established in 1455 (as the Casa da Guiné) to oversee trade to and from Atlantic Africa.<sup>7</sup> In 1514, he negotiated a share of a joint contract for trading in enslaved people through São Tomé in consortium with Lisbon merchants Fernão de Castilho and Pedro Álvares Gentil, the latter of whom would remain in the business of human trafficking for decades to come.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of such fiscal arrangements in the 1510s, Belo organized slaving voyages from the Rivers of Benin and Kongo to São Tomé, and from São Tomé to Lisbon.<sup>9</sup> During the same decade, Belo acquired a separate three-year contract from the crown to convey captives between São Tomé and the Portuguese fortress of São Jorge da Mina. Belo went on to charter multiple voyages on this route between 1518 and 1520, mostly entrusted to captains and pilots using vessels that he owned, carrying 70-80 enslaved Africans per voyage.<sup>10</sup> Attesting to his rising renown, notaries and officials at São Jorge da Mina recorded the receipt of captives ascribed to "the *trato* of Duarte Belo."<sup>11</sup>

Just as the crown had its officials and factors (*feitores*) to oversee dealings in the name of the king, Lisbon merchants like Belo entrusted their representatives, also known as *feitores*, to oversee their financial interests and logistical aspects of the trade in the Gulf of Guinea. These persons coordinated with others in São Tomé, São Jorge da Mina, Benin, and Kongo to ensure that vessels arriving and departing from the island carried an agreed-upon number of human captives and were sufficiently outfitted with supplies. The factors were also responsible for distributing and collecting payments to mariners, many of whom were themselves enslaved to absentee merchants or to the *feitores*. Belo and his Lisbon associates Castilho and Gentil relied on at least four *feitores* to coordinate

their trafficking operations in São Tomé and the Gulf of Guinea during the late 1510s. In 1519, for instance, an individual named João Alvares worked as the contractors' factor, organizing and overseeing slaving voyages from São Tomé to São Jorge da Mina in their name.<sup>12</sup>

Belo's financial windfall from human trafficking and other commerce in the Gulf of Guinea vaulted him to prominence in Lisbon. In December 1522, the "merchant from Lisbon" received from the Portuguese king a widely coveted license to publicly ride atop a mule or other beast of burden.<sup>13</sup> Profits from human trafficking likely also helped finance Belo's purchase of "large homes" in Lisbon, in the vicinity of what later became known as the "Rua da Bica de Duarte Belo" noted at this essay's opening.<sup>14</sup> At the time when Belo walked (or rode) the cobbled streets, the family members occupying his mansion exhibited ostentatious signs of their social prominence, from ornate leather upholstery to voluminous red curtains.<sup>15</sup> The house bustled with activity; in the span of ten years, beginning in 1511, Inês de Paiva gave birth to eight children who would go on to survive into adulthood. Several people enslaved to the Belo family cared for the children, cleaned, cooked, and tended to other chores in and out of the home, as was the norm in many Lisbon households at the time (Saunders, 1982, pp. 63-68, 72-80; Fonseca, 2011, pp. 269-278). Among them figured the fifteen-year-old Helena, mentioned earlier. Four other enslaved individuals appear in extant records of the family's Lisbon property from 1540 alongside Helena: Catarina, sixteen years old, identified as *mulata*; an older Black woman also named Catarina, described as "disabled in one arm;" a twenty-five-year-old man named Cristóvão do Cal; and a twelve-year-old called Lançarote, a "Black [boy] from Guinea."<sup>16</sup> Precious little is detailed of their quotidian experiences in the inventories, with hints that they slept in separate beds that were deemed – perhaps by virtue of their disrepair – to be exclusively used by the house's Black servants.<sup>17</sup>

By contrast, in addition to the wealth derived from long-distance slaving voyages, the Belo family's rising prestige in 1520s Lisbon also rested on property holdings on São Tomé that included two sugar *engenhos*. Whether these estates were purchased by Duarte Belo or entered his patrimony through Inês de Paiva's family connections remains unclear. But the significant outlays necessary for putting into place the physical infrastructure, personnel, and labor requirements for the mass production of sugar were clearly enabled by the family's trafficking of enslaved Africans. A passing reference in one official report suggests that Belo and his associates may have jointly bankrolled the construction of a sugar mill in the 1510s; in any case, Belo likely acquired sizeable estates on São Tomé before 1522.<sup>18</sup> Far from being the only absentee estate owner on São Tomé, Belo shared this distinction with his fellow contract holders Pedro Álvares Gentil and Fernão Castilho, and the latter's son-in-law Afonso de Torres, a slaving merchant of rising prominence in Lisbon.<sup>19</sup>

The move to include São-tomense sugar plantations in their schemes for accumulating wealth meant building

on the network of factors and brokers orchestrating the trade in enslaved people. For the Belos, key administrators who managed the estates on the island included Francisco Nunes, Afonso da Silva, and Cosme Gonçalves.<sup>20</sup> The responsibilities of these *feitores* included overseeing enslaved people who undertook the intensive work of planting, harvesting, and processing sugarcane, subsistence goods, and other tasks. In a sign that enslaved people on Belo's estates produced sizeable quantities of sugar among other agricultural and artisanal labors, the Belo family also contracted *feitores* to receive their shipments in Antwerp.<sup>21</sup>

Belo's organization of slaving voyages after the 1510s is less apparent from extant sources, but several signs indicate his ongoing trafficking enterprises during the following decade. A *feitor* for the Belo family referred to as Friar João resided in Congo into the early 1530s, perhaps in the port of Mpinda.<sup>22</sup> Much of Friar João's labor may have consisted of rehabilitating Belo's reputation among African trading partners in the region: in 1516, Europeans trading on Belo and Gentil's behalf in Kongo had taken 22 captives from the Mani Kongo claiming them as payment for debts; the African sovereign was still incensed a decade later.<sup>23</sup> Textiles, reams of paper, and velvet sent from Lisbon via São Tomé to Congo – perhaps to be dispensed by Friar João – may have helped assuage feelings of ill-will among representatives of the Mani Kongo in a period of rapprochement between the African and European rulers.<sup>24</sup>

Despite his investments in estates on São Tomé and human trafficking in the Gulf of Guinea, Belo set his sights on other trading horizons towards the end of his life. In 1529, a "*nau* of Duarte Belo" delivered a load of weaponry and ammunition to royal officials in Funchal, on Madeira Island.<sup>25</sup> This vessel's shipmaster, António Luís, then proceeded to Ireland to conduct unspecified trade.<sup>26</sup> Around the same time, Belo and his associates organized a major overseas venture, involving significant financial outlays leveraged by credit from European lenders and materials loaned by the Portuguese crown, to South Asia.<sup>27</sup> The vessel "*Santiago* that went to India outfitted by Duarte Belo" left a trail of debts in its wake, creating long-lasting financial problems for the Belo family.<sup>28</sup> But Belo died before its full repercussions would come to light, and his eldest son, António Belo—around twenty years of age in 1530—took over the helm of the family's affairs. The Belo family business's reorientations toward northern Europe and South Asia took place in the context of changing conditions on São Tomé that included widespread marronage. From the earliest decades of the European presence in the Gulf of Guinea, Africans brought forcibly to São Tomé took to the sea or the forests to liberate themselves from bondage (Santos, 1996, pp. 75-82; Caldeira, 2017). Testimonials from the 1530s suggest a great range of fugitive enterprises. "Every day," noted one official, some enslaved Africans "escape, and some return, and others do not appear again."<sup>29</sup> Many runaways fled to areas of tropical forest characterized in documents as *matos* (bush or wilds), and to spaces described as "be-

hind the island.”<sup>30</sup> The imposing peaks in the island’s center served not only as destinations of flight but also as barriers to areas where maroons and their descendants held sway. By the 1520s and 30s, several fugitive communities appear to have cohered around specific leaders. A 1539 royal document refers in passing to “Diogo Molare, captain of certain Blacks” who had been “insurgent [*andavam alevantados*] in the *mato*” during the early 1530s.<sup>31</sup> Diogo Molare’s first name and leadership role suggests that he had previously been enslaved, while the term “Molare” suggests Lower Guinean origins, to be discussed further below. An individual known as Mocambo, whose name was of Kikongo or Kimbundo origin, left a similarly fragmentary paper trail. A substantial number of escaped Africans appear to have joined forces with Mocambo to wage a multi-year conflict against Portuguese settlements on the island beginning as early as 1528.<sup>32</sup> Into the 1530s, local and crown officials responded to Diogo Molare and Mocambo’s uprisings by organizing expeditions “against the escaped Blacks who are in the *mato*.”<sup>33</sup> The expedition members were mostly local volunteers and enslaved conscripts, but they also included European mercenaries recruited to fight in the conflict that became known as the *guerra do mato*.

Members of the Portuguese royal court in Lisbon, and the broader merchant community – including, no doubt, the Belos – took note. Combating and weakening the island’s fugitive communities would shore up São Tomé’s position as a slaving entrepôt and an emerging sugar producer, but financing a maroon war required significant resources. In 1530, an inquest into the matter produced transcriptions of account books kept by officials in São Tomé and interviews of people with firsthand knowledge. From Lisbon, Duarte Belo’s old trading partner Pedro Álvares Gentil offered his deposition in 1530 (perhaps Duarte Belo himself would have been called in if he had still been alive.) Gentil underscored that the phenomenon of escapes was nothing new; already since the days of his contract, his *feitores* regularly reported runaways. This sentiment was shared by Afonso de Torres, who stated point blank that enslaved people on São Tomé ran away as a matter of “custom.”<sup>34</sup>

The convergence of marronage and intensified sugar cultivation created a serious provisioning crisis that further threw the future of the Portuguese colonial enterprise on São Tomé into question. Matters came to a head in 1531, when royal administrators, referring to the “hunger and sterility of this island,” explicitly linked both the pattern of escapes and the now-prominent sugar industry to the abandonment of farmsteads that had produced basic staples such as yams (Ramos, 1986, p. 35; Faro, 1958, pp. 334-335). The state of colonial affairs was all the more dire at the local level. In 1534 São Tomé officials were forced to accept low-ball offers on municipal tax-collection contracts on account of “the land being very lacking [*demovyda*] in provisions;” other disturbances, including local watercraft being used to transport “people who go against Mocambo” instead of pursuing their regular fishing activities, contributed to unrest.<sup>35</sup> Another official in

1535 lamented the “farmsteads and plantations [*roças*] that Mocambo depopulated.”<sup>36</sup> Such references, which cut across various types of documentation, suggest a provisioning crisis on São Tomé that lasted from approximately 1531 to 1535.<sup>37</sup> Hinting that the provisioning crisis may even have originated before 1531, Lisbon royal officials arranged to send rice to São Tomé to sustain militia members fighting in the *guerra do mato* in December of that year, a date which seems to mark an advanced stage of subsistence difficulties rather than their inauguration.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, the island’s royal *feitor* mentioned the “hunger and necessities of the last years” in an August 1532 *regimento* (Faro, 1958, p. 334). In any case, the existence of a multi-year provisioning crisis offers important nuance to conventional chronologies of São Tomé’s sugar boom.

Colonial officials, Portuguese and São-tomense merchant elites, and crown agents alike recognized the promises of sugar, but also the limits of their ability to institute its widespread production in the face of African resistance and a shortage of provisions. Meanwhile, in 1531, Portuguese ruler João III attempted to tighten royal control over the trade in enslaved Africans from São Tomé to Mina and the Caribbean—a “business” that some continued to view as the crown’s primary source of profits in São Tomé—with the close support of the influential Lisbon merchant Afonso de Torres (Faro, 1958, pp. 329, 338, 353). But the industry of human trafficking, too, may have been forced to contend with the same obstacles that threatened the viability of sugar cultivation. Presumably facing the same shortage of yams and other locally-produced foodstuffs due to widespread marronage and enslaved agricultural workers’ fear of maroon attacks, slaving voyages from São Tomé to Mina, Lisbon, and the Caribbean during the early 1530s supplemented captives’ provisions with rice imported from the Upper Guinea Coast, and even with “maize from the Antilles” (Torrão, 1995, pp. 52-59, 76-79, 98-100).<sup>39</sup> Moving to spur both sugar production and subsistence farming, the crown in 1532 offered a three-year window by which abandoned farmsteads were to be placed back into production, on the penalty of reassigning them to new owners, in hopes that sugar cultivation would continue on an “ever-growing” path (Faro, 1958, pp. 331, 334-335). But for merchant families like the Belos, who no longer found themselves at the center of lucrative crown contracts, colonial prosperity would have seemed even less assured.

In the years surrounding Duarte Belo’s death, with the family’s debts mounting, Belo’s surviving peers were doubling down to secure their profits despite an indeterminate state of affairs on São Tomé. In 1531 Pedro Álvares Gentil recruited a merchant living in Vila Franca de Xira, not far from Lisbon, to serve for the following three years as his *feitor*, administering his properties on the island.<sup>40</sup> Afonso de Torres used powers of attorney and other legal instruments to secure his own family’s slaving interests in and beyond of the Gulf of Guinea, and specifically the administration of their properties on São Tomé.<sup>41</sup>

By contrast, the São Tomé estate left behind by Duarte Belo, ostensibly managed by his son, appeared to be more

directly in the hands of the family's *feitor* Afonso da Silva, a local estate owner, and merchant. Silva had, in turn, delegated caretaker responsibilities of the Belo properties to his subordinate (*criado*) Cosme Rodrigues, who was described in 1533 as having "negotiated and managed" the affairs of the estates in those years.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the factor Afonso da Silva had been the most visible local representative of the Belo estates for some time; rather than Belo's death it was da Silva's, in late 1532 or early 1533, that prompted the inventorying of properties on São Tomé that belonged to Belo's inheritors.<sup>43</sup>

Only scant signs remain of the hand played by Duarte Belo's son António Belo in the management of the São Tomé estates. The younger Belo sent a modest shipment of clothing to São Tomé, likely for enslaved people housed and laboring on the family's plantations, and facilitated the shipment of 300 *arrobas* of sugar to Europe in 1531.<sup>44</sup> Among his shipments to São Tomé, via Afonso da Silva, also figured a cache of German knives and "many sorts of textiles."<sup>45</sup> The royal factor at São Jorge da Mina, in February 1530, oversaw the sale of shell money and trade beads (*corys* and *comtas pardas*) in the name of the Belo family, but it is unclear how the proceeds from such sales were distributed (Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, 1993, p. 534). If anything, António Belo faced mounting pressure from creditors, former trading partners, and royal authorities for an avalanche of outstanding expenses incurred by his father in the outfitting of the India voyage.<sup>46</sup> Unable to benefit from his family's previous privileged position in the royal court, and with a series of legal proceedings against the Belo family's estate for unpaid wages, services, and loans from previous years, António Belo landed in prison in 1533. He would remain there, in a sign of continuing financial woes, for the next twelve years.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the family's economic troubles in the years following Duarte Belo's death, Inês de Paiva took measures to secure her continued social and economic standing in Lisbon. She opted, like many elite women in similar situations at the time, to remarry. Paiva's new husband, Diogo Nunes, not only occupied a similar status as Duarte Belo, but also boasted an illustrious record of military service in South Asia that had earned him the status of *fidalgo*.<sup>48</sup> Inês de Paiva's remarriage raised the possibility that the Belo family could return to prominence based on their investments and renewed efforts in São Tomé. For his part, Nunes leveraged his social and economic capital from his new position in the Belo family's affairs, attempting to capitalize on the family's assets without taking on their debts.<sup>49</sup> In this spirit, he filled out his own power of attorney in 1531 for a trusted merchant to oversee his newfound interests on São Tomé. This involved, according to the document, corresponding with the *fidalgo* Vasco Eanes Pacheco, who was "currently a *feitor* in Congo." At this time, Nunes also sent two enslaved mariners to work on slaving vessels in the Gulf of Guinea, whom he referred to as "Máximo" and "Belchior," both identified as "Indian slave[s] [...] between sixteen and twenty years of age."<sup>50</sup> Given their ages and Nunes's military exploits in South Asia circa 1526, it is certainly possible that Máxi-

mo and Belchior had been captured or purchased in India and taken to Lisbon with Nunes around 1527 to live in his household prior to being sent to work as *grumetes* out of São Tomé.<sup>51</sup>

Clearly, the Belos, other Iberian merchant families, and the Portuguese crown at the turn of the 1530s confronted a moment of change and unpredictability by developing a range of strategies aimed at securing their profits or diminishing their losses from enterprises in the Gulf of Guinea and beyond. The fuller contours of this crossroads become less evident when this period is primarily characterized as a golden age of sugar production soon to be replicated elsewhere. Over a timespan when traditional historical narratives underscore the rise of plantation production, ascendant maroon settlements contributed to a colonial provisioning crisis and a scramble to reorganize the Portuguese crown's relationship to the slave trade and land concessions on São Tomé. Departing from a general picture of a uniform rise of planter fortunes in this period thanks to a boom in sugar production, the Belo family faced a legally and financially delicate conjuncture, one that may have also been experienced by other middling merchants in Europe with interests in São Tomé. These considerations are worth keeping in mind as we examine the dramatically different but no less ambiguous experiences of enslaved Africans and people of African descent on Belo's estates.

#### AFRICANS ON BELO'S ESTATES IN 1533

In the late 1520s, Duarte Belo owned two agricultural properties or *roças* on São Tomé. The first, located on the outskirts of the main colonial settlement of Povoação in the northeast of the island, included residential structures for enslaved people, a sugar mill and processing house, and fields that yielded an annual total of 600 *arrobas* of sugar.<sup>52</sup> Another *roça* in the Rio do Ouro district, an elevated area northwest of Povoação, had a sugar mill, buildings for refining sugar, residences made of stone, and slave quarters; it produced an estimated 700-800 *arrobas* of sugar per year.<sup>53</sup> The annual output of Belo's *roças* in the years leading up to 1533 appears to have been considerably lower than that of the island's other estates. For comparison, royal landholdings on São Tomé in April 1529 included an estate named Cabo Verde and two *engenhos* under construction. All three combined were projected to yield over 5,000 *arrobas* of sugar by the year's end.<sup>54</sup> An average annual output of 1500 to 2,000 *arrobas* on each of the three properties would have vastly exceeded the estimated 600 and 700-800 *arrobas* produced on Belo's estates. Garfield argues that quantity, not quality, made São Tomean sugar globally competitive during the early 1500s (Garfield, 1992, pp. 65, 68, 71-73). From 1525 to 1528, the island's total sugar production grew from 111,000 to 123,000 *arrobas*, reaching 136,000 by 1535-1536 (Caldeira, 2011, p. 68, n. 73; Pinheiro, 2012, p. 36; Seibert, 2013, p. 73).<sup>55</sup> If these figures are accurate, by 1533 production on Belo's estates accounted for barely one percent of the island's total. Given the Belo family's

faltering finances, the vicissitudes of the *guerra do mato*, and consequent scarcity of provisions, Belo's *roças* may have yielded less than usual in the early 1530s or may have been downsized compared to previous years' yields.

In 1533, Belo's properties were operated by at least 184 enslaved people of African origin: 71 at Povoação and 113 at Rio do Ouro. Their numbers were lower than those of other *roças* on the island; a 1535 inventory of crown properties tallied 1,642 enslaved people on seven estates, suggesting an average of 235 per *engenho*.<sup>56</sup> Garfield notes that "a great *fazendeiro*" would typically own "from 100 to 300 slaves" and that by mid-century, São Tomé's 60-80 sugar estates employed approximately 150 enslaved workers each (Garfield, 1992, pp. 73, 80). While Belo may have simply been one of São Tomé's less prosperous landowners, or perhaps his family's fortune was in decline, the inventory may offer only a partial listing of his estates' inhabitants. Given its function—to determine the properties' value following his death, for purposes of inheritance and the repayment of debts—some enslaved people may have been concealed, relocated, or sold beforehand. Some may have been absent because they had escaped. Despite these potential factors, the listings of enslaved individuals in Belo's post-mortem inventory provides an unrivaled view into the conditions of enslavement, demographic characteristics, and heterogeneous backgrounds of enslaved Africans on the island during the early 1500s.

In the inventory of Belo's estates, enslaved people were listed alongside "things pertaining to the sugar mill," but only three men at Rio do Ouro were described as having occupational skills related to sugar production.<sup>57</sup> The "miller" (*moedor*) Gaspar Ibo was likely responsible for operating a water-powered mill that crushed sugar cane to extract its juice.<sup>58</sup> After the cane juices had been boiled, refined, cooled, and placed into clay pots or cone-shaped forms, an enslaved "purger" (*purgador*) named Manuel would presumably concoct and apply a mixture of oils and ashes to cover the sugar and gradually remove any remaining dregs or scum; after several months of draining and hardening, the sugar would be dry and lighter in color (though São Tomean sugar tended to remain somewhat damp and reddish-brown).<sup>59</sup> A third enslaved man, António, was a "sugar master" who tempered the refined cane juice and probably oversaw the entire process of refining, purging, and packing.<sup>60</sup> Four other enslaved men were described as sawyers or carpenters; among them, António *serrador* owned a hand saw, and Pedro *carpinteiro* possessed "old" tools including "a machete and a saw and a file."<sup>61</sup> Comparable inventories of sugar estates in sixteenth-century Hispaniola indicate that enslaved people commonly performed woodworking occupations, including logging and carpentry, that undoubtedly served purposes beyond those necessary to support sugar production (Guitar, 1998, pp. 442-446; Rodríguez Morel, 2012, pp. 145-149, 165-170, 182-193).<sup>62</sup>

We have little information about the labors that other enslaved workers on Belo's properties typically performed; occupations are listed for only fifteen individuals, all men.

But on these and other estates in São Tomé, some workers were engaged in animal husbandry, subsistence farming, domestic service, or other related activities (Wheat, 2016, pp. 184-185). For instance, in addition to implements associated with sugar cultivation, the Belo inventory lists a cooking pot used to make food for hogs.<sup>63</sup> At Povoação, a man named Framsisquo was described as a viticulturist (*vinhateiro*), probably meaning that he tapped and fermented palm wine, and Cristóvão Bulama, who at the time of Belo's death still owed money for his purchase of a sword, was listed as an estate caretaker.<sup>64</sup> Five enslaved men at Rio do Ouro labored on "the boat."<sup>65</sup> This vessel might have been used for fishing, to transport passengers and cargo between different locations on the island, or even to haul supplies and soldiers engaged in the *guerra do mato*. The vessel's size is not specified, but it could have also been used for slaving voyages within the Gulf of Guinea. A man listed as Pedro "captain" (*capitão*) may have been captain of the boat, but seems more likely to have exercised a leadership role among enslaved people at Rio do Ouro.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to 83 men – most of whom we are unable to associate with any specific type of labor – at least 46 women and 55 children resided on Belo's São Tomé estates. The enslaved population at Rio do Ouro (53 men, 29 women, 31 children) was larger than that of the *roça* at Povoação (30 men, 17 women, 24 children). Yet on each site, men and women formed roughly 65 and 35 percent of the adult population respectively. The presence of twice as many men as women corresponds surprisingly closely to the gender ratio of "a third part females" often stipulated by the Spanish crown for early transatlantic slaving voyages (Scelle, 1906, pp. 763-795), but the availability of female as opposed to male captives also depended heavily on the policies of African rulers who sold or traded them (Nwokeji, 2001). Buyer preferences and local policies were likely influential as well. For example, Portuguese officials in São Tomé recognized African women's roles as healers and caretakers as early as the 1490s; in the household of governor Álvaro Caminha, a possibly enslaved woman named Úrsula "cured the sick," including the governor himself.<sup>67</sup> In 1517 another official advocated the practice of assigning enslaved women to newly arrived settlers to "treat them of their illnesses."<sup>68</sup>

Sex ratios on Belo's *roças* were more balanced if children, who comprised roughly one third of the population on both estates, are included. The number of girls (15) and boys (16) at Rio do Ouro was nearly even. Another 16 girls and 8 boys resided at Povoação. The terms used to describe children – daughters and sons (*filhas, filhos*), girls and boys (*meninas, meninos*), adolescents (*moças, moços*) – were sometimes used interchangeably, and did not necessarily denote youth. Beatriz, one of four *filhos* or *meninos* born to the enslaved woman Catarina, was estimated to be twenty years old, and Joana, the daughter of a woman named Filipa, was "already a woman."<sup>69</sup> Just over half of the women enumerated in the inventories were described as mothers or listed with children, but the absence of information about paternity prevents us from

reconstructing relationships between women and men, or between children and their fathers. Of the three individuals listed as *moças* or *moço*, none was associated with a mother, indicating that their parents were deceased or sold, or that they had been trafficked as children.

Previous scholars have established that Africans of diverse backgrounds built the foundations of a colonial society on São Tomé (Henriques, 2000; Sousa, 2008), but little is known of São Tomé’s interactions with specific African polities during the early 1500s, and the relative importance of enslaved Africans brought from West Central Africa as opposed to Lower Guinea is still “largely

a matter of conjecture” (Curtin, 1969, p. 115). The inventories of Belo’s estates assign African ethnonyms or toponyms to sixty men and ten women. These individuals constituted less than half of the inhabitants of Belo’s *roças* and only a tiny fraction of São Tomé’s enslaved labor force; their origins may not be representative of those of Africans elsewhere on the island. Yet they provide unprecedented, ground-level insight into the composition of two São Tomé *roças* in 1533, contributing to our understanding of the processes of enslavement and the diplomatic and commercial relations that brought thousands of enslaved Africans to the island.

TABLE 1. Ethnonyms of Africans on Duarte Belo’s São Tomé estates, 1533

African Region	Original spelling	Standard ethnonym	Tentative identifications	F	M	Total
Upper Guinea	Bulluma, Bullama	Bullom? Bolama?		0	2	2
Lower Guinea	Adia, Adea		Aja	1	0	1
	Ambo, Amboo	Ambo		2	1	3
	Beny, Beni, Byny, Biny	Benin		6	0	6
	Cuquana, Quqana		Cucana	0	2	2
	Ybo	Ibo		0	6	6
	Lucomy, Lecomy	Lucumi		0	1	1
	Molare, Mollare, Molare		Molare	0	10	10
	Ujo, Lujo		Ojo, Uyo, Oyo	1	5	6
	Qua, Yqua, Equoa, Ocoa, Oqua, Oquoa		Qua, Ikwa, Ekwa, Okwa, Uquo	1	4	5
West Central Africa	Amgola	Angola		0	1	1
	Amziquo, Amzyquo	Anzico		0	5	5
	Ambala		Mbala	0	1	1
	Conguo, Comguo, Manycomguo, Nanycomguo	Congo		0	7	7
	Ambundo, Ambumbdo	Mbundu		0	1	1
	Mosangua, Mosamgua		Mossanga	0	15	15
	Zombo	Zombo		0	1	1
<b>Total</b>				11	62	73
<b>Adjusted Total</b>				10	60	70

Source: ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85r-89r, 105r-110r. We use the term “ethnonym” here in the interests of space, but acknowledge that these terms included toponyms, exonyms, glossonyms, eponyms, and other forms of identification that did not necessarily connote an “ethnic” identity. The adjusted total at bottom accounts for three individuals who were each ascribed two ethnonyms: Cateryna Byny / Ambo, Joame Mosangua / Mosamgua Mollare, and Tomé Mosangua / Qua.



Among the seventy individuals on Belo's estates who were ascribed African identity markers, nearly half were West Central Africans. Eight bore the descriptive surnames "Congo," "Manicongo," or "Zombo," suggesting association with the Kingdom of Kongo.<sup>70</sup> Here the political title Mani Kongo, referring to the kingdom's ruler, appears to have been used synonymously with "Congo" (Hilton, 1985, pp. 32-49); the same eponym surfaced in Valencia during the 1510s (Cortés Alonso, 1972, p. 131). Zombo was one of Kongo's northeastern provinces; the name could also refer to its inhabitants (Miller, 1988, pp. 34-36, 133, 166, 209). Five additional men were described as "Amziquo."<sup>71</sup> The Anziku Kingdom, a powerful state northeast of Kongo, was often at war with the latter during the early 1500s (Vansina, 1966, pp. 39-40, 101-109; Thornton, 2020, pp. ix, 22, 30, 43, 80). Other recognizable terms denoting West Central African origins were ascribed to "Francisco Amgola" and "Joane Ambundo."<sup>72</sup> Their appearance at Rio do Ouro in 1533 took place the year after São Tomé residents attempted to establish an outpost to trade with the Kingdom of Ndongo; these efforts were promptly prohibited by the Portuguese crown in response to complaints from Kongo's monarch (Caldeira, 2013, pp. 88-89).<sup>73</sup>

Ascribed to no less than fifteen men, "Mossanga" was the most common African ethnonym in Belo's estate inventories.<sup>74</sup> Enslaved Africans described as "Mosanga" or "Moçanga" have also been documented in sixteenth-century Spanish America, but mostly in later decades and in fewer numbers (Bowser, 1974, pp. 40-41; De la Fuente, 2008, p. 105; Wheat, 2016, pp. 58-59). The Mossanga on Belo's estates in 1533 may have been from Nsanga, a polity on the Congo River that had recently been conquered by Kongo (Thornton, 2020, pp. 30-32).<sup>75</sup> The precise date of Nsanga's incorporation into Kongo during the early 1500s is unclear, but these men could have been war captives, or may have been viewed by Kongo's rulers as expendable people from a peripheral region. Alternately they may have been associated with the Kuba Kingdom, a state located to the east of Kongo and Anziku in what is today the Democratic Republic of Congo; the same nation's Kwilu Province contains a rural area known as Mosanga. The Kuba Kingdom's inhabitants, the Bakuba or Bushongo, referred to themselves as "Mbala" and perhaps as Mosongo (Lecomte, 1972; Bontinck, 1994, pp. 446-448; Thornton, 2020, pp. 143-145). A sixteenth man at Rio do Ouro was named Cristóvão "Ambala" or "Bomballa" (Ba-Mbala).<sup>76</sup> The word *mbala*'s two root meanings – "coast" and "royal residence" – are likely the origins of "numerous ethnonyms and toponyms" that can be found in "the land of the Bakuba" and both "north and south of the Zaire River" (Bontinck, 1976, p. 44). Thus, it may be difficult to pinpoint Cristóvão Ambala's origins; the same could be said of a man identified only as "Ambala" who led an uprising among São Tomé's enslaved population in 1585 (Caldeira, 2011, pp. 62).

As might be expected given Belo's prominent role in the *trato de Benim* from 1514 to 1520, over half of the Africans labeled with ethnonyms in the 1533 inventories

can be linked to polities on the Lower Guinea coast.<sup>77</sup> Six women were identified as "Beny" or "Byny," variations of Benin.<sup>78</sup> The Kingdom of Benin had grown powerful in the late 1300s and 1400s, and accumulated captives taken in warfare with its neighbors; some were likely channeled into networks that distributed prestige goods, reinforcing the Obas' authority (Chouin and Lasisi, 2019). By 1486 the Portuguese crown had a factor posted at Ughoton to procure captives, and the western Niger Delta soon became known to Europeans as the "Slave Rivers" (Vogt, 1973; Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, 1993, pp. 335-350). In 1516, Benin's Oba separated the traffic of enslaved females from that of males, and soon afterwards banned the exportation of men altogether. During the 1520s vessels from São Tomé and Príncipe continued to acquire captives from Benin, but only women (Ryder, 1969, p. 45). The presence of six "Beny" women on Belo's estates in 1533 evokes a time when it had been possible for Iberians to obtain concentrated groups of captives from Benin. That these individuals were exclusively women—in contrast to the larger numbers of "Beni" men and women sold in Valencia in previous decades (Cortés Alonso, 1964, pp. 317-470)—confirms the efficacy of the Obas' decision to cease trafficking men.

Three individuals on Belo's São Tomé properties were listed as "Ambo" or "Amboo," an ethnonym that Paul Hair associated with modern-day Cameroon (Hair, 1967, pp. 264-265). A woman and man identified as "Fellypa Ambo" and "Fernando Ambo" labored at Povoação; at Rio do Ouro, Catarina Byny was also described as "Catarina Ambo," perhaps signaling that she was of Ambo origin but had been trafficked through Benin.<sup>79</sup> Ardener notes the presence of distinct peoples known as "Ambos," but suggests that in the 1520s the term referred to residents of an island near Cameroon's mainland (Ardener, 1996, pp. 7-11).<sup>80</sup> This interpretation coincides with information provided by the seventeenth-century Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval, who wrote that the Ambo inhabited an island near Fernando Po (Bioko). According to Sandoval, Iberian vessels ran aground there frequently, but the Ambo "are so charitable and of such compassionate heart that instead of mistreating those that have suffered a shipwreck, they regale and sustain them" until a rescue boat could arrive (Sandoval, 1956, p. 17). Other sources mention enslaved "Ambu" or "Ambo" in Valencia in 1506 (Cortés Alonso, 1972, p. 130) and Hispaniola in 1547 (Guitar, 1998, p. 443).

Several individuals listed in the inventories as "Ybo" can readily be identified with the Igbo.<sup>81</sup> To be clear, pan-Igbo identity does not appear to have existed until the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries; rather than forming a centralized polity, diverse Igbo-speaking peoples constituted multiple states of varying sizes, none of which corresponded to the vast region of Nigeria that is today recognized as Igboland (Kolapo, 2004; Nwokeji, 2010, pp. xv-xvi; Oriji, 2011, pp. 82-86). Yet as early as 1514, individuals described as "Ebu," "Hibo," or "Ibo" were sold in Valencia (Cortés, 1972, p. 131; Hair, 1980, pp. 121, 132), and an enslaved "Ybo" appears in a Hispanio-

la estate inventory in 1531.<sup>82</sup> The presence of at least six “Ybo” men on Belo’s São Tomé properties in 1533 adds to our knowledge of the sixteenth-century Igbo diaspora, and constitutes what is thus far the largest documented group of enslaved Igbo-speakers anywhere in the Atlantic world before the 1600s. On São Tomé, Igbo men could have played an important role in the cultivation of yams, which were not only key to the growth of human settlement on the island but also a staple throughout Lower Guinea; among the Igbo they were “regarded as the king of crops and cultivated exclusively by men” (Nwokeji, 2010, pp. 159-160).<sup>83</sup>

One woman and four men on Belo’s estates were identified with terms ending in “qua” or “quoa”: Diogo Oquoa (or Coa), Roque Oquoa (or Equa), Gonçalo Ocoa (or Equoa), Catarina Yqua (or Qyena), and Tomé Qua.<sup>84</sup> An enslaved fifteen-year-old male named “Equa” transported from Benin to Valencia in 1509 provides our only documented precedent (Cortés, 1964, p. 385). “Qua” presents a range of interpretative options; the Kwa language group encompasses dozens of languages spoken by millions of people in West Africa today (Hall, 2005, pp. 35, 101, 107). Historical place names and proper nouns in southern Nigeria offer further clues. In the 1700s, the Qua peoples—“original owners of the lands east of the Calabar River”—were led by King Aqua, who was based in Qua Town on the Great Kwa River (Behrendt, Latham, and Northrup, 2010, p. 53). Writing in the 1920s, a colonial British Census Officer identified the Kwa, whom he placed to the west of Calabar, as a “sub-tribe” of the Ibibio (Talbot, 1926, pp. 56-59).<sup>85</sup> Over time, some communities relocated, changed place names, or took on new self-designations reflecting developments such as raids by adversaries, resistance to enslavement, or the adoption of new totems (Oriji, 2011, pp. 121-131). Other cases indicate long-term continuities (Hair, 1967). While no one on Belo’s estates was listed as “Calabar” or “Carabali,” it seems likely that the five people identified as Qua, Coa, Ocoa, Oquoa, Equoa, Equa, or Yqua originated in regions near the Cross River, or had been trafficked from the Cross River Estuary before the rise of Old Calabar. In fact, the Efik town later dubbed “New Town” or “Duke Town” was previously known as Atakpa or, more pertinently, Akwa Akpa (Nwauwa, 1991, p. 309; Behrendt, Latham, and Northrup, 2010, pp. 15-17). Nigeria’s Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Abia States contain numerous towns and villages named Ukwa, Uquo, Okwa, Okwo, Ekwa, Ikwa, and Ikwo.

Other enslaved people on Belo’s properties in 1533 were likely Yoruba speakers. One man at Rio do Ouro was listed as “Framciscquo Lecomy” or “Lucomy.”<sup>86</sup> Historians associate the ethnonym “Lucumi” with the Yoruba, today one the largest ethnolinguistic groups in Africa. Although the term Yoruba was not widely used to designate a broadly-shared identity until the nineteenth century, many scholars have examined the development of this identity and the degree to which it may have already existed under a different umbrella term.<sup>87</sup> Robin Law has persuasively argued that rather than serving as a forerunner to modern pan-Yoruba identity, “Lucumi” probably referred to a specific place or people somewhere along the eastern reaches

of the vast lagoon system running parallel to the coasts of modern-day Togo, Benin, and Nigeria (Law, 1997b, pp. 209-212). Other studies support Law’s conclusion that “Lucumí” was a localized designation (Lovejoy and Ojo, 2015, p. 370). Viewed in light of Lucumi men and women’s presence on Hispaniola estates in the late 1540s and 1550s (Thornton, 1998, p. 112; Guitar, 1998, pp. 442-446),<sup>88</sup> the term’s prior appearance in São Tomé supports the argument that Lucumí identity originated on the eastern side of the Atlantic (Lovejoy and Ojo, 2015, pp. 360-361; Oriji, 2011, p. 72). Francisco Lucomy’s presence in São Tomé constitutes the first known appearance of this term in any written source, predating what was previously considered its earliest documented usage by fourteen years (Law, 1997b, p. 207).

Another six enslaved Africans (five men and one woman) on Belo’s properties listed as “Ujo” are also likely to have originated in South or South-West Nigeria.<sup>89</sup> The term “Ujo” closely resembles Uyo (capital of Akwa Ibom State), Ojo (a coastal Local Government Area near Lagos), and Oyo State. One might even speculate that “Ujo” referred to the Oyo people. Before it was adopted by Yoruba-speaking peoples more broadly as a common identity, the name “Yoruba” originally referred to a subset of the Oyo (Smith, 1965, p. 57). No written sources mentioning the Oyo are known to exist until the late 1600s or early 1700s, but Oyo territories are believed to have been temporarily conquered and their ruling dynasty supplanted during the early sixteenth century; these events likely contributed to the Oyo Empire’s subsequent adoption of cavalry tactics (Smith, 1965, p. 59; Law, 1975, pp. 3-4; Agiri, 1975, p. 11). They may have also produced Oyo captives, with some surfacing in São Tomé during the 1520s or early 1530s. Two “Ojo” women in Hispaniola who were estimated to have been 35 and 60 years old in 1556 may have experienced similar trajectories before being re-exported from São Tomé.<sup>90</sup>

The second-most frequent African identity marker to appear in the inventories of Belo’s estates, ascribed to ten men, was “Molare” (alternately “Mollare” or Moelare”).<sup>91</sup> Although it closely resembles the modern Yoruba (female) name Omolara, this term, too, poses a challenge in that we are aware of its usage in only two other instances during the sixteenth century. The first and most notable is the 1531-1533 uprising led by Diogo Molare on São Tomé, mentioned above.<sup>92</sup> Secondly, an enslaved man named “Juan Mulari,” estimated to be 55 years old, was a cart operator on the same Hispaniola estate where two “Ojo” women labored in 1556.<sup>93</sup> Nearly three centuries later, several female and male captives embarked on transatlantic slave ships in Lagos, Porto Novo, Ouidah, and Calabar were identified with similar names including Moláre and Molarree.<sup>94</sup> We suspect that “Molare” can be traced to what is today South-West Nigeria, where villages in Oyo and Osun States bear the names Molare, Molade, and Molarere.

Two men at Rio do Ouro were listed with the similarly obscure term “Quqana,” or “Ququana.”<sup>95</sup> A woman identified as “Cucana” in Hispaniola in 1531 provides

our only known contemporaneous example from the Caribbean.<sup>96</sup> Other sources refer to enslaved black men as “Cucana” in Hispaniola in 1557, Havana in 1579, and Salvador da Bahia in 1618 (Rojas, 1947, pp. 129-131; Silva, 2014, pp. 132-133, 150, 153).<sup>97</sup> “Quqana” or “Cucana” calls to mind the medieval European myth of a carefree land called “Cockaigne” or “Cucanha” (Pleij, 2001). But towns named Kukana and Kukan exist in Nigeria’s Kano and Kaduna States today. In the same region during the 1800s, the word *cucanawa* designated enslaved people or their descendants (Hill, 1976, p. 403; Bashir Salau, 2018, pp. 14, 84, 102). Our proposed identification of “Cucana” with North-West Nigeria is admittedly speculative, but may be viewed in light of long-distance trade (and slaving) routes that spanned centuries (Wilks, 1962; Northrup, 1972).

Recent scholarship indicates that Portuguese contact with Allada, in the present-day Republic of Benin, was underway soon after Belo’s properties were evaluated (Pinto and Law, 2020). The estate inventories contain no reference to Allada or Arda, but they list an enslaved woman named “Catarina Adia” (or Adea), mother of two sons and a daughter.<sup>98</sup> Adia may be a reference to Aja or Adja, also known as Tado, in what is today Togo. Oral traditions hold that the Kingdoms of Allada, Ouidah, and Grand Popo were each founded by expatriates from the Aja-Tado royal dynasty. While these traditions likely seek to provide legitimacy to the newer states, they also point to the prior existence of the Kingdom of Aja, which otherwise “is not clearly documented in contemporary European sources before the early nineteenth century” (Law, 1997a, pp. 29-35).

Two other men were described in the inventories as “Bulluma” or “Bullama,” suggesting origins among the Bullom of Sierra Leone or perhaps on Bolama in the Bijagós Islands (Hair, 1967, pp. 254-255, 267; 1997).<sup>99</sup> It should come as no surprise to find small numbers of enslaved people in São Tomé who were from neither West Central Africa nor Lower Guinea; as we have seen, a few enslaved mariners arrived from as far away as South Asia. The remaining 114 enslaved inhabitants of Belo’s estates were not ascribed ethnonyms, though most were likely brought from the mainland as well. Others such as “Gomçalo Cryolho” and undoubtedly many of the fifty-five children were born on the islands.<sup>100</sup> Regardless of the amount of time their parents had resided in São Tomé, “creoles” like Gonçalo were born into a society that differed substantially from the worlds their elders had known.

Previous scholarship on early sixteenth-century São Tomé emphasizes the productive contours of its plantation economy, but provides little indication of regional African contexts’ importance to the composition of the island’s enslaved population. Belo’s estate inventory offers ample evidence for how the island’s slave labor supply depended heavily on mainland African practices and events that generated captives for export, and on the willingness of African elites and merchants to trade with Europeans. As the above discussion indicates, our knowledge of those

political dynamics during the late 1400s and early 1500s is highly fragmentary, but the diversity of the terms with which enslaved people on Belo’s properties identified themselves—and the difficulties we face in interpreting many of them—reveals that during the years leading up to 1533, slaving routes centering on São Tomé, with linkages to Benin, Kongo, and elsewhere, were both volatile and diversified.

## FACING UNCERTAINTY

The 1533 inventory of the Belo family estates on São Tomé consisted of several rounds of property itemization undertaken at two different moments that year. The first sequence began in early January of 1533, when the notary Manuel Rodrigues and the *juiz dos órfãos* Gabriel Lopes, accompanied by the estate caretaker Cosme Gonçalves, enumerated Belo’s assets on São Tomé, human beings among them. Between July and August, four officials referred to as evaluators (*avaliadores*) once more set about to inventory the Belo estate. Accompanied by the same notary from January, the four evaluators repeated the work of itemization that had been done earlier that year, but added monetary values for each entry, and in many cases introduced important variations from the prior listings. These tweaks sometimes reflected changes that had occurred over the six to seven months that had elapsed between the initial inventory listing the Belo family’s slaves and the subsequent visit by the evaluators. After all, the better part of that year had been marked by chaotic developments on São Tomé, between provisioning shortages, the *guerra do mato*, and the redoubled efforts to expand human trafficking and sugar production. These contingencies manifested themselves differently but keenly for enslaved people, including those on Belo’s estates who also would have accompanied the slow process of the estate inventory’s completion. Subjects of evaluation, the enslaved were also evaluators in their own right: discerning and calculating developments around them, and what was feasible in the face of local and distant realities.

And yet, the better part of a year for some of the Africans on the Belo *roças* brought illness and disability, or in some cases death. Hardships are evident in those who were afflicted with *boubas*, a disease consisting of swelling, pustules, or tumors that may have been associated with syphilis, yaws, or bubonic plague (Newson and Minchin 2007, pp. 124-125, 285; Earle, 2012, pp. 111-113; McKinley, 2016, p. 222). Neither Gonçalo Kongo, nor André Zombo, nor the enslaved mother of two named Catarina were listed as sick in January 1533, but each was described as being “ill with *boubas*” in August of the same year.<sup>101</sup> A woman named Isabel had been “sick with *boubas*” in January 1533, but by August she was “very sick with *boubas* and lame in both legs.”<sup>102</sup> The cases varied in intensity, and did not preclude evaluators from applying the commodifying logic of enslavement to these individuals; in 1507, an unnamed woman described as being “sick with *boubas*” on a São Tomé estate whose owner had died was nevertheless sold a week after most other

enslaved people on the same plantation, for a lower price than others.<sup>103</sup> Neither does the preponderance of people with *boubas* in Belo plantations seem out of the ordinary. Of the 1642 enslaved people tallied across royal properties on São Tomé in 1535, 71 were listed as suffering from *boubas*, a proportion slightly higher than those described on Belo's estates.<sup>104</sup> Others on the Belo estate surely experienced maladies and afflictions that remain even more ambiguous than the hazy label of *boubas*: "Francisquo Comguo" and a woman named Isabel, mother of three, were alive in January but in August were listed as deceased.<sup>105</sup> We know nothing of how their deaths, let alone the illnesses afflicting the enslaved, were treated, experienced or marked by the kin and community members both on the estates and beyond; in the case of Isabel, we are left to speculate about how others stepped in to care for her three children, or if perhaps they were separated through sales or transfers to other locations on São Tomé or beyond.

Other developments altered the composition of the community on the Belo plantations in the span of half a year, irrevocably changing the lives of many. Sometime between January and August of 1533, "Gomçalo Cryolho" and at least eight additional enslaved people from Belo's estates were taken to Portugal by Francisco Belo, a man who was not listed as one of Duarte Belo's inheritors, but who may have been his illegitimate son or even an enslaved or dependent member of Belo's household. Notably, none of the nine people transported from São Tomé to Portugal had been ascribed an African ethnonym or toponym. In addition to Gonçalo Crioulo, those likely to be adults were identified as "Marya," "Amtonio Curto," and "Antonio the sugar master."<sup>106</sup> An adolescent girl or young woman named Clara was described as a *moça*, and the rest were children: "Apallonya," daughter of Beatriz; "Marya," daughter of Isabel; "Domynguo," son of Margarida; and one of the five children born to the enslaved woman Guiomar.<sup>107</sup> Most likely, these nine individuals were transhipped to Lisbon to be sold into slavery; vessels regularly departed from São Tomé for the kingdom for this purpose, including at least five in 1533.<sup>108</sup> These individuals likely faced a grueling voyage out of the Gulf of Guinea. Many of the same vessels that carried captives from São Tomé to Lisbon also hauled sugar, dyewoods, and ivory, following routes that took them through the Azores, where some people were sold before the ship's continuing to Portugal (Rocha, 2019). It is possible that some or most of the nine people taken by Francisco Belo never made it to Portugal.

With the regular comings and goings of vessels hailing from near and far, and the transactions supporting this maritime traffic carried out by a diverse array of Africans and Europeans, news and rumors circulated on the island about developments an ocean away from São Tomé. It is not out of the question that enslaved people on the Belo estates had particular cause for concern about the realities of a voyage to Portugal that year. From conversations with caretakers, neighbors, or even other enslaved people on the estate who had greater mobility on the island—such

as the man known as "Crystovão, who serves in [the town of] Povoação"—they could have surmised that the agricultural crisis on the island potentially placed restraints on the availability of provisions.<sup>109</sup> Before leaving with Francisco Belo, they may have heard of the voyage of the *Santa Maria do Carmo*, piloted by Afonso Anes de Fão, which had left with 100 captives, went on to sell five in the Azores, and arrived with 74 people in Lisbon, reporting that 21 individuals – 1 out of every 5 people who departed from São Tomé – had died along the way.<sup>110</sup> This presaged a string of slaving voyages from São Tomé to Lisbon in 1533 that proved particularly disastrous. Only ten captives out of one hundred survived one venture from São Tomé that wrecked in the Cantabrian Sea after many were sold in the Azores and Galicia; a similar voyage saw 45 out of 100 individuals perish en route.<sup>111</sup> Records of the slave trade indicate that mortality rates on the São Tomé-Portugal route were substantially higher than those of other trafficking routes in the same period (Torrão, 1995, pp. 80-81; Mendes, 2004, pp. 24-25).

Whereas this was cause for deep concern to the enslaved, such risks were palatable for the Belos. With António Belo imprisoned over the family's debts, trafficking a number of individuals from the estates may have been seen as a viable way to liquidate some of the family's assets. The sale of "Antonio the sugar master," given his expertise in the production of sugar, would have been particularly profitable to the Belo family. As "sugar master," António played a central role in the workings of the *engenho*: new royal regulations in 1532 formalized this widespread recognition by stipulating that sugar masters be evaluated every three years by a local official (Faro, 1958, p. 333). The decision to transport António seems compatible with the Belo family's strategy of seeking short-term profit rather than investing in expanding the *roças'* productive capacities. For António, this resulted in a journey that may have taken him beyond the Azores or Lisbon to other sugar-producing areas such as Madeira, the Canaries, or the Spanish Caribbean.

If the people transported by Francisco Belo made it to Lisbon, further stops certainly could have awaited any of them in Iberia. But Lisbon itself absorbed a sizeable share of arrivals, and some may have been sent to the household of the Belos at the Rua da Bica. Another inventory of the family's properties completed at the time of Inês de Paiva's death in November 1540 detailed the "house slaves" of the Lisbon residence. Of the five people who appeared there, one person identified as the "Black slave named Helena, fifteen years of age," noted at the opening of this essay, could have been the unnamed child transported by Francisco Belo seven years earlier. The August 1533 listing does not identify which of Guiomar's five children was transported to Portugal that year, but where Guiomar's children are named in January 1533, one of them appears as "Yllena," or Helena.<sup>112</sup> If she was the same person as the individual of the same name listed in 1540, Helena arrived in Lisbon as an eight-year-old and lived and labored in the home for at least seven years until, by Inês de Paiva's will, she was inherited by the

second eldest of Duarte Belo's children, João de Paiva. Surely, if João de Paiva visited his mother and stepfather regularly during the 1530s, talk of the state of sugar production or the *guerra do mato* on São Tomé, negotiations over Diogo Nunes's stake in family affairs, or of António Belo's continued imprisonment may have taken place at the family residence where Helena served. Outside, not far from the docks with its bustling markets and vessels in transit, Helena the child and then a young woman may well have wondered and inquired about what had become of her mother, siblings, and acquaintances whom she had been forced to leave behind.

Back on São Tomé, some absences in the listings between January and August of 1533 may have other explanations than death or forced removal. At least two individuals who appear in the initial inventory—one Baltasar, and another named "Diogo embaixador" ("ambassador," perhaps a nickname)—simply do not appear in the August listing.<sup>113</sup> Although their absence in the second inventory may have resulted from an accidental omission, the context of the *guerra do mato* also makes plausible that these two individuals ran away sometime between January and August. Various colonists had noted in a 1530 inquest that an uptick in fugitives regularly marked the days leading to the departure of slaving vessels. If provisions were more difficult than usual to obtain for outgoing voyages, delays in departure may have been more frequent, leaving anyone considering themselves more vulnerable to being forcibly transported more time and opportunities to flee. Given the number of voyages that sailed to Lisbon, Mina, and the Caribbean during the early 1530s, talk of impending departures must have been a regular feature in conversations among those with direct or indirect connections to the maritime sector, including the mariners enslaved on the Belo estate in 1533 (Ballong-Wen-Mewuda, 1993, pp. 358-361; Mendes, 2004, pp. 24-25). Because most people temporarily brought to São Tomé were routed to Mina or the Caribbean, longer-time residents of the Belo estates may have been more concerned about being taken to Portugal, as befell at least nine of their kin and community members in the same months.

If Baltasar and Diogo "the ambassador" ran away or were truant at the time of the second inventory, why would the notary not have jotted down a note suggesting such? It is unclear whether the scribe or evaluators present in July and August had access to the January inventory, since the copy that gathers the two inventories into one sequence dates from the late 1540s. Nevertheless, Cosme Gonçalves, as the legally designated administrator of the estate on São Tomé following Afonso da Silva's death, may have had motives to conceal that not all enslaved people under his authority were accounted for.<sup>114</sup> The evaluators would not have taken the news of fugitives lightly: among them was Pedro de Roma, whose official role in 1533 as the "treasurer of the affairs of the *mato*" made him responsible for doling out funds towards militia expeditions.<sup>115</sup> Another evaluator, Simão Lopes, may have been directly involved in such expeditions. In the months before his visit to Belo's estates, a Simão Lopes, identi-

fied as a tax collector (*recebedor*) and *feitor* of the trade of São Tomé, participated in raids against the "people of Mocambo." In the course of one campaign, this Simão Lopes was knighted for exemplary conduct in the conflict.<sup>116</sup> If the two Simão Lopes's were the same—and their complementary roles in local governance certainly suggests that they were—Cosme Gonçalves and other residents of the Belo estates, including its enslaved majority, may have known that the visitors in July and August included high-ranking officers actively involved in the suppression of fugitive efforts. As a result, they may have felt compelled to keep quiet about anyone who was intentionally absent, lest they be pressed to contribute themselves or others to the war effort.<sup>117</sup>

Undoubtedly, being an enslaved person on the run in 1533 carried enormous risks. Militia patrols skirmished against maroon collectives and sometimes killed or recaptured fugitives. Fragmentary records of bounty payments to militia members who apprehended royal slaves indicate that both fugitive women and men faced exile upon re-enslavement. In one case in October of 1533, three individuals apprehended within days of one another were placed on a vessel soon departing for Portugal.<sup>118</sup> Captives transported from São Tomé to Puerto Rico on a different ship in 1540-1541 included an unspecified number of *ladinos*—individuals "from the land" of São Tomé who were well-versed in the Portuguese language and Catholic rites—who may have been sold away from the island for similar reasons.<sup>119</sup> If Baltasar and Diogo "the ambassador" chose to run away in 1533, they may have figured that the rocky state of the Belo family's finances increased the chances that they would be sold off the plantation if they stayed put, and reasoned that they would rather take the risks associated with flight. Perhaps they had heard of the collectives associated with Mocambo or Diogo Molare. In the case of other enslaved people on Belo's estates, their decisions over whether or not to join the insurgents would have been filtered through their understandings of particular conjunctures of 1533 pertaining to their *roça*, their island, and the broader Atlantic.

Finally, the Belo estate inventory offers a glimpse into how enslaved people navigated the contours of colonial Portuguese political and legal institutions to press for their manumission, in a similar fashion as scholars have noted for Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in other early Atlantic settings (Owensby, 2008; Van Deusen, 2015; Iretton, 2020). A woman identified as the "other Violante" (to distinguish her from a "Violante Beny") provides us with a remarkable example of an enslaved person acting on her evaluation of murky circumstances. A mother of three, Violante sometime between January and August of 1533 decided to launch a formal suit to obtain manumission through local juridical avenues. The only hint we have of this legal process appears in the listing of her name in the August inventory, where the scribe observed in passing that she had initiated a *demanda* (petition) because she "says that she is free."<sup>120</sup> Violante, who was observed as having been enslaved to a Baltasar Rodrigues, was described in the January entry as having "stayed" on the

Belo estate after her owner's death. Baltasar Rodrigues is identified elsewhere as Duarte Belo's "factor of the trade to Benin" in São Tomé in 1519-1520. Although Violante did not carry an ethnonym in the extant records in which she appears, it seems highly likely that she (and perhaps some of the other "Bini" women on Belo's estates) had arrived on São Tomé through the mediation of a trafficker such as Rodrigues, expressly entrusted by the Belo family to coordinate the Benin trade. Baltasar Rodrigues disappears from extant records after 1520, suggesting that he may have either died or left São Tomé early that decade. In any case, Violante's insistence on her status as a freed-woman is palpable. The *demanda* was framed as being underway not so that she might gain manumission, but to confirm her free status.

The reasons for Violante not having previously pursued a strategy to secure her freedom through legal channels remain unclear. Perhaps her former owner Baltasar Rodrigues had only recently passed, or if some years had elapsed since his death, maybe Afonso da Silva had impeded Violante from searching out the appropriate venue to initiate the process. Different considerations, likely including the circumstances of Rodrigues's absence from São Tomé or death, her standing in the slaveholding hierarchy of Belo's estate, and her existing kinship and community ties, contributed to Violante remaining on the *roça* when she could claim herself and her children to be free. Possibly, the conjunctures of 1533 were concerning enough to Violante that she sought an added measure of protection against being traded away, or having any of her children taken from her. Perhaps she learned that a change in the makeup of local officialdom meant she would have a sympathetic audience to hear her case that particular year. If she had first arrived on São Tomé in the period when Rodrigues had been the Belos' factor in Benin, she would have spent the better part of a decade making a life on the Belo estates, becoming pregnant and giving birth to at least three children (Domingos, Francisca, and António), and gaining insights into the political and legal culture in colonial São Tomé. This knowledge would have served her well in 1533.

Whatever the factors that helped it move forward, Violante's freedom suit—as fragmentary as the evidence for it may be—points to the possibility that enslaved individuals on São Tomé and other early Iberian Atlantic settings sought legal recourse for manumission more widely than is assumed in local jurisdictions that did not necessarily reach royal tribunals and courts, and are therefore underrepresented in extant archives. We do not know the result of Violante's efforts, but an important hint that her case was strong is evident: the evaluators, seasoned veterans of the slave trade and the *guerra do mato*, ascribed neither Violante nor her children any monetary valuation in the August inventory. With a plausible case for her manumission, and by extension, perhaps that of her children, Violante's approach to the uncertainties of her moment seems to have paid off, at least in the short term, with a modicum of protection for her and her children against being assessed and traded away. Her actions support, in

other words, Jennifer Morgan's argument for the "growth of a critical comprehension among captive Africans about the relationship between the disruption of family and the production of children for a marketplace" in the early Atlantic (Morgan 2021, p. 160). Violante's tactics subverted the inventory's logic of assessment and quantification that separated families and communities, revindicating the durability of kinship bonds in unpredictable times.

## CONCLUSION

Littered with fragmentary testaments to a diversity of lives, the Duarte Belo inventory—the most extensive of its kind for sixteenth-century São Tomé to have survived, as far as we know—offers a unique set of vantage points onto the Gulf of Guinea and the early Atlantic. As with other inventories of enslaved individuals, the use of ethnonyms and other details provides a means of analyzing sugar estates in terms of the individual African men, women, and children who labored on them. Undeniably, behind a thicket of enumerations and valuations were enslaved peoples' experiences of survival and loss, their dynamic subjectivities, intellects, and labors, and the relationships of family and community that they forged along the way. Further work remains to be done with the source at the heart of this essay, as it offers sorely needed counterpoints to contemporaneous and better-known reports and narratives by travelers, officials, or anonymous pilots that characterize early colonial São Tomé in broad generalities.

São Tomé has often been presented as a vanguard or stepping stone of a plantation complex that would come to fruition on the other side of the Atlantic. But São Tomé's rise as a major sugar exporter in the 1520s and 30s also contained messy countercurrents, deep ambiguities, and differentiated forms of struggle. The Belo estate inventories show that Africans in and out of bondage experienced the brunt of change and uncertainty in a range of ways that were largely detrimental to their livelihoods, though notable exceptions are evident. That freedom suits and escapes were contemporaneous with family separations and illnesses among the enslaved offers important insights into the scope and character of the transformations taking hold on the island in the early 1530s. To live through this period of change was, more than the historiography recognizes, a reckoning with the profoundly uncertain nature of colonial enterprises on the island, and people of African origin both inhabited and contributed powerfully to that uncertainty. Acting in different ways on the basis of their own appraisals of an unclear state of affairs, Africans of diverse backgrounds and positionalities—fugitives like Diogo Molare, litigants like Violante, experts on sugar production like António, and countless others—played decisive roles in determining the future of São Tomé.

The Belo estate records, furthermore, offer more material for piecing together the commercial and slaving networks that connected São Tomé to other parts of the Gulf of Guinea, the Atlantic islands, and Europe, and

the acquisition of wealth by middling and elite sectors of merchants and traders at the expense of forcibly displaced and enslaved African laborers. By the time Helena arrived at the house at the Rua da Bica, the Belo family was no longer at the forefront of the accumulation of wealth from colonial and slaving projects in the Gulf of Guinea, but their prominence in Lisbon's elite circles had already been achieved. The main inheritor of the estate, João de Paiva (next in line after the imprisoned António Belo), remained so committed to keeping a family stake on the island and currying royal favor to do so that he received a crown grant for more landed properties on São Tomé in the 1550s.<sup>121</sup> The linearity with which early Atlantic historiography presents the rise of sugar plantation slavery obscures the circuitous paths and fluctuating fortunes of merchant families such as the Belos. Tracing their itineraries helps us to better understand how social inequities became concurrently entrenched in multiple Atlantic locales, how Africans and African-descended people and other non-elites confronted their realities, and the roles they played in shaping their worlds. American echoes of São Tomé's sugar age merit being understood, similarly, as developments that occurred despite uncertain conditions and countervailing tendencies, in which people weighed possible courses of action in the face of the unknown.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## NOTES

- 1 "Conheça as sete ruas mais bonitas do mundo. Há uma em Lisboa." *Observador* (Feb 21, 2017). Accessed June 1 2022. <<https://observador.pt/2017/02/21/conheca-as-sete-ruas-mais-bonitas-do-mundo-a-melhor-e-lisboeta/>>
- 2 Araújo, 1993, vol. 13, pp. 67-68.
- 3 Albuquerque and Santos, dirs., *Portugaliae monumenta Africana* [hereafter PMA], vol. 5, pp. 223-226.
- 4 PMA, vol. 2, p. 421.
- 5 Brásio, ed., *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, ser. 1 (hereafter MMA[1]), vol. 4, p. 34.
- 6 Although João de Paiva's 1485 charter encompassed the entire island, the royal donation was altered in 1486 to entail half of the island for him and another half for his daughter, Mécia de Paiva, and whomever she would marry. Inês de Paiva's relation to João de Paiva is plausible given her elite standing, family connection with São Tomé, and decision to name her second eldest son João de Paiva. The elder João de Paiva and Mécia de Paiva's donations may have been extinguished in 1490, when the crown emitted a new charter to João Pereira, though there is no reference to the cancellation of the Paivas' charter (which can be chalked up to lost records or the possibility that Pereira was the person whom Mécia Paiva married). In any case, the Paiva family could have held claims to individual properties and estates on the island from their days at the helm of the captaincy. Further research into the Paiva family genealogy could clarify these points. For the Paiva donations, see Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (hereafter ANTT), Chancelaria João II Liv. 1 fol 81 and Liv 8 f. 151v; Livro das Ilhas, ff. 161v-162r.
- 7 The Casa da Guiné was first established in 1455 in Lagos, transferred in 1463 to Lisbon when it came under crown patrimony and, in the 1480s, known as Casa da Guiné e Mina. Caetano, 2015, p. 76.
- 8 ANTT, Corpo Cronológico (CC), 2-161-91, f. 7r; Santos, 1996, p. 79; MMA(1), vol. 1, pp. 378-380. Caldeira interprets brief references to the language of the contract as pertaining to the collection of royal duties (2011, p. 44), yet the term *trato* could also be understood to include the trade itself, and Segura's letter makes clear that Belo by 1517-18 secured the right to conduct trade using one of seven vessels allotted to the consortium. Another document refers to a 1517 voyage to "Rio Real" financed by Castilho and Gentil without a reference to Belo, confirming that the latter was a minor stakeholder in this contract. ANTT, Chancelaria de D. Manuel I, Liv. 38, f. 39r.
- 9 The early years of the contract overlapped with exclusive trading rights given by the Portuguese crown to António Carneiro for trade out of the Rio Real in Benin, leading to an inquest in 1516 that recorded witnesses claiming that the *armadores* (likely referring to Gentil, Castilho, and perhaps Belo) organized a voyage that year that brought 400 captives from Benin. ANTT-CC-1-20-127. Suggesting lasting links between Belo and contract holders from this period, a receipt of money exchanged between Belo's *feitor* and Pedro Álvares Gentil figures among the inventoried items of Belo's estate in 1533. ANTT, Feitos Findos (FF), Inventários Pós-Mortem (IPM), D-4-42, n.2, f. 81v.
- 10 70 people taken on 1518 voyage (ANTT-CC-2-78-82); 80 people on August 1519 voyage (ANTT-CC-2-84-1).
- 11 ANTT-CC-2-84-1. Belo's contract was renegotiated in 1519 to allow for royal agents to simultaneously administer the Mina-São Tomé trade. See MMA(1), vol. 4, p. 131. Many trade items belonging to Duarte Belo were stored at the trading post in São Jorge in 1519, including *conibombos de Benim* and *coris* itemized as part of the "contract of Duarte Belo, *armador*": CC-2-85-75 f.6r. Confirming Belo's continued involvement in the Mina trade into 1520, see CC-2-87-2.
- 12 The four *feitores* were João Álvares (ANTT-CC-2-80-127); Diogo Álvares and Baltasar Rodrigues, "feitores do trato de Benim" (CC-2-79-65); and Diogo Fernandes, who accompanied the latter in his role as "feitor de Duarte Belo na ilha de São Tomé" (CC-2-81-4, CC-2-84-6, CC-2-86-30).
- 13 ANTT-Chancelaria João III-Doações-Liv. 1, f. 115v. On late medieval mule-riding privileges in Portugal, see Sousa, 1982.
- 14 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 169v ("large homes"). The street was already known as the "Bica do Belo" as early as 1554. Araújo, 1993, vol. 13, p. 67.
- 15 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 123v.
- 16 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 125r-125v
- 17 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 125r.
- 18 MMA(1), vol. 1, p. 389; Absent original land grants, we speculate on the timing of Belo's acquisition of the properties considering that the island's 1524 charter stipulated that sugar cultivation could not occur on estates unless they had been granted prior to 1522; some exceptions appear in royal chanceries after that date, but none refer to Duarte Belo. MMA(1), vol. 15, pp. 66-67.
- 19 Torres owned various residences in the riverside neighborhood Cata-que-Farás, and is attested to have lived there in 1526. ANTT-CC-2-185-10.

- 20 Francisco Nunes was “factor of Duarte Belo” circa 1527-28, no longer serving in this role by 1530: ANTT-CC-2-145-43, ff. 3r-4v, ANTT-Núcleo Antigo 561 f. 22r; Afonso da Silva and Cosmo Rodrigues appear in ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 61r.
- 21 Caldeira, 2011, p. 49; ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 172r; ANTT-Núcleo Antigo 561 ff. 22r-22v, 24r.
- 22 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 81v. In the mid 1530s, the king of Congo kept his own representative in Mpinda who was charged with interfacing with *feitores* of the Portuguese king as well as private traders. ANTT-CC-2-199-11
- 23 MMA(1), vol. 1, p. 482.
- 24 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 90r-90v.
- 25 ANTT-CC-2-157-68
- 26 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 171v.
- 27 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 171r, 172r-172v, 173v, 175r; ANTT-CC-2-158-36, ff. 1r, 3v-4r.
- 28 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 172r.
- 29 ANTT-CC-2-207-16
- 30 MMA(1), vol. 1, p. 391.
- 31 ANTT, Chancelaria João III, Doações, Liv. 27, f. 90r. This is one of two known extant references to Diogo Molare, in addition to another similar document (Chanc. João III, Doações, Liv. 44, f. 5v) identified by Caldeira, 2017, p. 132.
- 32 Santos argues that the name ‘Mocambo’ was sufficiently generalized in this period to refer to various leaders of fugitive collectives, while Caldeira assumes one person (Santos, 1996, p. 81; Caldeira, 2017, p. 133). We concur with the latter, as we have not come across a demonstrable instance when the term Mocambo indicated more than one individual on São Tomé in the 1520s and 30s. The term ‘Mocambo’ would go on to accrue various meanings in Brazilian Portuguese, including maroon settlements in the later sixteenth century. Alencastro, 2018, p. 60.
- 33 ANTT, Chancelaria João III, Doações, Liv. 44, f. 109v.
- 34 ANTT-CC-2-161-91 f. 6v.
- 35 ANTT-CC-2-187-86, ff. 7r-7v.
- 36 ANTT-CC-2-207-16, f. 1v.
- 37 This estimated time frame is based on explicit references to provisioning difficulties in the colonial domain of São Tomé. Ramos, 1986, p. 35.
- 38 MMA(1) vol. 1, p. 548.
- 39 On rice, see also ANTT-CC-2-178-9 and CC-2-176-56. On “milho das Antilhas,” see also ANTT-CC-2-187-82, CC-2-188-120, CC-2-190-50.
- 40 ANTT-CC-2-168-9. Concurrently with at least part of his time on São Tomé, Gentil’s *feitor* João Álvares served as royal tax collector for sugar shipments. He completed his three-year stint in 1534. CC-2-178-103, CC-2-189-78. Whether this is the same João Álvares who served as *feitor* to Belo, Gentil, and Castilho in the late 1510s is unclear.
- 41 ANTT-CC-2-168-64; CC-2-182-49. Another power of attorney from 1534 suggests that Afonso and his brother Diogo de Torres owned three slaving vessels operating in and out of São Tomé at the time. ANTT-CC-2-191-28.
- 42 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 61r.
- 43 Silva also owned a *roça* known as Monte Olivete, which became part of the royal patrimony by 1535. ANTT-CC-2-202-136, f. 5r. At least one mariner, an unnamed *grumete* who worked on slaving vessels in the early 1530s, was enslaved to him. ANTT-CC-2-185-9.
- 44 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 170v, 171v.
- 45 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 172v, 175r.
- 46 For a ruling in 1531 relating to the India voyage that favored António Belo, concerning the payment of municipal taxes [*di-reito do marco*], see Arquivo Histórico da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, Liv. I de Sentenças, Doc. 48. Another lawsuit pitted the family against Fernão de Anes, *mestre* of the vessel outfitted to India: ANTT, Núcleo Antigo 561 ff. 22r-24r. Debts from the same venture, including outstanding payments to Manuel Álvares, the pilot of the India voyage, ultimately landed the younger Belo in prison (see ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 171r), but correspondence between the Count of Castanheira and King João III in 1533 shows direct involvement of top officials, including the king, on deliberations over jailing António Belo in the months prior to his imprisonment. Ford, 1931, pp. 104, 106, 112.
- 47 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 176r. Being imprisoned did not stop Belo from engaging in legal wrangling over, among other matters, the ownership of an enslaved person identified as “Johane *mulato*” in a suit against Nuno Gonçalves. Biblioteca Pública de Évora, Cód. CV 2/11, f. 222v. Belo also received a dispensation to marry during his period of incarceration to Antónia do Casal. ANTT-CC-1-63-50.
- 48 Confirming his elite background, Nunes is referred to as a “filho de homem honrado.” ANTT-Chancelaria João III-Doações-Liv. 11, f. 102r and Liv. 2, ff. 56v-57r (1527).
- 49 He also minimized the family’s financial straits before officials, claiming that “the debts of the house are less than what appears” on inventories. Ford, 1931, p. 112.
- 50 ANTT-CC-2-171-73, f. 1v.
- 51 At least one other South Asian mariner worked on slaving vessels in the Gulf of Guinea in 1530s: see a 1532 power of attorney signed by Lourenço de Goa, a “Black man currently on the island,” who claimed back pay due to him from when he “worked as a mariner” on vessels from São Tomé, and who also made arrangements for someone to trade in enslaved people in Kongo in his name. ANTT-CC-3-29-61. Another mariner likely from South Asia, “Pedro da Índia,” worked as a pilot between Benin and Príncipe in the 1510s. CC-1-20-127, ff. 4r-4v.
- 52 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 104v-105r. For evidence of 3000 additional arrobas of sugar awaiting shipment, see ff. 84v-85. Perhaps the additional sugar had been produced on other estates, such as those belonging to Belo’s bookkeeper Afonso da Silva. Also, if the Belo family was divesting itself of enslaved workers or other properties prior to the inventory, they may have opted to take payment in sugar.
- 53 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 107r. An *arroba* was equivalent to 32 pounds (14.7 kg) in Portugal at this time; see Caldeira, 2011, p. 66 n47.
- 54 MMA(1), vol. 1, pp. 508-509, analyzed in Sousa, 2008, p. 55. By 1535, the Portuguese crown owned six major sugar estates, including the Cabo Verde *engenho* and three properties in Praia Preta; see ANTT-CC-2-202-136, analyzed in Santos, 1996, pp. 71-73.
- 55 For a higher estimate of 150000 *arrobas* per year, see Anonymous pilot [c.1545], 1989, pp. 23-24.
- 56 ANTT-CC-2-202-136, f. 1r.
- 57 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 85r.
- 58 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85v, 107v.
- 59 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 87r, 110r. This description of sugar processing is based on Garfield, 1992, pp. 69-76; Vieira, 1992, pp. 159, 161; Schwartz, 2004, pp. 13-14; Rodríguez Morel, 2012, pp. 309-316.
- 60 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85v, 108r. For a description of the duties of sugar masters and specialists in other contexts, see Vieira, 2004, pp. 262, 272-280; Rodríguez Morel, 2012, p. 143.
- 61 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 86r, 88r, 105r, 108v.
- 62 See also Anthony Stevens-Acevedo, “How I Met Sixteenth-Century Italian Settler of La Española Juan Soderini and Other People of His Time There, and What I Learned About Them: A Historical Essay / Reflection”, pp. 25-33, 37-38. We thank Stevens-Acevedo for making this unpublished essay available on the website academia.edu.
- 63 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 89v. Royal properties at this time held great quantities of hogs and some goats. CC-2-202-136.
- 64 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 83v, 88r-88v, 105r-105v. On palm wine, see MMA(1), v.4: p. 38.
- 65 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85v-86r, 108r-108v.
- 66 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 86r, 108v.
- 67 PMA, vol. 2, pp. 412-413, 415.
- 68 MMA(1), vol. 1, p. 391.
- 69 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 86v, 88v, 106r.
- 70 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85r-86r, 88r, 105r, 107v-108v.
- 71 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85v-86r, 107v-108v.



- 72 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85r, 88r, 105r, 107v.  
 73 MMA(1), vol. 2, pp. 14-15.  
 74 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85v-86r, 88r-88v, 105v-106r, 107v-108v.  
 75 “Mossangua” could be a phonetic rendering of “Mu-Nsanga” (a person of Nsanga); Bantu languages use the prefix “mu” for singular nouns referring to human beings (Thornton, 2020, p. 144 n73).  
 76 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85r, 107v.  
 77 Scattered references in the records of Belo’s factors in 1519-1520 likewise refer to the transportation of enslaved people from the “Malagueta” coast and “Rivers of Benin.” ANTT-CC-2-86-30, CC-2-87-2.  
 78 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 86r, 87r, 89r.  
 79 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 88r, 89r, 106v, 110r. Fernando Ambo was also listed as “Fernamdo Sabo” (f. 105r), suggesting a possible association with the Sawa (Duala) people of coastal Cameroon.  
 80 Ambo was also the name of a sub-branch of the Ema lineage in eighteenth-century Old Calabar (Behrendt, Latham, and Northrup, 2010, p. 16).  
 81 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85r, 88v, 105v-106r, 107v.  
 82 Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI) Justicia 11, n.1, ff. 24v, 32v-33r.  
 83 MMA(1), vol. 4, pp. 43-44.  
 84 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85v, 88r-89r, 105v, 107v. “Tomé Qua” was also identified separately as “Tomé Mosamgua.”  
 85 On the process by which Talbot obtained his data, and the challenges of relying on statistical information produced by colonial officials, see van den Bersselaar, 2004.  
 86 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 86r, 109r.  
 87 Among others, see Adediran, 1984; Law, 1997; Matory, 1999; Soares, 2000; Ojo, 2009; Lovejoy and Ojo, 2015.  
 88 For additional references to Lucumis on Hispaniola estates in the 1550s, see Stevens-Acevedo, “How I Met Sixteenth-Century Italian Settler,” pp. 16, 32-33.  
 89 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85r-85v, 87r, 88r, 105v, 107r, 108r, 110r. “Joane Ujo” also appears as “Joane Lujo;” Margarida Ujo was also listed as “Marya Jdo,” perhaps a reference to Edo (Benin)?  
 90 Stevens-Acevedo, “How I Met Sixteenth-Century Italian Settler,” p. 14.  
 91 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85v, 88r-88v, 105r-105v, 107v-108v. One person was listed as “Joame Mosamgua Molare” (f. 180r). “Gomçalo Mollare” was also listed as “Gomçalo Mogome” (f. 85v).  
 92 Only two known documents reference Diogo Molare and his role in this uprising, both royal letters confirming *fidalgos* status on individuals active in the *guerra do mato* that were composed in 1537 and 1539, respectively. They time the Diogo Molare insurgency to the “days of Henrique Pereira,” who served as *corregedor* of São Tomé between 1531 and his death in late 1533. See note 31.  
 93 Stevens-Acevedo, “How I Met Sixteenth-Century Italian Settler,” p. 13.  
 94 Slave Voyages, African Names Database, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/enslaved/OiuPzCan> (accessed May 31, 2022), African IDs 3480, 50826, 52899, 74103, 74996, 79871, 138272, 184107.  
 95 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85r, 107v.  
 96 AGI-Justicia 11, n.1, ff. 24v, 32v-33r.  
 97 For Hispaniola, see Stevens-Acevedo, “How I Met Sixteenth-Century Italian Settler,” pp. 27, 34.  
 98 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 87r, 110r.  
 99 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85r, 105r.  
 100 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 86r, 108v.  
 101 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85v-86v, 107v, 108v, 109v.  
 102 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 87r, 109v.  
 103 ANTT-CC-2-15-77, f. 11.  
 104 Four out of 130 individuals (3% of the total) in the August 1533 inventory are listed as suffering from *boubas*, compared to 71 out of 1642 (just over 4%) in the São Tomé royal plantations in 1535.  
 105 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 86r-86v, 108v, 109v.  
 106 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 85v, 86v, 88v, 108r, 109v.  
 107 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 86r-86v, 88v-89r, 106r-106v, 109r.  
 108 ANTT-CC-2-181-129; CC-2-210-91; CC-3-11-102; CC-2-181-70; CC-2-184-17; CC-2-185-122.  
 109 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 108v.  
 110 ANTT-CC-2-174-85; CC-3-11-102, f. 1v.  
 111 ANTT-CC-3-11-102, f. 1v; CC-2-210-91, f. 1r  
 112 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 88v, 106r, 125r-125v.  
 113 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 86r.  
 114 Cosme Gonçalves is described as having “in the life of Afonso da Silva, negotiated and managed the said estate [*fazenda*] and now [after Silva’s death] was in possession of the said house and estate.” ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, f. 61r.  
 115 ANTT-CC-2-184-43.  
 116 ANTT-Chancelaria João III, Privilégios L.2, ff. 282-282v.  
 117 Apart from mercenary soldiers who received pay for their service and enslaved conscripts serving in conditions of unfreedom, it is unclear what pressures were faced by elite or middling São-tomenses to join the militias or offer people enslaved to them in their stead. Cosme Gonçalves may have been concerned with this possibility.  
 118 ANTT-CC-2-185-117; CC-2-185-124.  
 119 AGI-Justicia 991, n.4, r.4, f. 48r.  
 120 ANTT-FF-IPM-D-4-42, n.2, ff. 86r, 109r.  
 121 ANTT-Chancelaria Sebastião, Doações, L.9, ff. 118v-119v.

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