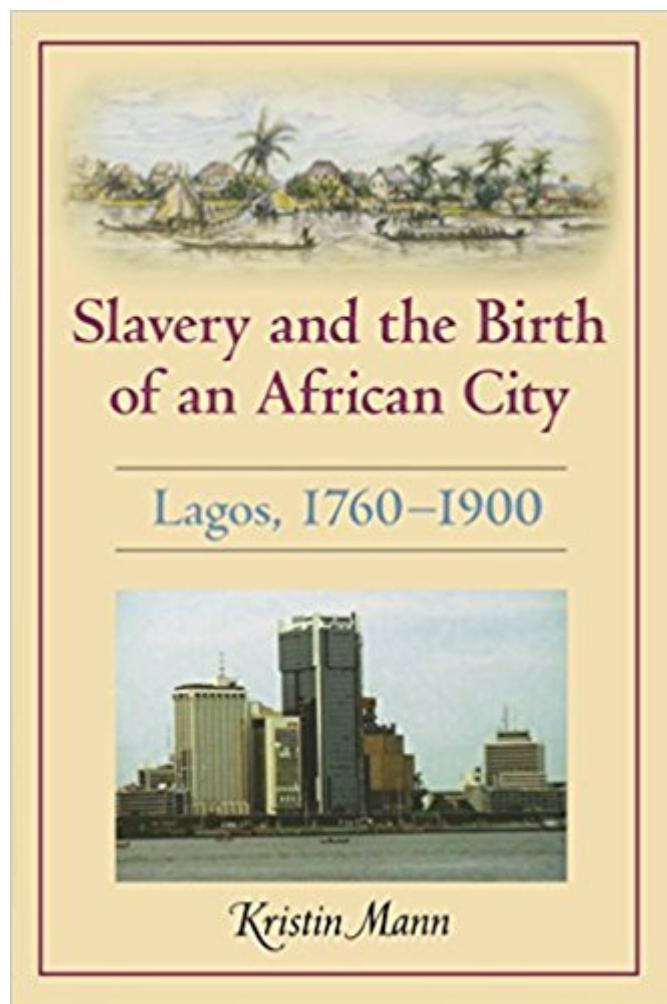


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Slavery And The Birth Of An African City: Lagos, 1760–1900



Synopsis

As the slave trade entered its last, illegal phase in the 19th century, the town of Lagos on West Africa's Bight of Benin became one of the most important port cities north of the equator. Slavery and the Birth of an African City explores the reasons for Lagos's sudden rise to power. By linking the histories of international slave markets to those of the regional suppliers and slave traders, Kristin Mann shows how the African slave trade forever altered the destiny of the tiny kingdom of Lagos. This magisterial work uncovers the relationship between African slavery and the growth of one of Africa's most vibrant cities.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a sophisticated analysis of the realities of slavery in an African culture in which belonging to a social group was the basis for both wealth and power. Mann (Emory Univ.) has devoted 30 years of research into the legal and financial records of this great port city in Nigeria to produce a masterpiece of urban history. She arranges her material in three chronological periods: the era of slave exports, the era of palm oil exports, and the late-19th-century period of conversion to wage labor. The central theme is the 'slow demise' of slavery and its reorganization through the medium of the social structures of the population of Lagos. Mann thus argues for the adaptive qualities of African slavery, which had economic and social roots. Both former master and slave developed new relationships in the growth of the new colonial urban culture. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above. Choice "A valuable contribution not only to African history, but also to the history of slavery on both sides of the Atlantic.... Brilliantly organized... Mann's style

makes the reading enjoyable." *International Journal of African Historical Studies*"This story is told by the author with the skill of a master--a master researcher, master analyst, master story-teller, and master essayist."

"By looking at an emergent commercial town with deeply engrained political and economic competition, and relating this study to the wider library, Mann provides a fine example of how the rise and decline of African slavery can be traced in its complexity." *International Journal of African Historical Studies*"Slavery and the Birth of an African City is an original and insightful work. This book is well written and well organized. It is an important guide to the history of the Atlantic slave trade, to the economic history of Lagos, and to the intervention of the British, especially since 1861 when Lagos was annexed. Overflowing with anthropological, cultural, and historical information, this book will be of interest to general readers and undergraduate and graduate students of West African history and anthropology." *Julius O. Adekunle, Monmouth University, HISTORIAN, April 2010*"It may not be possible to write a better social history of Lagos--let alone less fully documented African port cities; and, even if it is, future scholars will have to recognize Mann's book as a benchmark." *African Affairs*"[T]his book combines extensive archival research and interviews and does an excellent job in chronicling the complex history of Lagos with authority and clarity, and it does so in a manner that is pleasant to read. This is, indeed, a well-written book with an insightful trajectory attesting to the author's decades-long research on West Africa and the Atlantic world." *Journal of World History*"A sophisticated analysis... Highly recommended." *Business History Review*"The author covers a lot of ground in this book, and she fills in an important gap in the historiography of Lagos. Through her careful use of a set of primary sources not often used by historians for this purpose, she has expanded the boundaries of the debate about slavery and dependency and has offered new details about the organization of business in nineteenth-century Lagos." *American Historical Review*"Mann's work is an intellectually engaging, multifaceted, and tantalizingly in-depth study of slavery's gradual demise. She does an admirable job of offering fresh insights into the redefinition and rearrangement of employer-worker relationships in Lagos County, especially in the last decade of the 19th century. *American Historical Review*" *American Historical Review*"Kristin Mann has been stimulating us with fine articles on this subject for years.... This is a major contribution to African history to slave studies, and to urban history." *Martin Klein, author of Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*

"Kristin Mann has been stimulating us with fine articles on this subject for years. . . . This is a major contribution to African history, to slave studies, and to urban history." --Martin Klein --This text refers

to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In my recent studies I've read several books about the impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade on various West African Societies. This is the best of them. It's quite comprehensive, dealing not only with how the slave trade turned Lagos from a minor settlement to a major West African trade center, but how the city managed to not only survive but thrive after the slave trade ended. The book achieves balance, not an easy thing to do when talking about a subject as emotionally charged as the mass-kidnapping of human beings. It examines both European and African complicity in the trade, looks at how coastal trading elites benefited from the system and, and examines the good intentions and moral compromises that characterized early British colonialism in West Africa. The text is strong both in its economic analysis of how Lagos and its hinterland shifted from a slave-exporting economy to one built around agricultural exports and the internal use of unfree labor, and in its legal analysis of how the elites, both black and white, controlled this labor in the face of British law which declared slavery illegal. Without assuming a hectoring tone the book demonstrates very clearly how the British failed to properly apply their anti-slavery principles in the early years of their rule over Lagos. For any student of African history or colonialism, this is a worthwhile text. Lagos is one of the world's major cities and Nigeria one of the most important nations in the developing world, and this book tells a big chunk of the story of how that city and the country of which it is the metropolis became what they are today.

I had the great benefit of taking a class from Dr. Mann at Emory University. She remains one of the most knowledgeable professors in the field of African American History in the era of the Slave Trade. Excellent text to understand the history, geography, culture and details of Lagos.

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