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African Kings and Black Slaves: Sovereignty and Dispossession in the Early Modern Atlantic. *By Herman L. Bennett*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. 240 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, $34.95. ISBN: 9780812250633.
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Reviewed by Alex Borucki

A historian of the seventeenth-century African diaspora in colonial Mexico, Herman Bennett conducts in this book a postcolonial analysis of the precolonial and earliest relationships between the Iberian powers and some of the sub-Saharan African kings and lords in the century after 1450. He emphasizes that theology and political theory shaped the main understandings of slavery by the Iberian authorities, clergy, and mariners who initiated the expansion of slavery in the New World through the transatlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century. The Portuguese and Castilians' first contacts, correspondence, and diplomatic ceremonies with sub-Saharan African lords influenced these understandings. In a vigorous way, the book confronts European historians who have long ignored slavery in the making of early modern European political theory (and have also overlooked Spain, Portugal, and their Catholic intellectual and institutional legacy), as well as those historians of Spain and Portugal who have ignored the role of slavery and Africa in the emergence of conceptions of sovereignty, absolutism, and empire in the Iberian peninsula. This is not exactly a history book, given that Bennett offers no new archival evidence and uses English-language published translations rather than Portuguese and Spanish texts; rather, it is a historiographical intervention oriented to Africanize the intellectual and political history of the early Iberian Atlantic, which is commendable.

Portuguese acknowledgment of links between African sovereignty and African kingship was central for the merchant networks among several African coastal societies and European traders that were generated after first contacts. The Portuguese saw very early on that places ruled by kings and lords also provided slaves. Bennett moves politics, ceremonies, and pomp to the forefront in these fifteenth- and sixteenth-century encounters, which only later were seen through the prism of

capitalism and slavery by eighteenth-century merchants and modern-day Anglo-American scholars. The political was before, and in command of, the developing of a maritime slave trade. European slave traders needed African lords and merchants in order to have some predictability regarding the creation of slave markets in West and West Central Africa. But these fifteenth-century first encounters were about something other than only slave trading, and scholars should avoid teleological interpretations of these interactions based on eighteenth-century, mainly British, understandings.

Bennett's initial interests, as a Latin Americanist focused on the making of absolutism and the African diaspora in colonial Mexico, led him to analyze the genesis of political discourse on European-African relationships in texts representing encounters between Europeans, almost exclusively the Portuguese, and African kings and lords in the century after 1450. In his intellectual journey, which is documented in his book, Bennett conducts a profuse and thought-provoking examination of the English-language and Anglo-American oriented historiography on the African diaspora and fifteenth-century Portugal and Castile. However, some history on the early influence of Africa in Spanish America is missing, particularly by David Wheat, whose influential book *Atlantic Africa and Spanish America, 1570–1640* (2016) is mentioned in a footnote but not in the bibliography. (This shows some problems of design, which, in addition to some repetition of paragraphs in the book [e.g., pp. 157 and 174n45], evinces the need for better copyediting.) Bennett also reflects on the problem of researching and teaching the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century contacts between the Portuguese and many sub-Saharan African lords (from the Warri of the Bight of Biafra to the kings of Kongo, among others) almost solely with sources produced by the Portuguese about these encounters, which not only requires a continuous critique of the way the Portuguese represented Africa and Africans but also demands avoiding teleological approaches in which these moments are defined by the ascent and triumph of capitalism.

Castile and Aragon show up somewhat too late and too little in this book, appearing only in a secondary role in the fifth chapter, "Histories," and as central to the sixth and final chapter, "Trade." Analysis of the interactions between Iberian monarchies and African kings is limited to pages 123–30, and nuanced and significant examination of Spanish thinkers of the time is found only in the last chapter. The discussion of Spanish and Spanish American politics illustrates a divergence between scholars of intellectual history, like Bennett, and those who study the issue of contested governance in Spain and the New World on the ground—as shown by the debate led by Regina Graffe and Alejandra

Irigoin in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* (2008), by Carlos Marichal, and by Iberianists such as Pedro Cardim who have conceptualized the Iberian kingdoms in the Old and New World beyond the idea of "composite monarchies"—whom this book does not address.

The author also advances a double critique against quantitative methods of conducting historical research and against the model of cultural studies, by positioning politics first. As a practitioner of both quantitative methods (which is not a set of scholarship but one of the many methodologies within the historian's craft), and cultural studies, I agree with Bennett that an emphasis on culture can sometimes leave unanswered the questions of why Africans in the Americas did what they did and thought what they thought—their African political rationales. However, these critiques should not steer scholars toward a "non-empiricist" or "anti-empiricist" history. As Latin American historian Marixa Lasso points out, what sets historians apart from other scholars in the social sciences is the centrality of the use of the archive. This means knowing how to use archives, being aware of their geneaologies of power, and having the vocation and patience required for digging though these repositories. If scholars do not use archives, they may end up repeating commonplace impressions (which are geographically, culturally, and linguistically shaped) and lacking the ability to surprise. And as a historian, I love surprises.

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Reconstructing the National Bank Controversy: Politics and Law in the Early American Republic. *By Eric Lomazoff*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018. x + 253 pp. Figures, tables, bibliography, notes, index. Cloth, $90.00; paper, $30.00. ISBN: cloth, 978-0-226-57931-3; paper, 978-0-226-57945-0.
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Reviewed by Judge Glock

Few issues have been as well plumbed as the constitutional debates over the First and Second Banks of the United States. These debates led to the