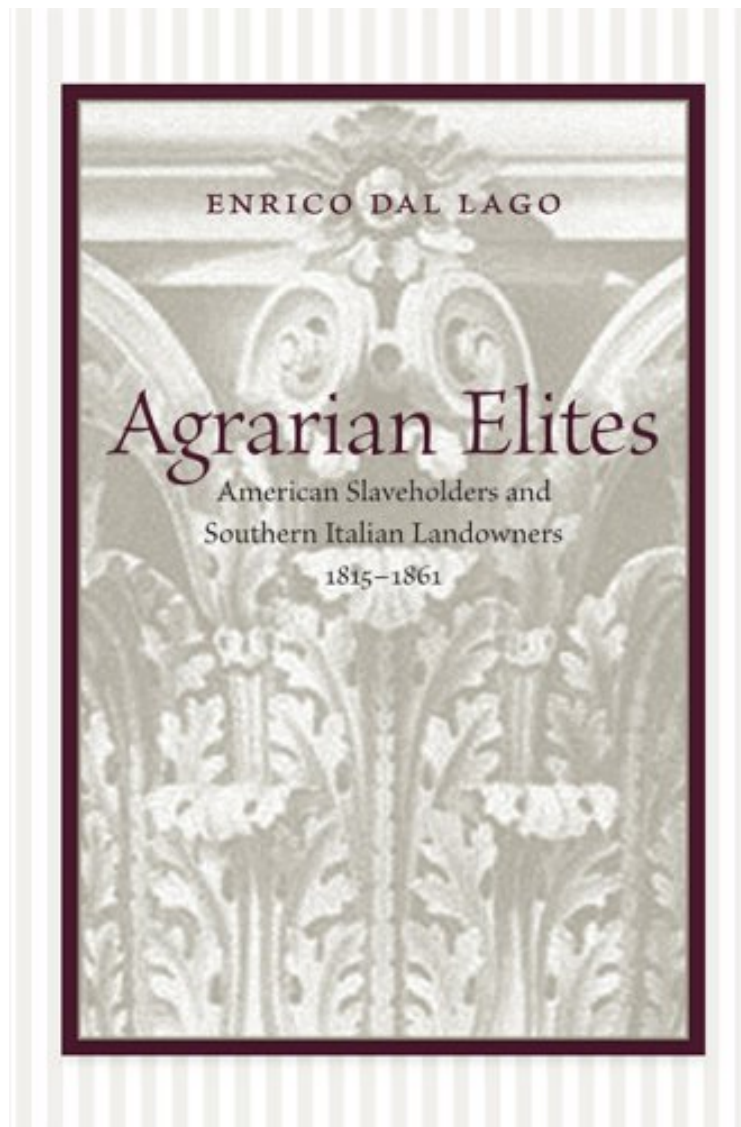


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Agrarian Elites: American Slaveholders and Southern Italian Landowners, 1815--1861

Enrico Dal Lago

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American Slaveholders and Southern Italian Landowners, 1815--1861:

Between 1815 and 1861, American slaveholders and southern Italian landowners presided over the economic and social life of two predominantly agricultural regions, the U.S. South and Italy's Mezzogiorno. Enrico Dal Lago ingeniously compares these agrarian elites, demonstrating how the study of each enhances our understanding of the other as well as of their shared nineteenth-century world. *Agrarian Elites* charts the parallel developments of plantations and latifondi in relation to changes in the world economy. At the same time, it examines the spread of "paternalistic" models of family relations and of slave and free-labor management that accompanied the rise of large groups of American slaveholders and southern Italian landed proprietors in the early-to-mid-1800s. According to Dal Lago, the most articulate and enlightened members of both elites combined the pursuit of profit with the implementation of "modern" contractual practices in dealing with their workforces. Both elites also used their economic and social power for political advantage, opposing the intervention of their national governments in local affairs. The search for ever-better protection of their respective interests in slaveholding and landed property led ultimately to their support for the creation of two nations, the Confederate States of America and the Kingdom of Italy, both in 1861. Dal Lago brings together two subjects that have generated considerable debate and research: systems of slave and nominally free labor and the elites who employed them, and nineteenth-century nationalism. With its pathbreaking approach and singular and comparative insights, *Agrarian Elites* will inform not only American and Italian studies but also the very practice of comparative history.

About the Author Enrico Dal Lago is coeditor of *The American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno: Essays in Comparative History and Slavery and Emancipation*. A native of Ivrea, Italy, he now lives in Galway, where he is a lecturer in American history at the National University of Ireland.