

Slavery and liberation in Brazil During the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries

العبودية والتحرر في البرازيل خلال القرنين السابع عشر والتاسع عشر

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Abstract: This study examines slavery in Brazil during the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries as one of the fundamental pillars of both the colonial and imperial systems. It analyzes the evolution of enslavement practices, the social and economic conditions of enslaved people, and the individual and collective forms of resistance that contributed to the weakening of the slave system. The study also highlights the gradual paths toward emancipation, particularly the impact of economic, intellectual, and legal transformations in the nineteenth century. It seeks to emphasize the dialectical relationship between slavery and freedom and to understand the specificity of the Brazilian experience in comparison with other slave societies in the Atlantic world.

Keywords: Slavery, Emancipation, Brazil, Atlantic Slavery, Resistance, Manumission, Seventeenth Century, Nineteenth Century.

الملخص: يتناول هذا البحث ظاهرة العبودية في البرازيل خلال القرنين السابع عشر والتاسع عشر، بوصفها إحدى الركائز الأساسية للنظامين الاستعماري والإمبراطوري. ويحلّل تطور أنماط الاستعباد، وأوضاع العبيد الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، إلى جانب أشكال المقاومة الفردية والجماعية التي أسهمت في

إضعاف هذا النظام. كما يسلط الضوء على مسارات التحرر التدريجي، ولا سيما أثر التحولات الاقتصادية والفكرية والتشريعية في القرن التاسع عشر. ويسعى البحث إلى إبراز العلاقة الجدلية بين العبودية والتحرر، وفهم خصوصية التجربة البرازيلية مقارنة بغيرها من مجتمعات العبودية في العالم الأطلسي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العبودية، التحرر، البرازيل، الرقّ الأطلسي، المقاومة، العتق، القرن السابع عشر، القرن التاسع عشر.

First requirement: Resistance in Palmares

The Palmares War is considered one of the most significant chapters of resistance against slavery in the history of the New World. While contemporary scholars and historians vary in their estimates of its population (ranging from six thousand to thirty thousand), it is certain that the Palmares communities, thanks to their vast geographical area and the large number of escaped slaves they housed, constituted the largest community of freed or escaped slaves in the history of Portuguese America. Although Palmares originated in the early seventeenth century, its rise as an influential center for escaped slaves was only truly realized during the Dutch conquest of Pernambuco, when large numbers of escaped slaves poured in seeking freedom.⁽¹⁾

Fleeing slaves took advantage of the turbulent conditions that accompanied the military chaos to escape towards southern Captania. The rebel groups that formed during that period were able to withstand many military campaigns launched by the West India Company, and after the expulsion of the Dutch, these groups were able to repel attacks launched by the Lusso-Brasilian forces.⁽²⁾

As the threat posed by these groups to the Portuguese colonial system in the Americas grew, the Dutch authorities, who administered the colonies politically, militarily, and administratively during the 1770s and 1780s, considered them "colored Dutch," referring to Africans and mixed-race people.⁽³⁾ And their descendants in Palmares, and military victory over those groups was not achieved until the period (1690-1699),

after a full century of struggle against two of the most prominent European colonial powers of that era, and before the Saint-Domingue Revolution (1791-1804) and the major anti-slavery uprisings in the British Caribbean during the first third of the nineteenth century, the story of Palmares resistance was comparable to the First Maroon War in Jamaica (1655-1739) and the Saramaca War in Suriname (1685-1762), yet the escapees in the last two wars succeeded in defeating the oppressive forces, which forced the authorities and slave owners to recognize their freedom.⁴⁾

The defeat of the Maroon kingdom in Palmares remains a historical enigma, long puzzled by researchers concerned with the history of slavery in Brazil. Why were there no similar resistance societies to Palmares throughout Brazilian history? This question is particularly relevant, as the 18th century saw an increase in Maroon activity coinciding with the expansion of the transatlantic slave trade and the emergence of mining centers in the interior, across northern and southern Brazil. The forms of resistance led by escaped slaves varied in both the size of the groups and their duration. In the early 19th century, Brazil emerged as the stage for another type of collective resistance, inspired by long-standing traditions in the British Caribbean islands, such as the series of African uprisings that shook the Roconcavo region of Bahia between 1807 and 1835.⁵⁾

Historians generally believe that the most common explanation for this mystery rests on the shift in Portuguese legislation concerning slavery. Following the events in Palmares, the role of the slave hunter known as the Capito became more prominent.—Do-Mato, responsible for pursuing escaped captives in various parts of Portuguese America, oversaw a gradual process of legalization and allocation, along with a legal redefinition of the concept of Marron. This approach, which involved legalizing the role of the slave hunter and recognizing any small group of escaped slaves as a Marron settlement

(regardless of their number), contributed to creating a repressive legal system that prevented the emergence of large communities similar to Palmares before they could become established or expand.⁶⁾

The researcher believes that there is a possibility of other complementary explanations, without compromising the validity of the theses addressed by the researchers. These explanations relate to the structure by which the slavery system developed in Brazil since the late seventeenth century, and my aim in this research is to try to understand why a new Quilombo Palmares has not appeared in Brazilian history.⁷⁾

To achieve this goal, I chose to highlight the relationship between several elements: the transatlantic slave trade, patterns of slave emancipation (manumission), and the provision of opportunities for collective resistance (whether through the formation of Maroon groups or the staging of major uprisings), during the period from the late seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century.⁸⁾

The idea is that events such as Palmares, the Maroon War in Jamaica, and Saramaca's campaign in Suriname were all linked to a specific pattern of slavery systems that can be described as a "plantation slavery system." This system is characterized by the concentration of agricultural production on a single agricultural producer and an unbalanced social environment in terms of the demographic composition between free whites and black slaves, most of whom were of African descent, as well as the scarcity of opportunities for emancipation and the high rates of landowners' absence from their farms.⁹⁾

The system of slavery prevalent in the British and French colonies in the Caribbean during the 18th century had specific characteristics that were not fully realized in Portuguese America except partially during the first half of the 17th century. Over time, this system gradually declined over the next two centuries in the history of Brazil. The emergence of mining activity played

a pivotal role in accelerating changes in the system of slavery in Brazil, as the institution of slavery expanded and became more widespread and integrated within the social fabric, producing a complex social structure with a clear ethnic and cultural hierarchy.¹⁰⁾

Traditional agricultural regions such as Zonada in Pernambuco and Reconcavo in Bahia were also affected by these transformations. Although these regions continued to depend on sugar production, which remained largely linked to slave labor, by the end of the seventeenth century the existing system increasingly relied on balancing the transatlantic slave trade with maintaining emancipation rates, an equation that allowed for the importation of more African slaves without threatening the existing social structure or the stability of the system.¹¹⁾

Following the suppression of the Palmares rebellion, the chances of new slave revolts or the establishment of large Maronite communities in Brazil declined significantly. Notably, the Portuguese authorities and later the Brazilian Empire pursued a strict policy of refusing to negotiate with rebellious slaves or large Maronite communities, with the exception of a brief incident during the Palmares rebellion in the 1670s. This policy was directly reflected in the prevailing structure of social relations and political forces at the time.¹²⁾

The central idea revolves around the connection of events such as Palmares, the Maroon War in Jamaica, and Saramaca's campaign to a specific type of slavery system within the extensive agricultural system. This system relies on the production of a single crop, and its social organization is based on a demographic imbalance between free whites and black slaves of African descent, with few opportunities for emancipation and a significant increase in the absence of owners from their farms.¹³⁾

The features of this type of slavery were most evident in the British and French Caribbean colonies during the eighteenth

century, while its features were not fully developed in Portuguese America during the first half of the seventeenth century. However, the system gradually declined during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Brazil, and with the launch of mining activities, the slavery system underwent a transformation in its basic nature, becoming more widespread on both social and geographical levels, and characterized by additional complexities between ethnic and cultural identities. Even old agricultural areas such as "Zona da Mata" in Pernambuco and "Reconcavo" in Bahia were not immune to these transformations, despite their continued reliance on forced labor in sugar production.¹⁴⁾

By the late 17th century, the Brazilian slave system relied on a delicate balance between the large-scale transatlantic slave trade and a relatively stable number of emancipations. This allowed for an increase in the importation of enslaved Africans without threatening the existing social stability. After the fall of Palmares, the chances of success for any slave rebellion or the formation of new Maronite groups in Brazil diminished. It is worth noting that the Portuguese colonial authorities, and later the representatives of the Brazilian Empire, maintained their refusal to negotiate with rebellious slaves or with the major Maronite groups, except for a brief period during the Palmares War in the 1670s. This policy clearly reflected the balance of power that governed that era.¹⁵⁾

The master-slave relationship stands in stark contrast to the approach taken by the British and Dutch, who had to acknowledge the battlefield victories of the Maroon and Saramaca communities through peace treaties concluded with them.

It is worth noting that historians have, for at least three decades, come to understand the close relationship between the intensity of the Atlantic slave trade and the remarkable increase in emancipation rates in Brazilian history. However, what seems to be missing is the development of a more coherent theoretical framework that explains this relationship and places it in the

context of the limited possibilities for the success of collective resistance to slavery in Brazil.

The second requirement: Slavery in the plantation system:

Slavery in the plantation system did not completely disappear from Western and Mediterranean Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire, but as a system of work, it gradually declined during the early Middle Ages, with the exception of specific regions such as the Iberian Peninsula and Italy. Even in those regions, slavery was of an urban character, where the widespread use of enslaved labor in agricultural production almost disappeared.¹⁶⁾

However, agricultural slavery practices were revived during the second half of the fifteenth century with the introduction of enslaved labor by the Portuguese and Spanish to sugar plantations in Atlantic islands such as the Canary Islands, Madeira, and Sao Tome, and with the beginning of European colonization of the American continent in the sixteenth century, this system expanded to accommodate large numbers of enslaved laborers.¹⁷⁾

The Portuguese benefited from the experience gained in sugar cultivation in Madeira and Sao Tome, and the Portuguese crown began supporting the establishment of sugar plantations in Brazil from 1530 onwards. Although the colonists initially faced several problems such as labor shortages and the lack of sufficient capital to build mills on the coasts, they gradually managed to overcome these difficulties. This was achieved by linking Brazilian production to the markets of Northern Europe and developing a regular network of slave trade between Africa and Brazil.¹⁸⁾

These developments contributed to the final launch of the slave-based sugar industry in Brazil during the years (1580-1620), and during that period, the growth of Brazilian production surpassed all other regions of the world that exported sugar to Europe.

It is worth pausing briefly to consider the role played by the Atlantic slave trade in the flourishing of Brazilian sugar production. In its early days, Brazilian mills relied primarily on labor from the indigenous population. Some of these workers (brought from coastal Jesuit villages) received limited wages, while the vast majority were subject to the system of slavery. Around 1550, African slaves were brought in for the first time, but their role was concentrated in specialized work within the mills, which made their cost higher compared to the indigenous workers. At that time, the price of an African slave was three times that of an Indian slave.¹⁹⁾

Epidemics such as measles and smallpox struck the Brazilian coast, leading to high death rates among the indigenous population. This created a need to compensate for the labor shortage, and under pressure from the Jesuits, the Portuguese crown imposed partial restrictions on the enslavement of indigenous people at the beginning of the sixteenth century. This coincided with Portugal strengthening its slave trade, especially after the occupation of Angola in the late sixteenth century. Figures show the scale of the trade during that period: between 1576 and 1600, about 40,000 African slaves arrived at Brazilian ports, while the number more than tripled during the years (1601-1625), as about 150,000 slaves were brought to Portuguese America, most of whom worked on sugar plantations and mills.²⁰⁾

The success of the slave-based sugar industry in Portuguese America attracted the attention of other European colonial powers. During the period (1590-1599), English and Dutch businessmen began to strengthen their role in the sugar trade between Brazil and Europe. The Dutch invasions of Bahia in 1624 and Pernambuco in 1630 formed part of this growing interest in the flourishing industry. However, the members and partners of the Dutch West India Company, who led those invasions, lacked a full understanding of the secrets of sugar production, which depended on three basic requirements:

sugarcane processing techniques, slave management techniques, and the ability to organize the transatlantic slave trade.²¹⁾

The conquerors quickly realized the deep geographical and economic interdependence between the African continent and the sugar plantations of the Americas. The Brazilian lands they controlled were of little value without complete control of the African supply points. Accordingly, in 1638 the West India Company began a campaign led by Mauricio de Nassau against the Portuguese port of São Jorge da Mina, followed by the occupation of Angola in 1641.²²⁾

Dutch rule over Pernambuco did not last long, as the Luso-Brazilian settlers were able to lead a rebellion in 1645 that ended with the final expulsion of the Dutch from Portuguese America in 1654. In 1648, settlers in Rio de Janeiro declared their direct responsibility for ending the Dutch presence in Angola. With the failure of Dutch projects throughout Brazil and Angola, the Dutch West India Company abandoned sugar production, turning to importing it from areas not under its direct control. To achieve this goal, Dutch traders focused their efforts on supporting and promoting sugar production in the British and French Caribbean regions.²³⁾

During the Dutch occupation of Brazil in 1645, Dutch traders transferred the expertise of Brazilian sugar mills to British colonists in Barbados, and to the French in both Martinique and Guadeloupe. These groups were also supplied with slaves through the Dutch West India Company's centers on the Gulf of Guinea. Sugar production in the British and French islands saw a remarkable boom from 1660 onwards, relying mainly on enslaved labor. European traders at that stage began to participate directly in the transatlantic slave trade. With the advent of the 18th century, the geographical and demographic landscape of the Caribbean underwent radical changes, as most of the islands were transformed into vast sugar plantations, while the vast majority

of the population became Africans, most of whom were captured and enslaved.²⁴⁾

Brazilian sugar mills experienced a significant decline in the supply of slaves. The Portuguese colonies in America received approximately 150,000 enslaved Africans during the years (1601-1625), but this number decreased significantly to only about fifty thousand during (1719-1725) due to the wars waged by the Dutch in the South Atlantic in Pernambuco and with the Luso-Brazilian settlers. A wide opportunity for resistance arose among the ranks of the slaves who were transported in large numbers during the early decades of the seventeenth century. The cultural role played by groups coming from central and southern Africa in shaping the policy of the New African Kingdom of Palmares cannot be ignored. It is worth noting that these regions were among the most active for Portuguese slave traders since the end of the sixteenth century.²⁵⁾

The size and power of Palmares can be understood not only in the context of the imperial conflict between Portugal and the Netherlands, but also in relation to the demographics of the Pernambuco region, where sugar plantations were heavily concentrated. Although it is difficult to make definitive judgments about the demographics before the 18th century, it can be confirmed that African slaves constituted the majority, outnumbering the white population and even the indigenous population, at the time of the Dutch invasion of Pernambuco.

The Luso-Brazilian forces directed their military efforts to continue fighting against the inhabitants of Palmares after driving the Dutch out of the region. However, the main problem the settlers faced was economic; the rapid growth of the slave-based sugar industry in the Antilles, beginning in 1650, dealt a severe blow to the Portuguese-American sugar industry.²⁶⁾

With increased production in the British and French Caribbean islands, sugar prices fell in European markets, while high demand for labor on Antillean plantations drove up slave prices on the

African coast. The challenges didn't end there; the Luso-Brazilian sugar barons faced two additional obstacles: first, British and French trade policies that supported sugar production in the Antilles through monopolistic protection, virtually closing European markets to Brazilian sugar; second, the long war Portugal waged for its independence from Spain (1640-1668), coinciding with the collapse of the "pepper empire."²⁷⁾ In the East, as a result, the colonies in the New World became an economic pillar for Portugal, leading to heavy taxes on sugar to support the kingdom's diplomatic and military expenditures.²⁸⁾

The sugar industry in Portuguese America did not collapse, despite the devastation wrought by the South Atlantic Wars (1620-1654), the high taxes after 1650, the fierce competition from the plantations of the Antilles, and the impossibility of accessing some European markets; the Luso-Brazilian sugar producers succeeded in maintaining stable production.²⁹⁾

Success depended on reactivating the dual Atlantic system linking Africa to Brazilian ports, which was achieved after the recovery of Angola in 1648. During the second half of the seventeenth century, approximately 360,000 African slaves were shipped to Brazil, providing a steady supply of labor at modest costs. This situation helped the Brazilian sugar industry to meet difficult international challenges.

One of the most important early studies on this subject focused on the state of Bahia, adjacent to Pernambuco, the center of the sugar industry, and covered the years (1684-1745). Researcher Stuart Schwartz analyzed numerous documents relating to manumission and discovered a recurring pattern indicating that the number of women who gained their freedom was twice that of men who were freed. Given the numerical dominance of men in the transatlantic slave trade and in the general distribution of slaves, Schwartz asserts that the proportion of women who received manumission was much higher than statistical estimates suggest.³⁰⁾

Schwartz argues that the preference for freeing enslaved women of childbearing age weakened the demographic potential for natural reproduction among the enslaved population in Brazil. This reinforced the dependence of the colonial system based on slavery on the transatlantic slave trade to compensate for labor shortages in the colonies.³¹⁾

Third requirement: Mining and its impact on slavery:

With the discovery of gold in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, this demographic dynamic became entrenched and expanded geographically. The lure of the promise of quick riches had a profound effect on the population in the colony and Portugal, driving a mass exodus towards the mining areas. According to some studies, this displacement was considered the first mass migration in Brazilian demographic history.³²⁾

In addition to internal migration, the mines attracted a huge number of Portuguese immigrants, estimated at around 400,000 people during the eighteenth century. However, there was another, larger wave of a forced nature, as the transatlantic slave trade to the Portuguese American colonies doubled, becoming the largest ever in the New World. Between the years (1701-1720), about 292,000 enslaved Africans were transported to Brazil, most of them to work in the gold mines. Between the years (1720-1741), the number increased to 312,400, and the number of slaves transported between the years (1741-1760) reached 354,000.³³⁾

The expansion of the Portuguese colonies during the 18th century witnessed astonishing growth both demographically and territorially, but this expansion was accompanied by increasing social, economic, and political unrest. Severe clashes erupted in the state of Minas Gerais in 1720 as a result of the haphazard nature of settlement. The unrest included severe famines due to food scarcity, speculation in the prices of basic commodities brought into the region, and conflict between settlers from São

Paulo and others from elsewhere in the colony or from Portugal. These conflicts led to the Embobabas War. The settlers also faced attempts by the Portuguese crown to impose its authority by establishing new towns and setting up a bureaucratic apparatus.³⁴⁾

The research focuses on another type of social conflict, namely the escape of slaves and the establishment of Kilombos settlements and the planning of large-scale slave uprisings. Many studies indicate that working conditions in mining provided slaves with a certain level of autonomy and resistance against the domination of their masters, as the mines were widely distributed and some workers received a share of the profits and enjoyed a combination of self-control and professional expertise, such as the mining skills of slaves coming from the Mena coast.

This reality reduced the need to use repression to ensure productivity, so many slaves were able to save money to buy their freedom. Although these opportunities led some to give in to the existing reality, they also gave them more space to organize resistance. There were many kilombo settlements in Minas Gerais with strong economic ties to the surrounding communities.

Some believe that the significant growth in Kilombos activity may have been an unintended response to the repressive campaigns launched by the authorities to eradicate them. The restrictive concept that considered a Kilombo settlement as merely a gathering of five or more runaway slaves living on vacant land brought this phenomenon into sharp focus for both contemporary observers and later researchers.³⁵⁾

Regardless of the explanation given in this context, what is certain is that there were large Kilombos settlements in that region that included about a thousand people, in addition to a large number of small settlements. Among these settlements stand out Kilombos Ambrosio, which was defeated in 1746, and Kilombos Grande, which fell in 1759. Three major attempts at

slave uprisings were also recorded in the years 1711, 1719, and 1756, but all of them were thwarted before they could erupt.

In this research, we raise an important question: Why did Minas Gerais not witness an event similar to Palmares, despite the volatile social situation and the clear superiority of the number of slaves over the white population? This question becomes more urgent when we remember that the specter of Palmares haunted the authorities of Minas throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, and one of the most prominent challenges was that launched by Count Osomare to the Portuguese King João V in 1718, when he said: “The survival or annihilation of the nation may depend on the suppression of the Kilombos gatherings” ⁽³⁶⁾He pointed out the tendency of the Black people in this region to replicate the Palmares model in Pernambuco.

To answer the question, one must go back to the legal strictness that officially enshrined the role of the slave hunter, which prevented the emergence of resistance experiences similar to Palmares in Portuguese Brazil. However, some historians have offered an alternative reading of events. For example, Donald Ramos believes that the spread of small settlements established by escaped slaves in the Minas Gerais region actually contributed to reducing the general ability to organize a unified resistance against the system of slavery. The trade established by these small groups with their surrounding society indicates that they played the role of (vent valves to prevent an explosion), rather than being radical points of challenge to the slave system. What is interesting in Ramos’s analysis is his observation that granting individual freedom to slaves on a broad scale contributed in turn to consolidating the structure of the society based on slavery, which made its resistance more scattered and less effective.

Two points stand out as unique to the mining experience in the context of Portuguese America: firstly, the number of slaves who gained their freedom was greater during the mining boom (1750)

compared to the decline period, and secondly, the widespread practice of *quartetiasão* ⁽³⁷⁾On a broad scale.

Regardless of what has been said about the phenomenon of manumission, Russell Wood points out that all studies relating to mining areas in the eighteenth century agree on key points: women were more favored than men, people of color were more favored than blacks, people of Brazilian birth were more favored compared to Africans, urban slaves were favored over rural slaves, and many slave owners preferred to free infants rather than adults.

The system of emancipation of slaves (*manomissão*) in the state of Minas Gerais followed a pattern similar to that documented by Schwartz in Bahia at the end of the seventeenth century, as the system was based on a clear basic rule: the further in time a slave was from the period of the transatlantic slave trade, the greater the likelihood of him gaining freedom. African men, who represented the majority on slave ships, rarely gained their freedom, but their descendants after a generation or two often managed to gain freedom.³⁸⁾

Third requirement: The Brazilian regime's policy towards slavery

Portuguese America in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was characterized by a unique demographic composition compared to other colonies in the New World. To understand this distinctiveness, it is necessary to look at other European colonies during that period. Throughout the 18th century, the sugar-producing islands in the British and French Caribbean provided a clear example of the significant imbalance between the number of free people and black slaves. Despite some differences between them, the number of slaves far exceeded the number of free people. For example, Barbados had approximately four black slaves for every white man, while in Saint-Domingue (Haiti), the ratio reached fifteen slaves for every white man. The number of free blacks and mixed-race people was much lower

than the number of slaves. The number of free people in that colony did not exceed 30,000, a figure that was almost equal to the number of white people. In Jamaica, the figures indicated lower ratios compared to other regions.³⁹⁾

A two-racial slave society arose in the South American continent and later in the southern states of the North American republic. Although the proportion of Black people and freeborn people was much lower compared to the British and French colonies in the Caribbean, there was a kind of numerical balance between the white population and Black slaves. In Spanish America, however, there was a wider demographic diversity between the European colonists, who were largely supported by the indigenous population, and the African slaves and their descendants. The concentration of Black people in cities and some limited areas such as Caracas, Chocó, and the Lima coast was so low that it prevented Spanish America from being described as a fully-fledged slave society.⁴⁰⁾

Portuguese America, on the other hand, represented a fully-fledged slave society, but it differed from the British and French Caribbean colonies, and from the southern states of the American Republic. The main difference was the presence of a large number of free Black and African people and people of African descent, who lived alongside a white society, in addition to a vast majority of slaves, who were mostly African, along with a smaller percentage of native-born Americans and people of color. There was also variation between the different states, as the far north and south retained their Native American populations, and due to the lack of accurate demographic statistics (⁴¹⁾The demographic composition of Brazil at the beginning of the nineteenth century can be estimated approximately according to the following table.

Table No. (1) Estimated population ratios for Brazil in the year 1800-1806⁴².

Percentage	Type	T
28%	eggs	1
27.8%	Black	2
38.5%	Free Coloureds	4
5.7%	Black and colored slaves	5

The table above shows that free people of color constitute a simple majority in Brazilian society, and that the proportions of blacks and whites are almost equal. This indicates that the society is in the process of liberation from slavery, as well as the demographic diversity that characterizes the society.

In this context, Luiz Felipe de Alencastro offered a brilliant description of this phenomenon in the conclusion of his book, "The Neighborhood Bargain," where he addressed what he called "The Invention of Coloured People" explained that coloured people in Portuguese America enjoyed certain privileges, as they were preferred for skilled work and integrated into military units, and were among the groups most eligible for emancipation. He also compared their situation in Brazil with what it was in Portuguese Africa, where coloured people were treated like other black people without any significant social privileges.⁴³⁾

The Brazilian experience highlights a unique process of transformation involving the mixing of races (a direct demographic consequence of relations of domination and exploitation) and the resulting ethnic pluralism, reflecting social complexities that led to the emergence of a multi-racial society, although this process was rigidly class-based and ideologically charged. Sensuality, however, did not negate its violent dimensions, which were a fundamental element in the general structure of Brazilian society. Brazil witnessed the emergence of the colored class as a result of old colonialism based on the

systematic exploitation of slavery, a pattern of control that did not exist in the same way in Angola.⁴⁴⁾

It can be argued that the establishment of a sustainable slavery-based social structure in Brazil, based on a continuous influx of foreign immigrants of African origin, necessitated the development of effective social mechanisms to mitigate tensions that threatened violent uprisings, similar to those seen in the British and French Caribbean colonies or those that occurred in Bir Nambucco during the seventeenth century. The gradual emancipation of the descendants of African slaves played a key role in this process, as people of color in Brazil became part of the social system as Brazilian citizens.

The most prominent evidence of the success of this mechanism is the way in which Black and free people of color interacted with the slave system. The economic and social ambition of many of them was to own slaves, reflecting their desire to become slave owners. Recent studies have shown the widespread practice of slave ownership among Black and free people of color, and even among the slaves themselves. In light of the continued large-scale influx of slaves into Brazil (which represents the largest slave movement in the history of the transatlantic slave trade), the African slave became a low-cost commodity from a social perspective. This dynamic contributed directly to the spread of slavery across the various classes of Brazilian society and its transformation into a unique system. This system also played a pivotal role in shaping the exceptional economic structure of Portuguese America, where social and economic factors combined to entrench slavery as a fundamental pillar in the social structure.

The colony witnessed remarkable diversification starting in the 18th century, with the mining sector playing a pivotal role in this transformation. This activity contributed significantly to the emergence of production geared towards meeting local market needs, embodied in cattle breeding in areas such as Rio Grande

do Sul and the São Francisco Valley, as well as the production of basic foodstuffs in the state of Minas Gerais itself, and the regions of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Moreover, the numerous urban centers in the state of Minas Gerais and the growth of old cities such as Rio de Janeiro and Salvador further enhanced internal economic dynamism.⁴⁵⁾

Tobacco production in the Reconcavo region of Bahia was a thriving economic activity at that time, as tobacco became a key commodity used in bartering for slaves from the Mina coast, due to its high value in the mining areas. However, sugarcane-growing regions such as Reconcavo in Bahia, Zona da Mata in Pernambuco province, and the Campos dos Goitacazes fields retained their vital role throughout the 18th century, despite competition from Antillean products that restricted their entry into British and French markets.⁴⁶⁾

Within the framework of economic and social analyses, it is evident that all these activities (whether rural or urban) were largely dependent on the system of forced labor represented by slavery. The pattern of slave ownership was distributed among different classes of society and varying levels of wealth among them, as the acquisition of slaves was not limited to the white landowning elite. Thus, Portuguese America formed a unique model combining economic diversity with different forms of exploitation of enslaved labor, features that were found in other regions of the New World, from mining and urban slavery as in Spanish America, to slave plantations in the Caribbean and food production as witnessed in the Chesapeake region.⁴⁷⁾

It can be confirmed that this structure also existed in Spanish America, where forms of agricultural slavery appeared, particularly in the Caracas region. However, there are three fundamental differences between the two experiences that cannot be overlooked:

- 1- The outstanding economic importance of the indigenous population in Central Spanish America, compared to the heavy reliance on slaves in Portuguese America;
- 2- The lack of economic integration in the Spanish colonies, contrary to what was expected. In the Portuguese colony, mining played a pivotal role in creating an economic integration network stretching from Rio Grande do Sul in the south to Pernambuco in the north, with the exception of the wide gap between the Amazon region and the rest of Brazil;
- 3- The crucial role played by the transatlantic slave trade in promoting economic growth in Portuguese America, unlike the French and British colonies where the slave trade was directly managed from the mother capital, in the Portuguese case the organization of the slave trade was done locally from Brazilian ports, where the major slave traders responsible for supplies were based in cities such as Recife, Salvador and Rio de Janeiro rather than Lisbon.

The period from the late 18th to the early 19th century witnessed a significant transformation, characterized by the decline of the mining sector in favor of the expansion of export-oriented agriculture based on forced labor. This transformation was accompanied by the emergence of new regions such as Maranhão, specializing in cotton cultivation, and western São Paulo, specializing in sugar production, in addition to the recovery of traditional agricultural regions in Pernambuco, Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro. However, the change did not result in a radical shift in the socio-economic structure of Brazilian slavery, whose features had stabilized in the previous century. On the contrary, this structure enabled the slave-owning class to respond quickly to the favorable global transformations of the time.⁴⁸⁾

Within the framework of this study, it is important to highlight the response of the Bahia region as a key element in

understanding this context. Major events, such as the slave revolt in Saint-Domingue (Haiti) during the 1790s, profoundly impacted the agricultural economy of the Americas. Before the uprising in 1791, the French colony accounted for approximately 30% of global sugar production and was the world's leading coffee producer. However, this productive capacity collapsed with the revolution. This economic downturn allowed other colonies to boost their exports, particularly amidst the increasing demand for agricultural products due to the rapid industrialization in Europe. Faced with these new dynamics, Bahia became increasingly reliant on the transatlantic slave trade to provide the labor needed to support its sugar industry. The agricultural revival in Reconcavo Bahia, the rural area surrounding the city of Salvador This led to increased overall agricultural production, including staple food crops produced using enslaved labor, and as a result of this intensification and its surrounding areas, a significant increase in population density.⁴⁹⁾

From the late 17th century, the Mina Coast became the primary source of slaves brought to Bahia, with some trade continuing from Angola. By the 19th century, slave traders in Bahia had benefited from a significant increase in the supply of captives on the Mina Coast. This increase was due to two main factors: first, the withdrawal of the French and British colonial powers from the slave trade as a result of their prohibition on transporting slaves to their colonies; and second, the unrest caused by the regional wars sparked by the jihad of Usman dan Fodio.⁵⁰⁾ These wars led to a steady stream of prisoners, many of whom were sent to the slave markets of Bahia to bolster the workforce needed for its growing agricultural industry.

The groups forcibly taken from the Mina coast, including Nago, Hausa, Gigi, and Tapa ethnic groups, formed the decisive force behind the most dangerous wave of African slave uprisings in Brazilian history. and The country had only experienced organized resistance of this scale during the Palmares War, and a

comparable experience was only repeated with the Abolitionist movement in the 1880s. From 1807 to 1835, the Bahia region experienced a continuous period of rebellions led by enslaved Africans, culminating in the Palmares uprising, considered one of the most serious urban slave revolts in the history of the Americas..⁽⁵¹⁾

What happened to this resistance movement? Unlike similar uprisings in the British West Indies, the series of rebellions in Bahia between years The years 1807 and 1835 had a cumulative impact that threatened the slave system in Brazil., and Looking at the broader Atlantic context, we can appreciate the limited impact of these uprisings. While the Barbados revolts of 1870 were taking place 1816 Demirara year 1823 While Jamaica in 1831 provided a significant boost to the anti-slavery campaign in the British Empire, the slave resistance in Bahia had little impact in the following decades, leading up to the abolition of slavery in Brazil in the 1880s. In short, despite their strength and violence, these uprisings failed to shake the foundations of the Brazilian slave system. This failure can be explained by the significant divide that separated enslaved Africans from their Black and mixed-race descendants born in Brazil. This latter group did not participate in the revolutions led by the African community in Bahia; quite the contrary, as historian João José Resch explains: "**The Moors, Cypriots, and Creoles formed the core force relied upon to control and suppress the Africans. These were the ones who carried out the harsh tasks on behalf of the white people, such as enforcing order in public places and streets, destroying remote religious shrines, hunting down runaway slaves throughout the province, and suppressing any rebellion that arose among the slaves..**"⁽⁵²⁾

Loyalty to the institution of slavery was held by Creoles and mixed-race people. (Especially those who are free or have been freed) A crucial factor, no less important than the commitment of the white masters, which contributed significantly to the

continuity of the Brazilian slave system and its resilience in the face of challenges..

Ideology and the nation-state:

The structural framework of the slavery system in Brazil provided strong protection for its preservation, not only preventing the re-emergence of a revolutionary movement like the Palmares, but also averting a full-scale slave revolt similar to that which occurred in Santo Domingo., While Brazil became a nation-state in the 19th century, its largely stable, slave-based social system played a crucial role in fostering an unprecedented transatlantic slave trade, even though this trade had been considered illegal since 1831. That period also witnessed a widespread increase in slavery within the borders of Brazil itself.⁽⁵³⁾

FDuring the forty years between the arrival of the Portuguese royal family in Brazil in 1808 and the final cessation of the slave trade in 1850, the number of enslaved people brought to the empire exceeded 1.4 million, representing approximately 40% of all Africans who arrived at Brazilian ports during the three centuries of the slave system. The transformations that occurred within this system during the nineteenth century...(This is especially true given the significant boom in coffee production in the Paraíba Valley, which has cemented Brazil's position as a major global source of this commodity.) It was based on an existing system that allowed the importation of huge numbers of foreign slaves while maintaining the stability of the internal society without exposing it to any significant security risk.⁽⁵⁴⁾

In the same century, the greatest threats to slavery in Brazil came from abroad, specifically from the pressure exerted by anti-slavery campaigns led by the British lobby., This prompted Brazilian slave owners and politicians to construct their ideological arguments against British diplomacy, and even British military intervention, based on an analysis derived from the nature of the Brazilian slave system itself. In doing so, they

re-examined the prevailing ideological landscape of the colonial era.,In the past, Black people and free people were seen as a greater threat to the colonial system than any benefit that could be gained from them, according to the view of most Portuguese administrative authorities who lacked a deep understanding of the mechanisms of this institutional system..⁽⁵⁵⁾

With the dawn of the nineteenth century, these perceptions began to gradually change as a result of the observations made by European travelers who visited or lived in Brazil.For example, the British Henry Koster noted(He was himself a slave owner in the state of Pernambuco during the second decade of the nineteenth century.)Slaves born within the colony were more likely to gain their freedom compared to the difficulties faced by slaves in the British Caribbean.,These European testimonies played a role in creating a perception that Brazilian, and perhaps more broadly Iberian, slavery was more"Gentle" and less brutal compared to its Anglo-Saxon counterpart..⁽⁵⁶⁾

The elites who founded the nation-state in Brazil were quick and effective in employing this discourse.,The idea that freed slaves and their descendants were allies rather than enemies of Brazilian slave owners emerged clearly in 1822 during the Lisbon tribunal's discussions aimed at resolving the question of Brazilian independence.,During those sessions, while discussing with Portuguese parliamentarians the criteria for citizenship and political participation that could be enshrined in the future constitution, Rio de Janeiro deputy Custódio Gonçalves Lido made a clear position, stating that there was no justification for denying freed slaves their right to vote. He emphasized that a significant number of freed slaves live in Brazil, actively contributing to society and holding important positions in the industrial sector. He added that many of them have families, and therefore, denying them this right would be a grave injustice, even seen as perpetuating the evils associated with slavery..⁽⁵⁷⁾

This progressive perspective on defining citizenship, adopted by Custódio Gonçalves Lido in the context of his debates with the Portuguese Parliament, was reflected in the texts of the Constitution of the Empire of Brazil of 1911.¹⁸²⁴ According to Article 6, Paragraph 1 of this Constitution, freed persons born in Brazil are considered Brazilian citizens. However, this recognition did not extend to freed Africans, who remained excluded from belonging to the nation's social fabric. Nevertheless, this constitutional text enabled freed persons born in Brazil to enjoy the right to vote, as the articles of ⁹⁰Article 95 stipulates that former slaves born in Brazil with a net income of 100,000 reais per year are eligible to vote in primary elections to choose members of the regional electoral colleges. However, this right did not extend to running for office. As for the *Inhinos*, the sons and daughters of freedmen, whether African or Brazilian, they were granted the right to vote and the ability to run for regional elections, provided they met the specified financial requirements.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Thus, this system constituted a comprehensive definition of citizenship compared to that time. This constitutional text was later exploited as a propaganda tool to support the continuation of the slave trade, in order to counter increasing pressure from Britain to end this trade. In 1838, José Carneiro da Silva, who later became Viscount Alaruama and a leading conservative politician, advocated for the repeal of the Common Law.¹⁸³¹ And the legalization of the slave trade. Da Silva based his argument on historical experiences related to the Brazilian slave system, noting that he had witnessed slaves becoming owners of other slaves. Some were seen to become owners of vast lands, livestock, and horses, while others gained their freedom and became soldiers and officers enjoying prestigious positions with a positive impact on the state.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Conclusion:

This research demonstrates that slavery in Brazil was not merely an economic system based on the exploitation of forced labor, but rather a deeply entrenched social and cultural structure that spanned centuries. Mechanisms of oppression intertwined with various forms of resistance, contributing to the weakening of the slave system and paving the way for gradual liberation. It also reveals that emancipation was not a sudden event, but rather the result of a complex interplay between the struggles of enslaved people, economic transformations, and intellectual and legislative changes in the 19th century. The study emphasizes that understanding the experience of slavery and liberation in Brazil remains essential for comprehending the roots of contemporary social and racial inequalities and for grasping the unique historical trajectory of Brazil within the Atlantic world.

Footnotes:

⁽¹⁾For more information about Palmaras, see:

Décio Freitas' *Palmares, a guerra dos escravos*. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1990 (1st ed. 1971) and *República de Palmares*. Please comment on historical documents in *Século XVII*. Maceió: Editora da Ufal, 2004.

⁽²⁾ Luso-Brazilian forces Joint military formations comprising Portuguese and local elements in Brazil during the colonial era, particularly in the 17th and 18th centuries, contributed to the defense of Portuguese colonies, confronted rival European powers, and suppressed internal rebellions. They formed an early nucleus of the military organization that preceded the establishment of the Brazilian army after independence. For more information, see:

Jean Delumeau & Frank Lestringant (dir.), *Histoire du Brésil*, Paris, PUF, 2000.

⁽³⁾The term "Mulattos" is a historical term used in colonial societies, particularly in Brazil and Latin America, to refer to people of mixed African-European descent. They formed an intermediate social class between whites and blacks, sometimes enjoying limited privileges compared to enslaved Africans, such as working in urban professions or

serving in militias, while still remaining subject to various forms of legal and social discrimination. For more information, see:

Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 3rd ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 98–101.

⁽⁴⁾ *Coleção de Leis do Império do Brasil*, Imprensa Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, 1826–1850 (leis sobre o tráfico), várias páginas.

⁽⁵⁾ Regarding slave resistance in the English and French Caribbean and in Suriname, see:

Patterson, Orlando. “Slavery and slave revolts: a socio-historical analysis of the First Maroon War, 1655-1740”. *Social and Economic Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, set. 1970; Craton, Michael. *Testing the chains. Resistance to slavery in the British West Indies*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982; Price, Richard. *First-Time. The historical vision of an Afro-American people*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983; Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World. The story of the Haitian revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004.

⁽⁶⁾ Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Documentos referentes ao tráfico de escravos para o Brasil (séculos XVII–XIX), Lisboa, várias data.

⁽⁷⁾ Keila Grinberg, *A Construção da Liberdade no Brasil Imperial*, Tese de Doutorado, UFF, Niterói, 2001, p. 73.

⁽⁸⁾ Hebe Mattos, *Escravidão e Liberdade nas Minas Gerais*, Dissertação de Mestrado, UFF, 1985, p. 132.

⁽⁹⁾ Eduardo França Paiva, *Alforrias e Sociedade no Brasil Colonial*, Tese de Doutorado, UFMG, Belo Horizonte, 1992, pp 65-61.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Keila Grinberg, *Op. Cite*, p. 78.

⁽¹¹⁾ Manolo Florentino, *O Tráfico Atlântico ea Economia do Rio de Janeiro (Séculos XVIII–XIX)*, Tese de Doutorado, UFF, Niterói, 1991, pp. 33-35.

⁽¹²⁾ *Ibid*, p. 37.

⁽¹³⁾ Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Tráfico, Ilícitos e Redes Atlânticas*, Tese de Doutorado, Johns Hopkins University, 2003, p. 136.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Jaime Rodrigues, *De Costa a Costa: Escravos, Marinheiros e Intermediários do Tráfico Atlântico*, Dissertação de Mestrado, Unicamp, 1994, pp. 71-75.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Arquivo Nacional, Registros de entrada de africanos – Porto do Rio de Janeiro (1811–1831), Rio de Janeiro, diversas páginas.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Arquivo Público da Bahia, Documentos sobre a Revolta dos Malês (1835), Salvador, várias data.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Anais do Parlamento Brasileiro, debates sobre revoltas escravas (1823–1840), Tipografia Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

⁽¹⁸⁾ IHGB, Documentation File of Quilombo dos Palmares, Rio de Janeiro, September XIX.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Livro de Notas de Alforria – Rio de Janeiro (1800–1888), Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

⁽²⁰⁾ Registros de Batismo e Alforria – Bahia (1780–1880), Arquivo Público da Bahia.

⁽²¹⁾ Coleção das Impérios, leis de 1831 e 1871 (Lei do Ventre Livre), Imprensa Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

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⁽²³⁾ Código Criminal do Império do Brasil (1830), Tipografia Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

⁽²⁴⁾ May 13, 1888 (Lei Áurea), original document, Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

⁽²⁵⁾ Automatic processing options include, Arquivo da Justiça do Rio de Janeiro.

⁽²⁶⁾ Registros of Irmandades Negras (Irmandade do Rosário), Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, séculos XVIII–XIX.

⁽²⁷⁾ The "Pepper Empire" refers to the Portuguese dominance of the pepper and spice trade in the Indian Ocean during the 16th century, which began to decline in the late 16th and early 17th centuries due to competition from other European powers, particularly the Dutch and English, and shifts in the global economy..For more information, see:

C.R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415–1825*, Penguin Books, London, 1969, p. 56–60.

⁽²⁸⁾ Maps populated for history (Séculos XVIII-XIX) - Arquivo Público de diversos estados.

⁽²⁹⁾ João José Reis, *A Greve Negra de 1857 in Bahia*, Dissertação de Mestrado, UFBA, Salvador, 1978, pp. 39-44.

⁽³⁰⁾ *Ibid*, p. 45.

⁽³¹⁾ R. Boxer, *Op. Cit*, p. 61.

⁽³²⁾ Flávio dos Santos Gomes, *Mocambos e Quilombos no Rio de Janeiro Oitocentista*, Tese de Doutorado, Unicamp, 1997, pp. 66-71.

⁽³³⁾ Register of food products (café, coffee shop) – Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.

⁽³⁴⁾ Arquivo Nacional, Inventários e testamentos de senhores e escravos (1750–1888).

⁽³⁵⁾ Décio Freitas, *O Quilombo de Palmares*, Dissertação, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, 1961, p. 152.

⁽³⁶⁾ Katia M. de Queirós Mattoso, *A Escravidão na Bahia no Século XIX*, Tese de Doutorado, Sorbonne, 1974, pp. 83-89.

⁽³⁷⁾ Quartersau (Coartação): hYA socio-legal practice prevalent in Brazilian society during the period of slavery, based on enabling the slave to gradually purchase his freedom by paying an agreed-upon sum to his owner in installments, instead of paying it all at once, so that full freedom would be achieved after paying the full amount. For more information, see: SCHWARTZ, Stuart B. *Escravos, Roceiros e Rebeldes*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2001, p. 112.

⁽³⁸⁾ Robert W. Slenes, *Senhores e Subalternos*, Tese, Stanford University, 1976, p. 163.

⁽³⁹⁾ José do Patrocínio, *Campanha Abolicionista*, Tipografia Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, 1780.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Arquivo Nacional, *Registros da Polícia da Corte sobre Escravos (1720–1780)*, Rio de Janeiro.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Joaquim Nabuco, *O Abolicionismo*, Leuzinger, Rio de Janeiro, 1783.

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⁽⁴³⁾ ALENCASTRO, Luiz Felipe de. *O Trato dos Viventes: Formação in Brasil no Atlântico Sul, Séculos XVI and XVII*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000, pp. 340–345.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ João José Reis, *Slave Resistance and Daily Life in Bahia*, Tese, University of Minnesota, 1982.

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⁽⁴⁶⁾ Listas de Tripulações e Carga – Porto do Rio de Janeiro (1810–1831), Arquivo Nacional.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Autos de polícia sobre práticas religiosas africanas, Rio de Janeiro (1830–1880).

⁽⁴⁸⁾ João Fragoso, *Mercadores e Escravos no Rio de Janeiro*, Tese, UFRJ, 1987, p. 148.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ *Ibid*, p. 149.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Usman dan Fodio (1754–1817): A religious scholar and Islamic reformer from the Fulani tribes of West Africa, who led a widespread jihadist movement in the Hausa region from 1804 onwards, which led to the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate. The regional wars associated with his movement resulted in major political and military upheavals, leading to an increase in the number of captives who were incorporated into slave trade networks across the Mina coast and the Gulf of Benin. This directly impacted the supply of slaves destined for Brazil, particularly Bahia, during the early decades of the 19th century. For more information, see:

Usman dan Fodio, Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, Longman, London, 1967, pp. 45–54.

⁽⁵¹⁾ Tâmis Parron, *A Política da Escravidão no Brasil Imperial (1826–1871)*, Tese de Doutorado, USP, São Paulo, 2009, pp. 23-27.

⁽⁵²⁾ Maria Helena Machado, *A Construção Jurídica da Liberdade (1865–1888)*, Tese de Doutorado, USP, 1994, p. 159.

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⁽⁵⁴⁾ *Ibid*, p. 55.

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⁽⁵⁸⁾ Sidney Chalhoub, *A Força da Escravidão eo Estado Imperial*, Tese, Unicamp, 1986, p. 75.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Ricardo Salles, *Escravidão e Capitalismo no Vale do Paraíba*, Tese, UFF, 1996, pp. 31-33.

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