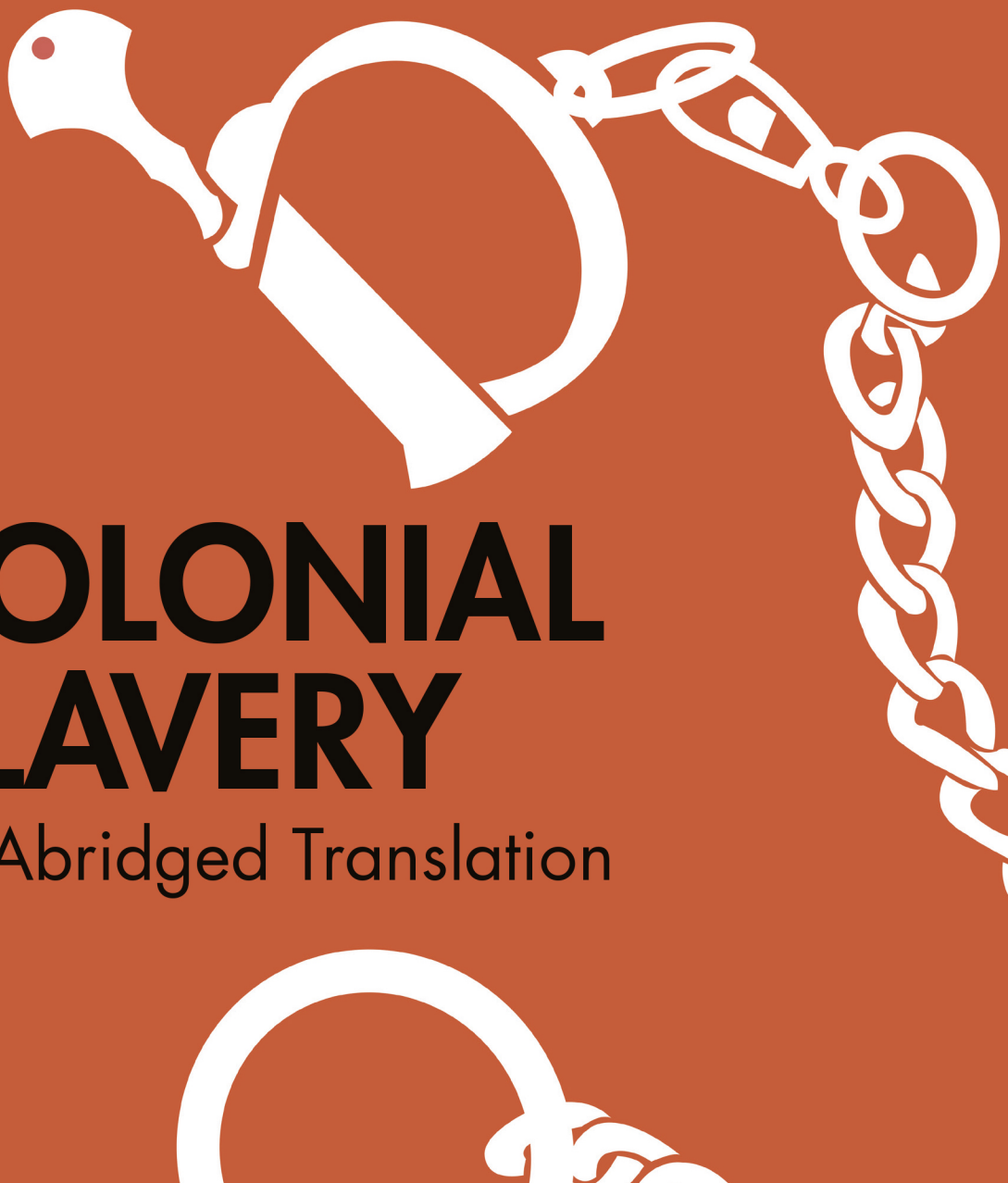
JACOB GORENDER
EDITED BY BERND REITER
TRANSLATED BY ALEJANDRO REYES



COLONIAL SLAVERY

An Abridged Translation

Decolonizing the Classics

ROUTLEDGE

"This is a classic of Latin American Marxist thought. Originally published in 1978, the book uses the concept of mode of production and the conceptual instruments developed in *Das Kapital* to understand the organization of slave labor in Brazil and to seek 'laws' that explain in a more abstract way the structure and social reproduction in slavery societies of colonial America. It is perhaps the most emblematic book of Brazilian Marxism in the 1980s. An essential reading for anyone interested in the history of ideas and of Marxism in Latin America, *O Escravismo Colonial* continues to be revisited by Marxist authors today."

Antonio Sergio Guimarães, *Professor of Sociology, Universidade de São Paulo*

"With this work Gorender affirms the original character of Portuguese colonialism in Brazil. The author demonstrates that slavery was the structuring mode of production in Brazil, resulting in the kind of social relations that make the country what it is today. A required reading for all those who seek to understand racial inequalities in Brazil and the slaveholding Americas."

Fernando Conceição, *Professor of Communication, Federal University of Bahia*

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COLONIAL SLAVERY

Jacob Gorender's (1923–2013) 1978 book, *Colonial Slavery* (*O Escravismo Colonial*), comes alive for English language readers thanks to Bernd Reiter and Alejandro Reyes's brilliant translation.

Gorender argued that slaveholding societies produced an economic system sui generis, not fitting into any of the established societal categories offered by Karl Marx and Max Weber. As such, Gorender proposed a theory of colonial slavery as the structuring force of slaveholding societies. For him, slaveholding societies are different from other societies in that slavery structured them differently. This is of the utmost relevance to this day as it allows for a new and different way to explain contemporary racial inequalities in post-slavery societies. An accomplished interpreter of Brazilian social formation, Gorender was motivated by the need to understand the historical roots of class domination and the emergence of Brazilian capitalist society. His presentation of rich historical data, rigorous theoretical and analytical framework, and militant action as an active member of the Brazilian Communist Party are the hallmarks of his writing.

Colonial Slavery: An Abridged Translation is a must-read for researchers, teachers, and students of history, sociology, economics, politics, as well as activists of the Black movement and other movements committed to anti-racism.

Jacob Gorender was born on January 20, 1923, in Salvador, Brazil. He studied at the Brazilian Israeli School, at the Bahia High School, and enrolled in the Law School in Salvador. He interrupted his legal studies to join the fight against Fascism in Italy during WWII. In April 1968, he cofounded the Brazilian Revolutionary Communist Party (Partido Comunista Brasileiro Revolucionário – PCBR). In 1970, he was imprisoned and tortured. He began writing *Colonial Slavery* in 1974 and finished in 1976. It was published by Ática in 1978 and was quickly sold out. In Brazil, the book is in its 6th edition (2010). In 1994, Gorender received the title of Doctor Honoris Causa from the Federal University of Bahia. From 1994 to 1996, he served as visiting professor at the Institute for Advanced Studies of the University of São Paulo (USP). In 1996, he received the title of specialist of Notorious Knowledge from the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Human Sciences at USP. He died June 11, 2013 at the age of 90.

Bernd Reiter is Professor of Classical and Modern Languages and Literature at Texas Tech University, and the editor of Routledge's Decolonizing the Classics book series. Prior to joining academia, he worked as a social worker and NGO consultant in Brazil and in Colombia. He earned his

PhD in comparative politics from the City University of New York's Graduate Center and has been a visiting scholar in Germany, Brazil, Colombia, and Spain. He is recipient of the Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Public Policy, Brazil 2021–2022 award. Reiter's work focuses on race, democracy, citizenship, and decolonization. His publications include *The Dialectics of Citizenship* (2013), *Bridging Scholarship and Activism* (2014), *The Crisis of Liberal Democracy and the Path Ahead* (2017), and *Constructing the Pluriverse* (2018).

Alejandro Reyes is a writer, translator, activist, and independent journalist. He was born in Mexico City in 1963 and has lived in the United States, Brazil, and France. He has an MA in Latin American Studies and a PhD in Latin American Literature from the University of California at Berkeley. He is a public speaker, with conferences on marginal literature and social movements in Mexico and Brazil. He is cofounder of the alternative media collective Radio Zapatista. He currently lives in Chiapas, Mexico.

Decolonizing the Classics
Edited by Bernd Reiter, Texas Tech University

The critique of colonialism and post-colonialism has by now been broadly disseminated and understood. The logical next step in moving beyond colonialism in thought, research, and academic practice is to engage in decolonization efforts. This is currently occurring. However, most of these efforts are still based on the critique of Western centrism and its universalist claims.

Instead of adding another layer of critique to Western and northern intellectual domination and epistemological hegemony, Decolonizing the Classics actively inserts non-Western voices from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific into the canon of classic and seminal works currently taught around the globe.

Changó, Decolonizing the African Diaspora
Manuel Zapata Olivella, Translated by Jonathan Tittler

Colonial Slavery
An Abridged Translation
Jacob Gorender, Edited by Bernd Reiter, Translated by Alejandro Reyes

The Critique of Coloniality
Eight Essays
Rita Segato, Translated by Ramsey McGlazer

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COLONIAL SLAVERY

An Abridged Translation

Jacob Gorender
Edited by Bernd Reiter
Translated by Alejandro Reyes

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JACOB GORENDER: *O ESCRAVISMO COLONIAL*, 1978

Jacob Gorender's *Colonial Slavery* was the first book that came to mind when launching the *Routledge Decolonizing the Classics Special Book Series*. This was due to the fact that I had studied social sciences at the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil, during the early 1990s, where this book was a core assigned reading in the Brazilian History class I took with Prof. Marli Geralda Teixeira. I vividly remember the profound impression this book made on me, a German visiting student eager to learn about the history of Brazilian race relations. *Colonial Slavery* is a Marxist treaty on the importance of slavery for Brazilian society. Different from other Marxists, Jacob Gorender, who was self-taught, elaborated not just a critique of orthodox Marxism, but ventured to amend the work of Marx by offering a different societal typology, based on a specific mode of production, one not adequately addressed and conceptualized by Karl Marx or Friedrich Engels. Instead of devising ways to fit Brazilian colonial reality into the existing Marxist categories of feudal societies and the "Asian mode of production," Gorender boldly went where few Marxists dare to go. He proposed a new category and argued that modern enslaving societies, like Brazil, constituted a sui generis societal type, one based on and constituted by slavery.

Gorender understood that the enslavement of people by fellow humans forever changes the relations of the slavers and the enslaved. In societies like Brazil, where slavery was an accepted practice from 1530 to 1888, first enslaving the local indigenous people and then becoming the destination of about half of the population taken from Africa, slavery was not just of collateral importance. It made Brazil what it is today. Placing slavery in such a central and formative place allowed him to elaborate, in great detail, how exactly slavery impacted and changed societal relations, production, agriculture, industry, and all other aspects of Brazilian urban and rural life.

His analysis was, and continues to be, bold, thought provoking, and analytically fruitful, particularly today, when the awareness of the profound and long-term consequences of enslavement are becoming more and more transparent. Gorender thus constitutes a mandatory reading for anybody studying colonial and postcolonial race relations in formerly enslaving societies like Brazil and the United States.

Gorender's analytical choice of focus also constitutes an option to approach history from the standpoint of the enslaved, which in itself constitutes an important innovation of Marxist historiography, as it combines a structural analysis with a heuristic option to engage structure from the standpoint of the enslaved.

Jacob Gorender has been denigrated by mainstream scholars in their commitment to defend the Brazilian myth of racial harmony and he was attacked by elitist scholars who sought to dismiss his work because he did not hold a PhD in history. At the same time, his main book, translated here, was continuously published in Brazil, last by the Brazilian Publishing House of the Landless Movement (MST), *Expressão Popular* and supported by the Worker Party Foundation *Fundação Perseu Abreu*, in 2016. This was the 6th edition of *Colonial Slavery,* first published in 1978, and it was reprinted in 2019.

Colonial Slavery is a true classic of the social sciences and humanities, and it deserves a place among the canon of books constituting the core of the different disciplines in this field. *Colonial Slavery* is not simply a book of relevance for Brazilian colonial history. It represents an important contribution to Marxist historical theory. It is *Southern Theory* par excellence and as such it challenges the assumption that all social theory comes from the Global North. The insights elaborated by Gorender can and should be applied to other countries, who elevated modern slavery to the core of their productive systems.

I hope that this translation can help to introduce Jacob Gorender and his analysis to the Hall of Scientific Fame where he rightfully belongs.

We want to thank *Expressão Popular* for their support, making this translation possible, as well as the support we received from Ethel Gorender, without whom we could not have proceeded. For the sake of accessibility, we decided to offer an abridged version of Gorender's Opus Magnus. We did not include any of the extensive footnotes of the Brazilian original and we opted to exclude the methodological section (*Categorias fundamentais*) of the First Part. In addition, we excluded the 5th and 6th Part of the book, as well as the last chapter, on the West Paulista farmers (Addendum). These parts, a total of eight chapters, offer important applications and implications of slavery on agriculture, mining, urban life, indigenous slavery, finance, planters and markets, reproduction and accumulation, and the specific case of the West Paulista farmers. While the excluded sections are important, we are confident that the central argument and the theoretical contribution are fully elaborated in Parts I–IV.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The translation at hand is based on the fourth edition of Gorender's Opus Magnus, which he himself revised in 1985. The language of the original reflects its time in the choice of pronouns and a terminology that has been recognized as problematic by some recent critics. As this is an abridged and edited version of the original, we opted to update some of the rather problematic terminology, wherever it was possible without distorting the original meaning.

Whenever Gorender discusses enslaved people, we substituted "slave" for "enslaved" or "enslaved person." However, where he proposes and discusses "slave" as a social category, we left it as is in order to maintain the distinctions and contrasts he sought to emphasize. We understand that the term "slave," when referring to a person, reduces that person to his or her status of bondage, thus hiding their agency, their humanity, and even the sometimes transitory character of their enslavement. Many times, however, Gorender, loyal to his teacher Karl Marx, discusses not the enslaved person, but "slave" as a social category that is connected and oppositional to the social categories "master," and "subject." In those cases, we opted to maintain the original "escravo," translating it as "slave." We also maintained all composite "slave" categories he proposes, such as "slaveholding society," "slave mode of production," and "slave work," as updating those would lead to cumbersome categorizations (think "enslaved person mode of production") with less analytical sharpness and value.

It is not always clear when Gorender discusses a person or a social category, and we fear that we are left with a certain margin of error with regards to this terminology. We count on the reader's understanding in those cases. It was an easier task and certainly, we think, in Gorender's spirit, to update the usage of pronouns to a format that creates no discomfort to the contemporary reader. We thus changed all exclusive usage of "he" or "his" to a more inclusive "he/she" or "they." Wherever possible and not presented, by the author, as a direct reference or citation of older work, we also changed references to "primitive" societies to "pre-modern" societies. Here, too, Gorender relies on Marxist terminology and where he does so explicitly, we did not change his language in order to preserve the reference to Marx's original approach. The book at hand is a classic and as such it contains the conventions of the time of its production. Changing all the terminology would jeopardize our ability to recognize the Marxist intellectual and categorical genealogy into which Gorender inserts himself, potentially leading to analytical distortions.

INTRODUCTION: *COLONIAL SLAVERY*

Jacob Gorender's Copernican Revolution[1]

*Mário Maestri**

* PROFESSOR AT THE HISTORY GRADUATE PROGRAM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PASSO FUNDO

Education and Trajectory of a Communist

Jacob Gorender was born on January 20, 1923, in Salvador. His father, a socialist, antizionist Ukrainian Jew, migrated to Argentina in 1905 and later to Bahia. Gorender studied at the Brazilian Israeli School, at the Bahia High School, and enrolled in the Law School in Salvador. At the beginning of 1942, he participated in the struggle for Brazil's participation in the War, in the communist university cell founded by Mário Alves. At the time, he worked in the newspapers *O Imparcial* and *Estado da Bahia*.[2] In 1943, he participated in the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB), left for Italy, fought in the war until the end, and frequented the Italian Communist Party. In Bahia, he abandoned law school to devote himself to political activism. In late 1946, he worked at the *Clase Operaria* newspaper and at the metropolitan secretariat of the Brazilian Communist Party (Partido Comunista do Brasil – PCB) in Rio de Janeiro.

With the Cold War, the PCB shifted from its previous policy of collaboration with the state to one of confrontation with the government of Gaspar Dutra (1946–1950). The leftist rhetoric continued after Getúlio Vargas's victory (1951–1954). In 1951, Gorender joined the PCB's São Paulo State Committee. In 1953, in Rio de Janeiro, he worked organizing the "Stalin courses" and at the periodical *Imprensa Popular*. At the end of 1954, he was elected interim secretary of the Central Committee (CC) at the IV Congress, which reaffirmed Brazil as a "semi-colonial and semi-feudal country" and the "struggle for a democratic and people's government" led by the "Democratic Front for National Liberation." In spite of the PCB's *hard* rhetoric, it supported the Juscelino Kubitschek–João Goulart candidacy (PDS-PTB). In 1955, Gorender, together with some comrades, joined the Higher Party School of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). In Moscow, the Brazilians became acquainted with Khrushchev's report on Stalin, which put the communist movement in a state of confusion. In Rio de Janeiro, he directed the periodical *Imprensa Popular* and the weekly *Voz Operária*.

In 1958, inspired by Prestes, Giocondo Dias, Alberto Passos Guimarães, Mário Alves, Armênio Guedes, and Gorender drafted the March Manifesto, which materialized the policy of alliance with the *national and progressive bourgeoisie* and the proposal to rise to power through peaceful means. The Brazilian revolution was defined as anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, national, and democratic. In 1960, during the V Congress, he was elected full member of the CC, and Mário Alves and Carlos Marighella joined the Political Commission. The proposals set forth in the March Manifesto were officialized.

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Jânio Quadros's resignation and João Goulart's rise to power (1961–1964) strengthened the PCB's ties to national-populism, demanding an advancement of the social struggle and autonomy from the government. In 1959–1961, the victory of the Cuban Revolution and the proposal to take power through guerrilla struggle galvanized the Latin American left. The name change from Partido Comunista do Brasil to Partido Comunista Brasileiro justified founding the PC do B, led by Amazonas, Arruda, Pomar, and Grabois. In 1958, Gorender published "Correntes sociológicas no Brasil" ("Sociological Currents in Brazil"); in 1960, "A questão Hegel" ("The Hegel Question"); and in 1963, "Contradições do desenvolvimento econômico no Brasil" ("Contradictions in Brazil's Economic Development"). In 1961, together with Mário Alves, he translated the *Manual of Political Economics*, of the USSR's Academy of Sciences.[3]

The 1964 coup strengthened the *leftist* opposition – Apolônio de Carvalho, Marighella, Gorender, Joaquim Câmara Ferreira, Manuel Jover Telles, Mário Alves, etc. – expelled in December 1967 before the VI Congress. Especially after 1967, the government's backward dictatorial politics led to a strong people's reaction, which fostered the PCB's fragmentation. In April 1968, Mário Alves, Apolônio, Gorender, and others founded the Brazilian Revolutionary Communist Party (Partido Comunista Brasileiro Revolucionário – PCBR). Marighella and Câmara Ferreira founded the National Liberation Action (ALN) guerrilla organization. Communists joined the PC do B and militarist groups.

The PCBR rejected the alliance with the bourgeoisie, without struggling for socialism; it defended the trade union movement and armed struggle in the countryside. In January 1970, Mário Alves was imprisoned and executed, following other detentions that led to a replacement of the PCBR'S historical leadership for a new one that escalated its militarism, leading to the group's quick destruction. Gorender reflected on the vicious cycle of military actions/detentions and began researching Brazil's society. In prison, he taught a course on Brazil's transition from slavery to capitalism without going through feudalism and proposed direct struggle for socialism, in opposition to the March Declaration. After his release in October 1971, he did not return to active party activism – he joined the Worker's Party (PT) belatedly without actively participating in it.

Colonial Slavery – A Copernican Revolution

After his release from prison, Gorender worked as a translator and advanced in his research. He began writing *Colonial Slavery* in 1974 and finished in 1976. It was published by Ática in 1978 and was quickly sold out.[4] The work defended the colonial slaveholding nature of the Brazilian past, overcoming the feudalism vs. capitalism debate that divided the social sciences and the left. Stalinism *demanded* that non-European societies repeat the stages defined by Marx and Engels for Europe's society – primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism. In 1928, during the VI Congress of the Communist International, this interpretation was officialized for the semicolonial and colonial world.[5]

In the *Third World*, this interpretation subjected the realm of labor to the *national bourgeoisie* and to the operations of Soviet diplomacy. It was supported by fractions of the middle classes, trade union bureaucracy, and the working class elite. It imposed on backward capitalist nations, defined as colonial, semicolonial, feudal, and semifeudal, an alliance and subjection to the national bourgeoisie – an anti-imperialist and anti-latifundium front. The struggle for socialism would take place once the democratic stage of the revolution was overcome. Intellectuals from the PCB interpreted the Brazilian past from the standpoint of the opposition between peasants and semifeudal latifundia. Alberto Passos Guimaraes proposed an "irreconcilable antagonism" between the "peasant class" and "large landowners" throughout "the entire" history of Brazil.[6]

The active participation of the *national and progressive bourgeoisie* in the 1964 coup demonstrated the senselessness of that policy. In Brazil, fragile Marxist movements – such as the *Organização Revolucionária Marxista–Política Operária* and Trotskyist groups – defended the socialist program in isolation, in general seeing capitalist relations practically since the so-called Discovery due to the early presence of commercial capital, followed by worldwide capitalist domination. They failed to engage in a concrete analysis of the old Brazilian social formation, and therefore the new, contemporary tendencies.[7]

For most activists, Brazil's history began with the *1930 Revolution*, with a *national*, albeit fragile, intervention of the working class. Previous centuries were ignored, since they could not be examined according to capitalist categories. *Colonial Slavery* overcame that chronological/historicist standpoint, defining Brazil's slaveholding colonial structure in a categorical/systematic manner. It undertook a "structural" study of that reality in order to penetrate the "phenomenal appearance and to reveal" its "essential structure," internal connections, and the movements of its fundamental contradictions – the opposition between the enslaved and the enslaver.[8]

The main interpretations of the past prior to abolition point to the Northeastern *engineer* (Gilberto Freyre, 1833)[9] and the São Paulo coffee grower (São Paulo School, 1950–1960) as social demiurges. The latter current defended the brutality of slavery, forms of "incomplete capitalism," and the historical impotence of captives.[10] Gorender depicted the enslaved as "*subjective agents* of the labor process," and not as "machines" and "capital assets," as classical authors did. Ciro Flamarion Cardoso proposed the dominance of the colonial slave mode of production (CSMP) in Brazil, emphasizing the subjective nature of slaves' actions.[11]

Previous theoretical movements cleared the way to a radical reading of Gorender. In Brazil, summary historicist or systematic interpretations defended the existence of a *slave system* and the opposition between masters and enslaved people.[12] As Stalinism declined, the international debate on the plurality of modes of production in non-European social formations was rekindled, based on Marx and Engels's proposal of an "Asian mode of production." [13]

E. D. Genovese interpreted slavery in the Southern United States from the standpoint of its internal dynamics, structures, and contradictions. He pointed to the existence of a necessarily colonial slave social system, subordinated to other forms of labor, without defining it as a mode of production. He hesitated between a materialist and an idealist interpretation and opposed a capitalist definition of all mercantile societies.[14] Genovese would later abandon most of those proposals.

Tendential Laws of Colonial Slave Production

In *Colonial Slavery*, Gorender undertakes a categorical/systematic critique of slavery in the Americas understood as a historically new mode of production, due to its primarily mercantile character, which strengthened secondary or underdeveloped determinations of Greco-Roman patriarchal and minor-mercantile slavery.[15] Gorender proposes the determination of societies where colonial slavery was dominant. He bases his research on the Brazilian case in part because it was there that colonial slavery developed the most in terms of longevity, space, variety of products, import of slaves, political influence, etc.

He analyzed the theoretical and historiographical literature on slaveholding Brazil, utilizing a Marxist methodology, linking historical, logical, and methodological levels of analysis. He utilized as a paradigm Marx's presentation of the tendential laws of capitalist production in *Capital*, refuting Marxist references to modern slavery that he considered incorrect or insufficiently developed.

He began his thesis with a chapter devoted to "methodological reflections," critiquing Althusserian literature.[16] In "Part One," he defined colonial slavery as a historically new category, in the context of the impulse of the world market and the advancement of productive forces at the time. He presented

the "fundamental categories" of the CSMP, emphasizing the "slavery category" and the "plantation form of organization of slave production."[17] In "Part Two," he approached the genesis of the Luso-Brazilian slave formation in the context of Portuguese *native* and colonial social and geographical spaces. He undertook his *demarche* from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the concrete.

Tendential Laws

In "Part Three," he discussed the "monomodal" laws that are exclusive to the CSMP as opposed to the "plurimodal" laws common to various modes of production. The former are the law of money income; the law of the initial investment to acquire the slave; the law of the rigidity of the slave workforce; the law of the correlation between the mercantile and the natural economy in slave plantations; the law of the enslaved population.[18] In Parts Four, Five, and Six, and in the final Addendum, he discussed "the territorial regime and the ground rent," "the particular forms of slavery," "circulation and reproduction" in modern slavery, and "slave plantations west of São Paulo," refuting the definition of coffee growers in that region as capitalist entrepreneurs, a vanguard of the bourgeois revolution in Brazil.

Gorender carefully describes the large enslaved plantation, which dominated colonial slave production, emphasizing the structural, dialectic coexistence between the spheres of (subordinate) natural production and (dominant) mercantile production. The debate regarding the benign or despotic nature of slavery in the Americas was not new. Freyre's *patriarchal* interpretation, which *pacified* the past and the present, became semiofficial in Brazil. Gorender goes past that debate, pointing out that *patriarchy*, put forward as the essence of slavery, was in fact a secondary occurrence derived from the sphere of natural production, which was subordinated to the mercantile sphere oriented to the world market.

The General and the Particular

This understanding highlights the need to analyze sociohistorical phenomena in the context of the totality of social structures and formations in order to present their general and essential links and determinations, instead of generalizing from the particular and particularizing from the general. *Colonial Slavery* was not an isolated academic thesis, a part of the erudite division/specialization of knowledge, which fails or succeeds by responding to various degrees to the semi-anarchic demands of the development of knowledge determined by hegemonic social forces – demands that are *external* to the researcher's production process and often to his scruples.

Colonial Slavery was developed "from the standpoint of critical and dialectic Marxism," which, in the context of its "relative autonomy," considers "intellectual work" as a "dimension of political and ideological struggles present in capitalist society."[19] The research aimed at establishing solid bases to interpret Brazil's modern social formation in order to revolutionize it, according to Marx's 11th Thesis on Feuerbach from 1845. A reflection that Gorender explored in depth especially in *Gênese e desenvolvimento do capitalismo no campo brasileiro* (Genesis and Development of Capitalism in the Brazilian Countryside) and in *A Burguesia brasileira* (The Brazilian Bourgeoisie).[20] By describing the political economy of the CSMP, he contributed to the efforts to construct a political economy of the plurality of modes of production.[21]

Colonial Slavery – Climax and Crisis

Important events in Brazil and the world in the late 1970s facilitated the understanding and *success* of *Colonial Slavery* in the decade following its publication and the radical reversion of its academic *reception* in the 1990s. In 1977–1978, the "Brazilian miracle" was a thing of the past,

and Brazil entered a period of tendential stagnation. The imposition of inflation/austerity in order to pay the debt rekindled trade union activism, disrupted in 1969.

In 1977–1979, strong mobilizations circumscribed the protagonism and centrality of the labor world, *hindered* by the bourgeois national developmentalism of the PCB prior to 1964 and the petit bourgeois militarism of the left after 1967. *Colonial Slavery* materialized workers' need for a radical interpretation of the Brazilian social formation from a perspective that overcame the phantasmagoria that sustained the populist, collaborationist, and militarist strategies defeated in the 1960s and 1970s.

Strikes and land occupations, the foundation of the anti-capitalist Workers' Party (PT) (1980) and the classist national trade union (CUT) (1983), etc., fostered the academic/scientific recognition of radical readings of the Brazilian formation. The advancement of the labor world immediately faced a conservative counteroffensive, including theoretical representations of that social thrust, on the part of the propertied class and imperialism. They questioned the scientific/academic legitimacy of *Colonial Slavery*, indirectly at first and then directly, in an attempt to seal the cracks created by placing workers at the center of the interpretation of the Brazilian social formation.

Efforts were made to produce arguments that questioned the proposals of *Colonial Slavery* even in the world of appearances and to marginalize the advocates of the new revisionism from the academic world. In spite of his erudition, the doors of the Academy were closed to Goorender, who continued working in *Abril Cultural*, coordinating the collection "Os Economistas," where he published the Introduction and Presentation to two volumes of works by Marx and, in 1989, the Introduction to *The German Ideology*.[22]

Only in 1994 did Gorender receive the title of Doctor Honoris Causa from the Federal University of Bahia. From 1994 to 1996, he served as visiting professor at the Institute for Advanced Studies of the University of São Paulo (USP).[23] In 1996, he received the title of specialist of Notorious Knowledge from the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Human Sciences at USP. His exclusion from the Academy forced him to respond, without institutional support, to the attacks on the part of scholars backed by their institutions and the state.

Two essays by Gorender stand out in the important debate over *Colonial Slavery* – "O conceito de modo de produção e a pesquisa histórica" (The Concept of Mode of Production and Historical Research) (1980) and "Questionamentos sobre a teoria econômica do escravismo colonial" (Questions on the Economic Theory of Colonial Slavery) (1983).[24] In 1985, he published the revised and expanded fourth edition of *Colonial Slavery*. In 1990, in a radically adverse political/ideological context, he published *A Escravidão Reabilitada* (Rehabilitated Slavery), a response to the criticism directed against it.[25] Those works outlined the evolution of the operations to *deconstruct* and *silence* his interpretation.

In 1980, the article "O conceito de modo de produção e a pesquisa histórica" documented the impact of *Colonial Slavery*.[26] In the "Introduction," Amaral Lapa noted that the compilation renewed the debate interrupted "fifteen years ago," bringing together "the most representative" authors of the "interpretation of Brazil's historical reality through the concept of mode of production." The authors used the "central Marxist theoretical concept" in a "generally discordant" manner, even though there were a few "substantial approximations."

The intention was to engage in a debate in the "conceptual universe" of "mode of production" and "social formation," correlated with "its basic categories […], relations of production, productive forces, social classes, the class struggle, etc." [27] Gorender opened the essay, followed by Barros de Castro, Flamarion Cardoso, Werneck Sodré, Octávio Ianni, Peter Eisenberg, and Theo Santiago, in alphabetical order. The organizer pointed out the absence of some important authors on the topic, such as Caio Prado, Celso Furtado, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Florestan Fernandes, and Souza Martins.[28]

General Theory

In his text, Gorender defends the construction of a general theory of the unique modes of production; he reaffirms social categories as an expression of empirical reality; he points to the dominance of the economic sphere associated to the extra-economic sphere; he emphasizes the need to develop a theory of social formations in general and of the capitalist social formation in particular. He defends the historically new character of the CSMP relative to ancient slavery, dependent on a non-slave external market, which reflects its *colonial* nature "in the *economic* sense of the term." He argues that the CSMP was not determined by internationally dominant modes of production nor was it integrated into them, as proposed by *integrationist* perspectives such as the Dependency Theory.

He concludes by proposing a general and systematic research process, demanded by the characterization of the genesis of capitalist production in Brazil, based not on feudalism, but on colonial slavery, especially after 1888, with the consolidation of "pre-capitalist peasant forms combined with the plantation structure and latifundia and cattle-raising," a thesis presented at the conference "*A gênese e desenvolvimento do capitalismo no campo brasileiro*" on July 13, 1979.[29]

Conservative Bourgeoisie

The transition from mercantile, colonial slave production based on allodial forms of land property to capitalist production demonstrates the conservative nature of the national bourgeoisie, which never encountered "obstacles to acquire land property and which found in land speculation one of its sources of original accumulation of capital." Without exacerbating its "contradiction with large landowners," it incorporated "latifundia to the structure of capitalism in Brazil, [thus] burdening" its "development […] with the exorbitant price and rent of the land […]." [30]

Regarding the social dynamics and the intermodal transition, he proposes that it is "the variations in productive forces […] which establish a non-correspondence with the existing relations of production and ultimately lead to their replacement by other relations of production and to the emergence of a new mode of production." [31] A Marxist proposal that interprets the forward and backward impulse of social relations of production in the context of productive forces is determined by the solution of the contradiction between the explored and the explorers. In *Colonial Slavery*, in that article, and in the proposal for a systematic research of Brazil's social formation, there is no explicit reference to the class struggle as the main determination of the social formation, which the author addresses by responding to the accusation of having ignored that instance, made by authors that generally defended the *objective* indeterminacy of the *subjective* action of the oppressed.

Systematic Rebuttal

In "A economia política, o capitalismo e a escravidão" (Political Economy, Capitalism, and Slavery), Barros de Castro presented what was perhaps the first attempt to refute the CSMP, arguing that capitalism was the only mode of production that could be apprehended by political economy, since only in it did the "economic logic" determine the social.[32] Based on a superficial presentation of feudalism and classical slavery, his thesis clashed with the economic determinations of colonial slavery, a logical paradox that he circumvented by proposing that "modern slavery" had "important traits in common with capitalism" and that "slaves" were "forerunners of the modern proletariat," revisiting the interpretation by the São Paulo School of a "slaveholding capitalism" and a "capitalist slavery." [33]

The enslaver was therefore "subjected to an economic machinery," while the enslaved did not have a "social character effectively molded by the production regime," which did not condition their existence as enslaved people – if that were true, it would make no difference whether the slave worked in the master's house or at the furnace! The enslaved adapted "well or poorly" "to the production apparatus […] through a more or less efficient combination of violence, rewards, persuasion, etc." In the context of "explicitly antagonistic classes," especially "in the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century," when production took on a mercantile character, the slave society was imbued in explicit social confrontation and the seigniorial class was acutely aware of the danger that the enslaved represented.[34]

Negotiating Enslaved People

This dualist-subjectivist reading abstracted the determination of historical development from production, since it depended on "the intensity, direction, and success of enslaved people's resistance and/or open struggle, as well as on the answers found by the owners and free men in general to assimilate, accommodate, and stifle the hostile presence and potential for rebellion" of the enslaved people, as proposed by Freyre in 1933–1936 in *The Masters and the Slaves* and *The Mansions and the Shanties*.[35] The acts of "explicit and open rebellion" were "like the vapor that noisily escapes the machine," warning slaveholders of the need to adapt "socially, politically, and militarily to coexist" with the enslaved people, attenuating their "belligerence," leading to a "transformation" of the "social regime" under the impact of the enslaved people's "presence." [36]

Castro proposes researching phenomena that draw little "attention" from Brazilian historiography, such as those recorded in the "Peace Treaty" with the enslaved people of "Engenho Santana de Ilhéus" in 1789,[37] land grants to enslaved people, "mercantile" activities of the enslaved people, etc., which expressed the struggles undertaken by enslaved people to "build their own space" under slavery. Those actions did not merely express "slaves' efforts" to "challenge the conditions" that oppressed them, but also the process of "accommodating" to slavery by seeking "recognition of their existence and a place in society." [38] A large number of historians followed the recommendations by Castro Freyre, in an attempt to read the evolution of slavery from the standpoint of *accommodation* instead of *production* and *resistance*.

The Peasant Gap

In 1983, Gorender responded to the main "Challenges to the economic theory of colonial slavery," with special emphasis on the "peasant gap," by creating the *dossier* on slavery published by IPEA-USP, with the participation of Flamarion Cardoso, Peter Eisenberg, Manuel Correia de Andrade, among others.[39] In Part Three of the essay (Colonial Slavery and the Peasant Economy), Gorender examined that phenomenon, broadly presented by Flamarion in 1979 in a chapter of the book *Agricultura, escravidão e capitalismo* (Agriculture, Slavery and Capitalism).[40]

In "A brecha camponesa no sistema escravista" (The Peasant Gap in the Slave System), Flamarion returned to Tadeusz Lepkowski's proposal of an "independent subsistence economy" of agricultural maroon communities and "small plots of land granted in usufruct on the estates to non-domestic slaves," as "activities that, in slaveholding colonies, escaped the plantation system." For Flamarion, in addition to maroons and enslaved people, we should include "tenant farmers of 'bound farms' in plantations," "*moradores*," and "*parceiros*," as in the seventeenth century in the Antilles, where "indentured servants" and "*engagés*" obtained plots of land at the end of their contracts. He acknowledged that the expansion of plantations corroded that *peasant economy*. In that essay, he barely refers to maroon agriculture, focusing on the *dissolution* of the

categories of "slave" and "slave mode of production," defending that captives were both *enslaved people* and *peasants*, by alternately living both "relations of production."

A Single Model

Flamarion proposes the dominion of enslaved person relations over enslaved person "peasant activities"; that the objective of the slave system was to "minimize the cost of maintenance and reproduction of the labor force" through concessions; the reduction of autonomous agriculture during "the season for harvesting and elaborating the products"; their "economic" and psychological importance for "slaves"; the "revocable" nature of the plots of land, whose purpose was to "tie" enslaved people "to the estate and thus avoid escapes." He recognizes the existence of "*a single model of the slave system* in the Americas" and proposes examining the phenomenon based on "the set of cases observed." Even admitting that he did not "research" "exhaustively all slaveholding regions," he proposes that "granting plots of land and time to cultivate them to slaves" constituted "a universal characteristic of slavery in the Americans" and that "slaves' access to the means of production and to free time" tended to "mutate into a *de facto* right, in some cases established by law." [41]

Flamarion based his arguments on the notion of a presumably contractual character of "slavery" whereby, according to him, "as in any socioeconomic regime, a contractual agreement – legal or customary – is established between the dominant class and the exploited class, which guarantees, at least *de facto*, certain rights for the dominated class, whose violation entails the danger of some form of rebellion." [42] With the "peasant gap" proposal, he argued for the existence of systemic – necessary and universal – peasant relations of production, which determined, corroded, and dissolved the CSMP. When presenting the corroborating documentation, he acknowledged that, in Brazil, "the little attention paid […] by historians to the 'peasant gap' might be indicative of a certain skepticism regarding its importance."[43] Yet he failed to consider the possibility that the "little attention paid" to the phenomenon could be indicative of its little importance. He optimistically argued that new studies would reveal the "significant weight" of the "peasant gap," a fact that never occurred.[44]

Summary Documentation

His summary primary documentation on Brazil mainly consists of references to Antonil, Benci, Vilhena, and Stuart Schwartz's study. The same thing happens with the Southern United States, of which he states that the "habit of granting plots of land in usufruct and time to cultivate them to the slaves" was "well established," and that there were "indications that possession of the plot of land and the guarantee of free labor were widely recognized rights […]." With slightly less deficient documentation, he proposes that, in the French and British Guianas and the Antilles, two plots of lands were granted to enslaved people, one of them close to the cabin and another one usually in a distant, mountain land. He documented enslaved person's actions in some regions at the time of abolition to purchase or lease the plots of land. He presented scattered references regarding Venezuela, Cuba, Puerto Rico, etc.

In spite of evidence of differences and gaps in the phenomenon in the slaveholding Americas, he asserts its universal nature and, paradoxically, contradicting to some extent the systemic character he proposes, he states that "[…] in **all** slaveholding colonies or regions – albeit **to varying degrees** –, **many** slaves had plots of land in usufruct and time to cultivate them […]."[45] He concludes the essay by presenting an optimist/impressionist assessment of the productivity of autonomous slave agriculture, without attempting to estimate it. In "Saint-Domingue," "in

the plot that was close" to the "cabin, they planted fruit trees and vegetables and raised chickens and sometimes also turkeys, pigs, and goats. In the common lands, they planted bananas, corn, roots (cassava, yam, sweet potato, etc.)." He extends his positive assessment to the mercantile character and profitability of the land. He proposes that, in Jamaica, "slaves" "cultivate coffee, ginger, and some minor export products on their own; in Venezuela, in addition to subsistence products, they "preferred" growing "cocoa," constituting "small farms – *haciendillas* – within the larger estate." [46]

Small Bankers

In the "French Guiana," enslaved people monopolized "almost entirely the internal *cassave* (processed manioc) and fowl market," controlling "a large part of the currency that circulated in the colony." In Jamaica, they owned "20% of the circulating currency" and, through informal wills, bequeathed "up to 200 sterling pounds!"[47] He defends that "in all colonies, slaves' insertion in mercantile circuits was similar" and proposes that the "main purpose" of that production was "to obtain additional food and better clothing (including jewelry [sic] and shoes), tobacco, and drinks."[48]

He extends this realty to Brazil, by accepting Schwartz's proposal that the enslaved people of the Santana plantation "were able to produce a marketable surplus" and "directly participate in the market economy [sic] and accumulate capital [sic]"! A enslaved person production that presumably led to the "development" of an "internal" and "industrial market"! [49] He concludes with a caveat absent in the text: in general, the plots of land "were insufficient to ensure the totality" of the enslaved people's subsistence; often, the "extreme form of the plantation logic" prevailed; "not all slaves benefitted from the system" or had the energy and were willing to employ their few hours of rest in that activity.

Methodological Critique

In "Questionamentos sobre a teoria econômica do escravismo colonial," Gorender argues that Flamarion approaches the issue "without resorting to the categories of *social formation* and *mode of production*," assimilating coexisting, dominant and dominated modes of production in a single social formation. He recalls that, in Antiquity and in modern times, in addition to the dominant slave mode of production, "various types of peasant activity," "dependent or not," subsisted. He points out that *Colonial Slavery* defined the existence of "*a mode of production of small non-slaveholding farmers*," "secondary in the slave social formation," "that included small farmers, *posseiros*, and *agregados* or *moradores*." Workers "entirely" excluded "from the so-called 'peasant gap.'" [50]

Regarding "farmers, whether owners or tenants," who planted "sugarcane to process it in other people's mills," "they were slave owners and even large slave owners," "organically integrated into the CSMP." Regarding maroon communities, he observes that they were "outside" the realm of colonial slavery, even though they maintained "trade ties" with it. Since they introduced "no change in the colonial slave mode of production," they were not "an argument in favor of the presumed 'peasant gap,'" [51] The "peasant forms" did not constitute "a *gap* in the dominant slave mode of production, whether patriarchal or colonial, *since they were not part of its structure*." [52]

Gorender proposes that "slaves' cultivation of plots of land within the plantation" constituted indeed a phenomenon of the "structure" of the CSMP. "Cardoso summarizes the references of secondary sources on the issue and concludes that it was a generalized practice in various slaveholding regions in the Americas," "with differences in scope in each region." However, "cultivating foodstuffs," "gathering activities," etc., for self-consumption" and for sale were rare

in the United States but were "more developed" in the Caribbean, with "significant commercial participation of the slaves themselves through the sale of their products and a certain stability in the usufruct of their plots of land, which even allowed them to bequeath them."

An Old Debate

Gorender recalls that, contrary to Flamarion's suggestion, "a number of "historians and sociologists have examined" the issue, in some cases "only superficially," and that he approached the phenomenon in *Colonial Slavery* based on ten primary sources and the same number of thinkers. In that work, he refuted the universality and extrapolation of productivity in slave fields and, in particular, Passos Guimarães's proposal in the 1960s in *Quatro séculos de latifúndio*, that captives were part *slave* and part *peasant/serf* because they controlled serf fields.[53] In *Colonial Slavery*, he argued that the practice was transplanted to Brazil by the Portuguese from São Tomé Island in the fifteenth century, applied in an "extremely irregular manner in the area of sugar production, where plots or free time were not granted to captives during the harvest, with workdays of up to "eighteen hours" and "very occasional" "rest days." [54] That *generosity* was greater in cotton and coffee plantations, perhaps due to the lesser demands of the "productive process" compared to those required for sugar production. In coffee plantations, the documents demonstrate that enslaved person "nourishment" was provided "essentially by the plantations and the planters' own fields." Slave fields were merely an ancillary resource.

The Right to Rest

Gorender admits that, "in ancient slavery," the practice might have been an initiative "favorable to the master," undertaken by the captives themselves – even if it constituted a regression – regarding the "right to rest on holidays," by forcing the "slave to work even on days reserved for rest in order to provide a part of the production necessary for self-subsistence," thus increasing the "level of exploitation of labor."[55] The phenomenon organically linked the practice to "the structure of the colonial slave mode of production," constituting a "single" system, and not two of them. A similar integration took place during feudalism between labor for the lord in seigneurial lands and labor for the slaves in their own fields. "Granting a plot of land to the slave" was an "*inessential and conditional* variant form of a segment of the natural economy, which could be entirely absent or constitute only a part of that segment."[56]

Admitting that captives made efforts to broaden the "autonomous space that the usufruct of the small plot of land provided," Gorender emphasized the extreme exploitation of captives in sugar production, with workdays that made "autonomous slave farming extremely limited and precarious."[57] He reminds us that the right to servile peculium, which was common in Antiquity, was belated and limited in Brazil. He rejects the benign interpretations of slavery and observes that, under slavery in the Americas, "the vast majority of agricultural slaves were subjected to merciless exploitation with no other prospect than death under slavery."[58]

Fourth Edition

In 1985, in the definitive fourth edition of *Colonial Slavery*, he revised and expanded "about ten percent" of the work. He observed in an interview that the revision reaffirmed and enriched the presentation of the work's "structure" and essential "theses." In the "Preface to the fourth edition," he observes that the topics expanded were "slave labor and the high cost of supervision," "slave plantations and technical progress," the "characteristics of the African slave trade," "patriarchal and ancient slavery," the "law of the slave population," "manumission," the "treatment

of slaves," "farmers and the evolution of the land rent," "slavery in Minas Gerais," "slavery and industrialization," "small slave owners," and "slavery" in coffee plantations.[59]

He refers to the influence, "in the last twenty years," "of US historiographical currents" in Brazil, in particular the neo-patriarchal interpretation represented by the "former Marxist" E. Genovese, who, inspired on Freyre, portrayed "slaves in the Americas as the working class that was best treated, from a material standpoint, in the world at the time." In a national historiographical context in which the "renewal of Gilberto Freyre's influence was dominant," especially through US historiography, it was "not surprising that we arrived at the centennial of Abolition" "with the vindication of Brazilian slavery." In 1990, he developed this proposal in his work *A escravidão reabilitada*.[60]

The Peasant Gap

In 1987, in *Escravo ou camponês? O proto-campesino negro nas Américas* (Enslaved person or Peasant? The Black Proto-Peasant in the Americas), Flamarion returned to the "peasant gap" in a biting response to Gorender's critique four years earlier.[61] In *Escravo ou camponês?*, he described Gorender's reply as full of historiographical "errors" resulting from a "monolithic" and "classificatory" view of history, "in the way of old Marxist manuals," in reference to the manuals by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, translated by Gorender in the 1960s. [62]

The book, with repercussions in the academy, is divided into three parts. In the first part, he presents, explains, and corrects the author's view of colonial slavery. In the next parts, he undertakes a general defense of the *peasant gap* as a "structural" phenomenon of the *mercantile orientation* in Brazil and in the slaveholding Americas in general. [63] Flamarion proposes that the same occurred in the Southern United States and in the British, French, and Spanish Caribbean, based primarily on travelers' narratives, colonial treatises, and a few historiographical works with an optimist view of the phenomenon and the conditions of enslaved people.

Regarding North Carolina, he writes: "In addition to what they produced in their own plots of lands, slaves were abundantly fed with foodstuffs produced by Pettigrez's plantations: fish, meat, rice, corn, wheat flour, and occasionally fruits." [64] Regarding Virginia: "Many […] avoided the extra work and lived only on what was provided for them. The food provided was so abundant that the slaves traded some of it, buying whisky on Sundays from poor white people in the surroundings, which they drank in secret […]."[65]

The situation in the cotton-growing South was presumably identical: "[…] there too, slaves were well fed and owned plots of land, chickens and pigpens, whose production they sold (purchasing wheat flour among other things), together with the animals they hunted."[66] Overvaluing the productivity and mercantile orientation of the slaves' "autonomous economy" without providing documentary evidence, he proposes: "That which was produced on the plots […], raising animals, and in extractive activities was usually sold; with the money obtained, the slaves purchased clothes, tobacco, textiles, and other objects (jewelry [sic], toys for their children, fishhooks, kitchen utensils, etc.)."[67]

Tiny Plots

This scenario contradicts the author's own acknowledgment that the plots occasionally granted were tiny – "they were not large" –, usually measuring two *ares per capita* in the French Caribbean. Forty square meters! In the British Caribbean, the miniscule plots measured from 25 to 30 square feet. About 80 square meters![68] Small plots and limited *free* time materially constrained the possible slave production; as a result, generalizing singular cases is arbitrary and distorts the phenomenon's description.

The author cites enslaved people who bequeathed "up to 200 sterling pounds!" and reaffirms that, "thanks to their commercial activities, […] they owned as much as 20% of the currency in circulation." "[…] in Saint-Domingue, Negroes held considerable economic power."[69] He insists on the extremely high productivity of the plots: "In one case, one and a half hectares, cultivated by three men and three women, yielded an average of twenty francs per day! The average annual profit […] of an individual plot was estimated" at "between 200 and 800 francs."[70]

This optimistic view of production was accomplished by joining activities and products from various micro-plots, using commas that imply the additive preposition "and," instead of the alternative conjunction "or." "Slaves planted cassava, bananas, potatoes, yams, various vegetables, fruit trees in their plots. They raised chickens, rabbits, pigs, goats, and sometimes even cows and horses […]. They also created crafts, cut wood, *and* made coal, collected fodder for sale, fished, etc."[71] Contradicting himself anew, he recalls that "Tomich reasonably points out the danger of exaggerating: only a few slaves were truly prosperous; many lived under extreme hardship; there were also those who refused to continue working during free hours and free days or could not bear to do so, preferring to receive their food from their masters." [72]

No Advancements Made

Without broadening the empirical material, citing materials used in *Colonial Slavery*, the rebuttal reaffirms and radicalizes his prior proposal, without refuting Gorender's critique. Regarding Brazil, the few cases cited of miniscule land grants are mainly in the context of the sugar economy and religious estates. These cases generally reaffirm the nonsystemic nature of that practice. In 1700, Bengi documented that "*some* masters" allowed "one day" to the enslaved people to produce foodstuffs. In 1711, Antonil stated that "*some* masters" allowed their enslaved people "one day per week to plant for themselves." In the late eighteenth century, Vilhena reaffirmed the nonsystemic nature of that practice, and in the middle of the following century, in Vassouras, estate owners "recommended" adopting that policy as a way of reducing slave resistance.[73]

In the case of Brazil, the plots are not overestimated, admitting Schwartz's proposal that enslaved people in the Santana plantation "were able to produce a tradeable surplus" and "directly participate in the market economy [sic] and accumulate capital [sic]"![74] In some cases, on the contrary, the documentations points to the exceptionality of the practice. Eurípedes Funes found documentary evidence that slave plots in Goiás were present in less than 10% of the estates – i.e. they were absent in 90% of them.[75]

Generalizing the Singular

Based on deficient sources that often contradict his proposals, and without discussing the rebuttals presented, Flamarion proposes that the phenomenon was "an increasingly entrenched and widespread custom," "indispensable" in Brazilian slavery. Inverting the objective reality, he proposes that those occasions when "masters preferred and imposed the food allowance system" were "individual cases" and "variable momentary contexts"![76] Flamarion and the advocates of the high productivity, the mercantile character, and the generalization of the *peasant gap* never explained why the enslavers did not distribute the land among the enslaved people, but merely leased it, reiterating the slavery-feudalism transition, exploiting the high productivity of the "peasant gap."

A transition that presumably allowed greater *peace in the slave quarters*, reducing expenses with security and reproduction of the slave workforce. And, if toward the end of slavery the allowance of plots for the enslaved people had grown, why was there no enslaved person mobilization

to gain control over them after Abolition in Brazil? Why did enslaved people abandon the plantations, seeking freedom in the cities, wage relations in the countryside, etc., instead of fighting to control the *innumerable* slave farms?[77] Subsequent research on colonial slavery in Brazil reaffirmed the nonsystemic nature of slave plots, their limited productivity, and their orientation mainly to satisfy subsistence needs. In 1978, in *Colonial Slavery*, Gorender proposed: "In the slave regime, the slaves' own economy was never indispensable – it was always supplementary and conditional."[78]

No One Is Innocent

A escravidão reabilitada (1990) was a forceful response to the critiques of Gorender's interpretation of colonial slavery, which had reached their climax, and which he characterized as a "rehabilitation" of slavery and a refinement of Freyre's patriarchal theses. Reminding his readers that "historiographical work is never innocent," Gorender pointed to the ideological and social roots of the strong social-democratic slant" of that revisionism: "[…] if it were possible and viable to reconcile master and slave classes […] it would be much more possible and viable to reconcile capitalists and wage laborers."[79] In 1990, we witnessed the climax of the historical victory of the world counterrevolution, the dissolution of the USSR and the proletarian states of Eastern Europe, etc., which swept away the historical achievements of the labor world, with a liberal/conservative reconstruction of the world

Gorender's firm critique emerged at a time when the social forces that drove the irrational tendencies in the social sciences became fully entrenched. That context provided the conditions for the formation of an academic opposition front against the author and his interpretation, at a time when research studies on the social world and slavery receded.[80] As a paradigmatic example of that regression, S. Chalhoub, in his review of *Escravidão reabilitada*, attempted to put an end to the epistemological/social transcendence of the debate on slavery, stating that he did not understand "why" Gorender believed that it was of such "transcendental importance."

Slavery Conspiracy

That author accuses Gorender of suffering from the "classificatory monomania" of "Machado de Assis's alienist doctor," "who, with his scientific experiments, terrified the residents of the town of Itaguaí." In Gorender's case, the victims were those "historians who dared write of the history of slavery and abolition," attacked by Gorender with the "broad and terrifying" method of the alienist/alienated. *A escravidão reabilitada* was presumably the product of an author who believed he was "the victim of a conspiracy contrived in the revisionist ranks." He accuses Gorender of basing his "procedures of historiographical critique in *tricks* and *pillage*" and of having no scientific and ethical authority, for he "never" undertook "a lengthy historic research in the archives of Brazilian slavery, limiting himself […] to reading a few printed documents [sic] and books by travelers." In the review, he hardly refers to the book reviewed.

In the long and arid social context characterized by the proposals of the *end of history*, the debates on the multiplicity of modes of production ceased, anathematizing the proposal of a tendential understanding of the past. Historiography moved on to examine more pleasant and less conflicting issues – private life, culture, mentalities, customs, etc., especially of the so-called elites. The next decade, slavery was reduced to a topic of the past, unrelated to an all-encompassing interpretation of the phenomena examined, in the context of the dominion of proposals of agreements and consensuses between the enslaved and their enslavers. After the 1990s, the bibliographies of theses and dissertations on Brazilian slavery rarely included *Colonial*

Slavery, in an obvious attempt to demonstrate that the fracture that had occurred in the universe of dominant representations in the distant year of 1978 had finally been overcome.

Notes

1 We would like to thank the reading by the linguist Florence Carboni. Synthesis of "O Escravismo Colonial: A revolução Copernicana de Jacob Gorender. A Gênese, o Reconhecimento, a Deslegitimação". Cadernos IHU, 13 Mar 2005. http://www.ihu.unisinos.br/images/stories/cadernos/ihu/013cadernosihu.pdf
2 TOLEDO, Caio N. de. "Notas sobre Jacob Gorender: o engajamento intelectual." SEMINÁRIOS, 2, SP, Arquivo do Estado/Imprensa Oficial do Estado, 05/2003; MAESTRI, Mário. "Da Europa, o olhar crítico sobre o Brasil". (Interview with J. Gorender). DIÁRIO DO SUL. Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul. 10 Sep 1987; idem on 12 Jul 2003; DIAS, Giocondo. *A vida de um revolucionário: meio século de história política no Brasil*. 2nd ed. Rio de Janeiro: Agir, 1993.
3 GORENDER, J. "Correntes sociológicas no Brasil." ESTUDOS SOCIAIS, n. 3–4, Rio de Janeiro, 1958; "A questão Hegel." Idem, n. 8, 1960; "Contradições do desenvolvimento econômico no Brasil." PROBLEMAS DA PAZ E DO SOCIALISMO, n. 2, Rio de Janeiro, 1963; CARVALHO, Apolônio. *Vale a pena sonhar.* 2nd ed. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1997; ACADEMIA DE CIÊNCIAS DA URSS. *Manual de economia política*. Rio de Janeiro: Vitória, 1961. p. 770.
4 GORENDER. *O Escravismo Colonial*. São Paulo: Ática, 1978.
5 LAPA, J. R. do A. [Org.] *Modos de Produção e realidade brasileira*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1980. p. 11.
6 Cf. GUIMARÃES, A.P. *Quatro séculos de latifúndio.* 3rd ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, n.d. p. 110.
7 Cf. for example: PRADO JÚNIOR, C. *A revolução brasileira*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1966. REIS FILHO, D.A. & SÁ, J. F. de. [Org.] *Imagens da revolução: documentos políticos das organizações clandestinas de esquerda dos anos 1961–1971*. Rio de Janeiro: Marco Zero, 1985. pp. 89–117.
8 GORENDER. O conceito de modo de produção e a pesquisa histórica. LAPA [Org.] *Modos [...]*. Ob.cit. p. 45.
9 Cf. FREYRE. *Casa grande & senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime de economia patriarcal*. 14th ed. Rio de Janeiro: José Olímpio, 1969. 2 v.
10 Cf. for example: FERNANDES, Fl. *Mudanças sociais no Brasil*. São Paulo: Difel, 1960; CARDOSO, F.H. *Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil Meridional: o negro na sociedade escravocrata do Rio Grande do Sul*. São Paulo: Difel, 1962.
11 Cf. GORENDER. Questionamentos sobre a teoria econômica do escravismo colonial. ESTUDOS ECONÔMICOS, Instituto de Pesquisas Econômicas, IPE, São Paulo, 13[1], Jan–Apr1983, p. 16; Cf. CARDOSO, C. F. S. El modo de producción esclavista colonial en América. *Assadourian. Modos de [...]*. Ob.cit.
12 Cf. MAESTI. "Filhos de Cam, filhos de cão: o trabalhador escravizado na historiografia brasileira." ALMEIDA, L.S. *O negro no Brasil: estudos em homenagem a Clóvis Moura*. Maceió: EdUFAl, 2003. pp. 23–112; PÉRET. *O quilombo de Palmares.* Org M. Maestri and R. Ponge. Porto Alegre: EdUFRGS, 2002; MOURA, Clóvis. *Rebeliões na senzala: quilombos, insurreições, guerrilhas*. São Paulo: Zumbi, 1959; COSTA, E.V. da. *Da senzala à colônia*. 2nd ed. São Paulo: Ciências Humanas, 1982; STEIN, J. S. [1957] *Grandeza e decadência do café no vale do Paraíba*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1961.
13 Cf., among others: SOFRI, G. *O modo de produção asiático*. [1969]. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1977. ASSADOURIAN, C.S. et al. *Modos de producción en América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1973.
14 Cf. GENOVESE, *Économie politique de l'esclavage.* [1965]; Paris: François Maspero, 1968; id.ib. p. 20.
15 Cf. MAESTRI. *Breve história da escravidão.* Porto Alegre: Mercado Aberto, 1988.
16 Cf. GORENDER. *O Escravismo Colonial*. Ob.cit. pp. 1–30
17 Cf. Id.ib. pp. 37–98.
18 Cf. Id.ib. pp. 45–370.
19 Cf. TOLEDO. Ob.cit.
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26 Id. O conceito de modo de produção e a pesquisa histórica. Ob.cit.; GORENDER, Jacob. *A escravidão reabilitada.* Ob.cit.
27 LAPA. Introdução ao redimensionamento do debate. Id. *Modos de produção […].* Ob.cit. p. 15.
28 Id.ib. pp. 10 and 3.
29 Cf. GORENDER. *Gênese […].* Ob.cit
30 Id. O conceito de modo de produção [...]. Ob.cit. p. 64.
31 Id.ib. p. 52.
32 CASTRO. A Economia Política, o Capitalismo e a escravidão. LAPA. *Modos […].* Ob.cit. pp. 67–107.
33 Id.ib. p. 92.
34 Id.ib.. p. 94.
35 Id.ib. p. 105.
36 Id.ib. p. 98.
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63 Id.ib. pp. 97, 109.
64 Id.ib. p. 63
65 Id.ib. p. 64.
66 Id.ib. p. 65
67 Id.ib. p. 66.
68 Id.ib. p. 69
69 Id.ib. p. 75, 81.
70 Id.ib. p. 84
71 Id.ib. p. 83 [highlight]
72 Id.ib. p. 84.
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74 Id.ib. p. 109.
75 Id.ib. p. 102.
76 Id.ib. p. 110.
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80 Cf. CHALHOUB, S. Gorender põe etiquetas nos historiadores. *Jornal Folha de Sao Paulo*, 24 Nov 1990.

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PART I

Fundamental Categories

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1

COLONIAL SLAVERY

A Historically New Mode of Production

The first problem encountered by scholars of colonial slavery is undoubtedly the confrontation between the Portuguese, who arrived in the territory that is today known as Brazil in the sixteenth century, and the indigenous tribes that had inhabited that same territory since time immemorial. With the conquest in 1500 and the subsequent colonization, two heterogeneous social formations came face-to-face: the European conquerors and the autochthonous tribes. The former came from a feudal Portuguese-Iberian society, a pioneer of mercantilism and one of the most advanced in Western Europe at the time, while the inhabitants of the territory to be conquered constituted a tribal and primitive communist society with a nomadic way of life, inferior to the newcomers in terms of the stage of development of their productive forces.

This confrontation between two societies with such different modes of production raises the issue of the various possible outcomes when inhabited territories are conquered. This issue, which does not arise in cases when conquerors and the conquered are economically and socially similar, entails various alternatives. When Marx stated that all conquests have three possible outcomes, he was actually only considering confrontations between different societies, as can be surmised from the following:

> The conquerors subjugate the conquered according to their own mode of production (e.g. the English in Ireland, and to a certain extent in India, in this century); or they leave the old mode of production intact and content themselves with a extracting a tribute (e.g. Turks and Romans); or a reciprocal interaction takes places whereby something new, a synthesis, arises (the Germanic conquests, in part).[1]

If we examine what happened with the Portuguese conquest of the Brazilian territory, we observe that none of the three possibilities outlined above came about. The feudal mode of production, predominant in Portugal at the time was not transferred to the conquered country. Nor did the Portuguese allow the mode of production of the indigenous tribes to subsist in the areas they successively subjugated. The remaining hypothesis is that of a synthesis. The mode of production resulting from the conquest – colonial slavery – cannot be considered a synthesis of the preexisting modes of production in Portugal and Brazil. At the time when Brazil was colonized, enslaved people were employed in the Portuguese economy, but their employment was of a subsidiary, complementary nature. Of course, I am referring to

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mainland Portugal, not to the Atlantic islands, since, like Brazil, the latter were conquered and colonized. In mainland Portugal, the employment of enslaved people was no doubt a relevant symptom of the country's current situation, rather than the fundamental tendency of the development of Portugal's social formation. Despite the several-century lag resulting from its feudal relations of production, aggravated by the overseas expansion itself, the tendency was toward capitalist transformation. As for indigenous people in Brazil, there is no evidence that they were even in the process of evolving toward slavery.

The conclusion is therefore that, in the case of Brazil, the colonial slave mode of production cannot be explained as a synthesis of preexisting modes of production. Its emergence cannot be explained by unilateral notions of evolutionism or cultural diffusion. This is not to say that colonial slavery was an arbitrary invention independent of any historical conditioning. On the contrary, colonial slavery emerged and developed in the context of a socioeconomic determinism rigorously defined in time and space. It was precisely from this determinism of complex factors that colonial slavery emerged as a mode of production with *new* characteristics previously unknown in human history. It did not constitute a repetition or a return to ancient slavery, as a "regular" step forward from primitive communism, nor did it result from a synthesis of the trends inherent to the formation of sixteenth-century Portuguese society and indigenous tribes. A study of the dynamics of the colonial slave mode of production, as will be undertaken in Part Three of this book, shall demonstrate what has been stated from the outset – namely, that it was an *historically new mode of production*, which is the only possible conclusion one can arrive at once the study reveals specific laws that differ from those of other modes of production.

In fact, after describing the three possible outcomes resulting from conquests, Marx posited a situation that implicitly leads to a fourth possibility. In this regard, which incidentally involves slave work, he wrote:

> To steal a slave is to steal the instrument of production directly. But then the production of the country for which the slave is stolen must be structured in such a way as to allow slave labor, or (as in South America, etc.) a mode of production corresponding to slavery must be created.[2]

Indeed, in South America, and more precisely in Brazil, a new mode of production was *created*, which, when recognized in its profound implications, corroborates modern lines of research and of systematic generalization of historical materialism.

However, such recognition has been hampered and even prevented by some statements by Marx himself, which are worth elaborating on. One of those statements, most likely in reference to the United States, is found in the *Grundrisse*:

> *Negro slavery* – a purely industrial slavery – which is, besides, incompatible with the development of bourgeois society and disappears with it, *presupposes* wage labor, and if other, free states with wage labor did not exist alongside it, then all social conditions of slaveholding states would immediately acquire pre-civilized forms.[3]

This is compounded by another statement also from the *Grundrisse*, in the *Formen* section:

> The fact that we now not only call the plantation owners in America capitalists, but that they *are* capitalists, is based on their existence as anomalies within a world market based on free labor.[4]

In the first excerpt, bourgeois society is considered a preexisting condition for modern slavery, without implying that the two are the same. As for modern slavery itself, Marx describes it as "purely industrial," thus differentiating it from ancient patriarchal slavery. The second excerpt is much more categorical. Although not explicitly stated, a literal interpretation of the text leads us to conclude that the mode of production of plantations in the Americas – which employed enslaved people – was capitalist, since their owners are considered capitalists. But this classification discursively appeals to the notion of *anomaly*, with the argument that it is part of the capitalist world market. Social anomalies are not inconceivable – independently of value judgments – and one example of them can be found in the Jesuit missions in the River Plate area. However, I believe that we cannot classify as anomalous a mode of production that was dominant for centuries, that extended over vast territories, that mobilized tens of millions of human beings, and that served as the basis for the organization of stable and unique social formations. The thesis that slavery in the Americas was an anomalous form of capitalism (or an *aberration*, as other historians later claimed) reflects an immature understanding of the problem, which Marx undoubtedly shared when he developed the preliminary reflections for *Capital*, without the intention of publishing them. In *Capital*, the thesis about the anomaly is entirely absent, and the author's approach to the issue of American slavery translates into a very different and opposite conceptualization. Marx's ideas about slavery had reached a stage of maturity that manifests itself consistently in the text of *Capital*, as well as in the unpublished Chapter Six, of which the author left only a draft.[5]

I believe that it is futile to sacralize every period and comma in the Marxist classics, which leads us to reject the mere possibility of contradictions between passages of writings from different periods, as if the classics were exempt from treading the laborious meanders of theoretical elaboration, in which hypotheses and errors are part of the process of the acquisition of truth. In that respect, I agree with Gramsci's admonition that one should make the distinction between the works published under the author's direct responsibility and others that are preparatory material not intended for publication or that only came to light posthumously.[6] When texts are contradictory, it is obvious that the requirement of authenticity, from the standpoint of the author's conclusive thought, belongs to the text published under his or her unequivocal responsibility. I do add the caveat, however, that from our perspective as readers, the texts are measured for what they are, regardless of whether they were destined for publication. The *Grundrisse*'s relevance is not invalidated or diminished by the fact that it consists of drafts meant for the author's personal use. I therefore believe that it is legitimate to prefer a formulation from the *Grundrisse* than one from *Capital*, especially since very important portions of the preparatory material were not fully elaborated in Marx's work published during his lifetime. Strictly for what it says and for the scientific criteria themselves, and not in response to arguments of authority or philological authenticity, I believe that, regarding the issue of slavery in the Americas, the thesis of its capitalist nature, *anomalous or not*, is unacceptable. I would also add, by way of reinforcement, that Marx himself demonstrated the unacceptability of that thesis in his writings on the topic in his main works.

If we fail to deeply engage with the political economy of the colonial slave mode of production, we will fall prey to the seduction of logics founded on analogies between common characteristics of different historical phenomena. Analogies can be useful and justifiable, but they require the utmost caution, especially when they appear as an easy recourse that spares us from further engaging with the analysis and discursive work. It is tempting to equate colonial slavery with capitalism, but doing so leads to a blind alley. Equally tempting is to equate it to ancient slavery. It is to this latter temptation that Genovese succumbed when he wrote that the slave systems of the Americas should be understood as an *essentially* archaic mode of production,

so it is not surprising that the historian should take refuge in the inchoate idea of a "specific paradox."[7] Because of its scale, slavery in the Americas appeared to be a resurgence of ancient Mediterranean slavery, especially Roman. Indeed, both share the common trait of slave work as the dominant type of exploitation of labor. But their structure and dynamics were different, so much so that imperial Roman society found it impossible to evolve from archaic patriarchal slavery to modern mercantile slavery. For the moment, I offer only a succinct summary of the argument, leaving its systematic examination for later in this work.

I also note, for further elaboration in due time, that in Genovese's comparative history study, precisely because he failed to examine the specific laws of the mode of production, he found it theoretically difficult to admit the specificity of colonial slavery. This difficulty was compounded by a confusion between the categories of mode of production and social formation, which did not allow him to differentiate the essential determination of the colonial slave mode of production, identical wherever it existed, from the assimilation of elements that are peculiar to the respective metropolises by the superstructure of slave formations in each country where they existed. Those superstructural elements are important for a multilateral characterization of slaveholding classes in the various countries and the respective systems of class alliance in the metropolises. The greatest merit of Genovese's study therefore lies in his justified emphasis on the need to research these differentiating elements. What is unacceptable is to consider them a defining criterion of the mode of production *per se*.

⋆⋆⋆

As previously mentioned, this work aims to study colonial slavery at the categorical/systematic level of historical knowledge. Instead of a chronological examination, we will analyze categories and the relations between them, i.e., the structure and dynamics of the system considered in its organic totality. This analysis will lead us to the mode of production as the most universal synthesis possible and, based on it, to the slave social formation in Brazil as a nationally characterized historical reality. Although the slave social formation had unique characteristics in Brazil, the dominant mode of production, in its conceptual concreteness as a reflection of empirical concreteness, corresponded to the same historical category that existed in all slave-owning countries in the Americas. It would not be overly pretentious to say that few countries besides Brazil offer the factual elements necessary to understand that category, since it was there that colonial slavery lasted the longest and had the greatest number of major determinations.

Notes

1 Marx, Karl. *Introducción* …, v. 1, p. 18.
2 Ibidem, p. 18–19.
3 Idem. Elementos fundamentales para la crítica de la economía política, v. 1, p. 159.
4 Ibidem, p. 476.
5 Marx, Karl. *El capital*, Book One – Chapter VI (Unpublished).
6 Cf. Gramsci, Antonio. *Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce.*
7 Cf. Genovese, Eugéne D. The American Slave Systems in World Perspective. In: Genovese, Eugéne D. *The World the Slaveholders Made*, p. 22 and 26.

2

THE CATEGORY OF SLAVERY

Property and Personal Subjection

Slavery is a social category that in and of itself does not indicate a mode of production. As domestic slavery – the only form under which it existed among several peoples – its function is unproductive. Even when it has a productive function, slavery can arise more or less accidentally and merely be an accessory to different relations of production. Nevertheless, when it manifests itself as a fundamental and stable type of relations of production, slavery gives rise not to one, but to two different modes of production: *patriarchal* slavery, characterized by a predominantly natural economy, and *colonial* slavery, oriented toward the production of marketable goods. It should be noted that servitude and wage labor by themselves do not imply univocal socioeconomic situations.

Focusing on its generic aspect, as it manifests itself in all the cases mentioned, it is worth asking what characterizes slavery as a sociological category.

The most essential characteristic of enslaved people is their condition as *property* of another human being. Let us briefly follow Aristotle's line of reasoning. Production, he says, requires instruments, some of which are animate and others, inanimate. All laborers are necessary animate instruments because inanimate instruments do not move spontaneously (shuttles do not weave cloth by themselves). The enslaved, a living instrument like every laborer, is also "living property." The notion of property implies being subjected to someone *extraneous*: the slave is subjected to the master to whom he belongs. Aristotle continues:

> Property is a word that should be understood as one understands the word part: a thing that is a part is not only included in the whole, but also wholly belongs to something other than itself. Likewise with property: the master is only the master of the slave, he does not belong to him; the slave, on the contrary, is not only the slave of his master, but wholly belongs to him.[1]

There is therefore an asymmetric relationship, meaning that the property is always subjected to the owner, and never the other way around.

If the notion of property necessarily implies *personal subjection*, it would make sense to point to the latter as the most essential characteristic of slavery. This is precisely what we see in Montesquieu's definition:

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> Slavery, properly so called, is the establishment of a right that gives to one man such a power over another as renders him absolute master of his life and fortune.[2]

Aristotle and Montesquieu said the same thing, merely emphasizing different aspects – ownership and personal subjection, respectively. From a genetic standpoint, personal subjection precedes property. Once slavery has been officialized, personal subjection arises from property. With regard to the slave, property and personal subjection do not always appear in an absolute manner, but always tend toward it.

With this caveat, Brion Davis's synthesis can be accepted and employed:

> In general, it has been said that the slave has three defining characteristics: his person is the property of another man, his will is subject to his owner's authority, and his labor or services are obtained through coercion.[3]

Being someone else's property (and its correlate of personal subjection) is the *primary* attribute of a enslaved person. This primary attribute gives rise to two *derived* attributes: perpetuity and heredity. Slaves are enslaved for life and their social condition is passed on to their children. Under Roman law and the slave regimes inspired by it, hereditary transmission of the servile condition was matrilineal, according to the principle of *partus sequitur ventrem* [the offspring follows the womb].

Slavery acquires its *complete* form when the primary attribute is accompanied by the derived attributes. However, there were forms of slavery in which the primary attribute – being personal property – was not accompanied by the derived attributes of perpetuity and heredity. I call these forms of slavery, which came to an end after a certain period and/or were not passed on to the next generation, *incomplete* forms of slavery.

The above apparently applies to European slavery, which, in the *Formen*, Marx distinguished from "general slavery of the Orient."[4] In its Asian form, individuals who never become owners, but only possessors, are property themselves, *slaves* of that which embodies the community's unity (that is, the despotic state), and "here slavery neither suspends the conditions of labor nor modifies the essential relation" (as it does in its ancient and Germanic forms).[5]

Marx did not examine the issue further, and it would be pertinent to wonder whether the concept of *general slavery* is theoretically justified in the context of historical materialism. Charles Parain, for example, makes use of the concept, distinguishing "general slavery" from "slavery proper." The former is presumably manifested in the conscription of laborers by the state to carry out public interest works, as is common in the Asian mode of production. In the latter, we have slaves as private property, purchased, sustained, and exploited by a private entrepreneur.[6] The author is forced to employ the artifice of calling the Western form of slavery "slavery proper," implicitly admitting the inadequacy of the concept of general slavery. If, as I believe, the debate on the Asian mode of production not only frees that category from geographic constraints, but also leads us to recognize the specificity of its relations of production, we should at least cast doubt on its identification as some form of slavery.

An examination of Marx's text demonstrates that it contains a precise elaboration with a *positive* characterization of Western slavery, contrary to the so-called general slavery. For that reason, I propose the hypothesis that the unelaborated reference to the concept of general slavery in Marx was a reminiscence from Hegel's philosophy of history, according to which Asians had not reached an awareness of the fact that men are free, knowing only that *one man* is free.[7] That *one man* was obviously the despot, who represented the sovereignty of the state. Before Hegel, Montesquieu also spoke of the "political slavery" typical of despotic countries.[8] Hence, the concept of "general slavery," which in Marx was only a mere reminiscence and was not further developed.

Thing and Person

In their condition as property, slaves are *things*, *objective* goods. Going back to Aristotle, we consider our property that which is *outside of us* and belongs to us. Our body, our intellectual skills, our *subjectivity* do not fit in the concept of *our* property. But a slave, being property, also has a body, intellectual skills, subjectivity – he is, in short, a human being. Does a slave cease to be a human being by becoming property, by becoming an object?

This question speaks to a contradiction that is inherent to the slave condition, ever since if emerged and was established in a certain social class. In his excellent historiographical work, Brion Davis endeavored to demonstrate how this contradiction permeates Western culture and deeply pervades the various ideologies that dealt with the institution of slavery.[9] But I believe that it is fundamental and indispensable to emphasize – which Brion Davis did not – that the contradiction inherent to the enslaved, between being a thing and being human, was not primarily expressed and developed in culture, in ideologies. The contradiction was primarily expressed and developed by the slaves themselves, as concrete individuals, because, while society turned them into things, it never succeeded in stripping them of at least the last trace of humanity. Before customs, morals, the law, and philosophy recognized the contradiction and attempted to solve it positively in favor of legitimizing slavery, reconciling the terms thing and person, the slaves themselves externalized their antagonistic condition by reacting to being treated as things.

Once slavery surpassed its embryonic and more or less accidental phase in pre-modern communities, acquiring defined and institutionalized contours in societies already divided into classes, slave owners tended to see the enslaved as *working animals*, as *instrumentum vocale*, a self-moving asset. *Ecclesiasticus* compares slaves to asses,[10] and Aristotle wrote that oxen serve as slaves for the poor.[11] When addressing the murder of someone else's slave, the Roman Lex Aquilia equated the slave to four-legged livestock for the purposes of a lawsuit to compensate the aggrieved owner.[12] The Portuguese Ordinances – Manueline and Philippine – combined under a single clause the right to reject both slaves and beasts due to illness or lameness when deceitfully sold.[13]

That is why it was common practice to brand slaves with hot iron like cattle. Black people were first branded in Africa before embarking, and again in Brazil, up to the end of slavery. In the nineteenth century, newspaper advertisements described the marks engraved on the flesh of fugitive slaves, usually with the owner's initials. This continued happening even after the prohibition of punishment by hot iron branding by the 1824 Imperial Constitution. It was no doubt inspired on Brazilian customs that, in the seventeenth century, Nassau proposed branding slaves sold on credit by the West India Company in order to curb buyer fraud.[14]

The oppressed may come to see themselves as their oppressor sees them. Slaves could come to view their condition as an owned animal as natural and proper. An extreme case of this can be seen in Tollenare's account. In Pernambuco, an enemy's slaves were killed for revenge, as their cattle were killed. A plantation owner who incurred the wrath of residents expelled from the lands they occupied ordered a Black man to accompany the French visitor in his walks. The Black man did not dare go near the town where the hostile residents lived, with the justification: "What would my master say if those people killed me?"[15]

Similar extreme cases were possible, but were not characteristic of the behavior of slaves at all times. Their behavior and awareness transcended their condition as an owned object in their relationship with their master and with free men in general. And they did so above all through criminal acts. The first *human* act of a slave is a *crime*, ranging from rising against their master to fleeing captivity. On the other hand, by acknowledging slaves' *penal* responsibility, the slave-owning society recognized them as human: in addition to including them in the law as

things, they also subjected them to penal law. Of course, this kind of knowledge came at a high price. Enslaved people always suffered the harshest and most degrading forms of punishment. Mutilations were not only allowed by Roman law, but also by the Portuguese Philippine Code and several penal legislations of American colonies at one time or another, including in Brazil.[16] But the cruelest punishment, precisely because it was a punishment, implied acknowledging that the individual being punished was a human being.

Slaves obtained recognition both as *subjects* of a crime and as *objects* of a crime. Their lives had to be protected, at least according to the letter of the law, and were thereby judged as *personal* assets and not only for their objective quality as a self-moving thing. The evolution of Roman law is revealing in this respect. During the Republic, Roman masters had control over slaves' lives and could torture and kill them with impunity at their discretion (*jus vitae et necis*[17]). The first emperor, Augustus, established limits to the punishment of slaves and personally repudiated the death of a slave at the hands of his master. The right to life and death was contested by Seneca, with whom Stoicism took the form of a slave owner's ideology. During the reign of Antoninus Pius, Imperial law considered the unjustified killing of one's own slave as a crime of homicide, just as killing another man's slave was already considered as such by the Lex Cornelia. Slaves also gained the right to demand a change of master in case of maltreatment. Imperial law prohibited sending slaves to the arena to combat wild beasts.[18]

For the Hebrews, the Mosaic Law established: "Whoever shall injure their male or female slave with a rod, leading to their death, will be accused of a crime. But if the slave survives a day or two, no penalty shall be applied, since the slave is their property." In the case of serious physical offenses (blinding the slave or breaking a tooth), Hebraic Law obliged the owner to free the slave.[19]

From the standpoint of the slaveholding ideology, few ancient authors were as aware of the contradiction between free men and slaves as Aristotle. Unlike the stoics, he did not relativize the legitimacy of the institution of slavery. On the contrary, he sought to include it in a harmonious political doctrine. To do so, he declared that slaves were inferior *by nature*, destined to obey and serve, and that by obeying the master's orders they shared with him a common interest and reciprocal friendship. But slaves were also dangerous. They conspired and concocted public calamities, as the experience of the Greek states demonstrated. "If there is a point that requires laborious solicitude, it is undoubtedly the conduct that must be maintained in relation to slaves," warned Aristotle. It was advisable to employ slaves only from a foreign nation and devoid of courage, to ensure that their labor could be obtained without fear of revolt. The philosopher concluded: "We shall later discuss how slaves should be treated and why freedom should always be presented to them as a reward for their work."[20]

The promise was not fulfilled in *Politics*, but in Book One of *Economics*. After expounding on a number of rules that involved reciprocal duties between masters and slaves, and not just for the latter, Aristotle justified his previous proposal:

> In short, it is always necessary to establish an end to slaves' work: it is fair and advantageous, in fact, to place freedom before them as the price for their sorrows, because slaves willingly accept fatigue when they have a reward in sight and their time of bondage is limited.[21]

As we will see in Chapter 17, the practice of manumission is present in all slave regimes, but always partially and subject to restrictions and conditions. The proposal of the norm of general and compulsory emancipation can only have arisen in response to concerns regarding latent threats inherent to the reality of slavery.

If we turn to modern slavery, we see a change that is characteristic of the law in North American British colonies. Brion Davis summarizes it thus:

> Until well into the eighteenth century, it was no crime in South Carolina for an owner to kill or mutilate his slave in the ordinary course of chastisement. Until 1788, the laws of Virginia assumed that since no master could destroy part of his estate with malice prepense, the killing of a slave was not felonious. In 1740, South Carolina ruled that a man who willfully murdered his own or someone else's slave should pay a fine of seven hundred pounds; the amount was cut in half for killing a slave in the sudden heat of passion. Yet the Georgia constitution of 1798 put the killing or maiming of a slave on the same level of criminality as the killing or maiming of a white man. In 1821, South Carolina prescribed death for the deliberate and willful murder of a slave, and six months imprisonment and a fine of five hundred dollars for killing one in the sudden heat of passion.[22]

Toward the end of slavery in Brazil, and with a reformist position opposed to it, Perdigão Malheiro summed up the legal theory regarding slaves as things and as people in classical terms:

> In criminal law, the slave, as *subject* of a crime or its agent is a human being, a man, equal in nature to other free men who are his fellows. He therefore responds personally and directly for the crimes he commits; a fact that was never at issue. That differs, however, from his status as an *object* or victim of a crime. Whatever evil he may suffer does not constitute a crime of *damage*, but a *physical offense*, to be punished as such, although the offender is obliged to compensate the owner; in this latter case, the issue is one of *property*, while in the former it is one of personality.[23]

As we can see, the law regarding slavery underwent changes that limited the master's authority and at least implicitly recognized a certain human condition of slaves. Those changes, however, did not alter the objective economic laws of the slave mode of production. The greater the mercantile character of a slave economy – which was especially the case in the colonies in the Americas – the stronger the tendency to treat slaves as objects. The legal changes that limited this tendency could only be very relatively enforced in isolated agricultural dominions, where the master's supremacy over slaves had no practical limits. Prevented by law from denouncing the master or testifying against him, without support from the public opinion of free men, slaves were in fact prey to the master's will.

As Brion Davis observes, the laws that punished crimes by masters against slaves were rarely enforced in the United States. According to Kenneth Stampp, few free men were executed for murdering slaves, and in almost all cases, the victims were other people's slaves. The all-White courts, which only heard White witnesses, skirted the laws with all sorts of mitigating circumstances and sentenced the defendant to pay a fine at the most.[24]

Although Portugal's and Brazil's positive law never recognized the right to life and death over slaves, masters and overseers who murdered slaves enjoyed full impunity in colonial Brazil. In the nineteenth century, if a crime was denounced to a judicial authority, the authority would collude with the criminal and attribute the slave's death to an accident or suicide. In the second half of the nineteenth century, as observed in José Alípio Goulart's research, some officials initiated criminal proceedings, but these ended up archived or left the wrongdoers unpunished. One exceptional episode occurred in 1861, when the São Paulo plantation owner Antônio Pereira Cardoso murdered fifteen slaves and later committed suicide in his house when he was on the verge of arrest.[25]

Slaves, on the other hand, when they were not privately chastised and were taken to court, received the full weight of the law and, in both Brazil and the United States, many saw their life end at the gallows. Excluding those who were sentenced to death for participating in collective rebellions, suffice it to mention that, according to J. A. Goulart, in a "normal" year like 1839, twenty-two slaves were hanged, the vast majority for murdering (or injuring) masters and overseers. They were tried under the draconian law of June 10, 1835, enacted after the most recent Muslim Yoruba (Malê) insurrection in the city of Salvador. In 1854, fourteen slaves were sentenced to death.[26]

Enslaved People and Labor

It was undoubtedly no coincidence that two high literary and ideological traditions of two very different peoples arrived at an identical formula regarding the "normal" treatment afforded to slaves. It is probable that, without depending on influences said to exist between Jews and Greeks, the formula constituted the height of wisdom derived from the experience of Mediterranean slavery, and for that reason appeared with the same words in *Ecclesiasticus* and the Aristotelian treatise on economic issues. "For the slave, bread, correction, and labor," recommended the Biblical book.[27] This does not differ from the teachings of the great Greek thinker: "Three things must be considered regarding slaves: labor, punishment, and food."[28] The terms are the same, only the order is inverted, which does not modify their meaning. Note that "correction" (translated from the Latin word *disciplina*) in *Ecclesiasticus* has an analogous meaning to "punishment" in the Aristotelian text. Biblical wisdom in fact called for severity, contrasting with the philosopher's indulgence, since it ordered: "To evil slaves, torture and iron."[29]

Such a perfect coincidence between two authorities accepted by Catholic thought – the first one "revealed" and the second "rational" – inspired the Jesuit Jorge Benci when systematizing the work with which he intended to orient slave owners' behavior in the early-eighteenth century in Brazil.[30] It should be noted, in fact, that ancient Mediterranean wisdom regarding slavery was not foreign to the common sense of plantation owners in Pernambuco. The Portuguese – wrote Joanes de Laet – have the following saying: "Whoever wants to get the most out of their Negroes must feed them, make them work well, and beat them better; otherwise, no service or advantage whatsoever shall be obtained."[31] As we can see, the three terms of the old formula are present, with a Luso-tropical emphasis on punishment.

Let us examine two terms of the formula: *labor* and *punishment*. We will speak elsewhere of *food*. The terms labor and punishment are inseparable from the slave system. Slaves are visceral enemies of labor, since labor represents their unilateral condition as owned things, as animate instruments. Slaves' reaction to labor is the reaction of their humanity to objectification. Slaves express their most embryonic and indefinite revolt in the form of passive resistance to work for their master. To the latter, this is seen as innate vice or indolence. Hence, the constant threat of punishment and its exemplary execution at the master's discretion became indispensable. One characteristic of all slave regimes in all nations is the master's *private* right to physically punish his slaves. This right must necessarily be private and applicable in ordinary day-to-day life without the intervention of a public authority, for otherwise the smooth operation of the slave economy would be inevitably hindered.

This *natural* association between labor and physical punishment was well understood by Thomas Davatz, the Swiss colonist who lived in a coffee plantation in São Paulo in the mid-nineteenth century. Without painting with too thick a brush – using it moderately, in fact – he wrote:

> In any case, the fate of these Negroes is unfortunate. They know that they are dispossessed, and this must make the beatings and other ill-treatment they suffer even more bitter […]. It is also important to bear in mind that many Negroes stop working

> well if they are not conveniently beaten. If we were to overlook the first iniquity to which they are subjected, that is, their forced introduction and submission, we would be compelled to consider the punishments administered by their masters as well deserved.[32]

In other words, strictly from the slave-owner's viewpoint, punishing slaves was necessary and fair.

In the everyday dealings with slaves through generations, facing a wide variety of reactions that included passive resistance to labor, escapes, attacks, and insurrections, the slaveholding class developed a "wise" understanding of punishment, expressed in the condensed forms of its ideology. This understanding advised that punishment should be *moderate*. *Ecclesiasticus* warned: "Be not excessive toward any; and without discretion do nothing."[33] Roman Imperial law prohibited cruel punishment.[34] The *Philippine Ordinances* authorized the punishment of slaves and other dependents, but punished excesses such as wounding with weapons.[35] The Portuguese Crown expressed concern on several occasions in royal charters and resolutions with the observance of moderation in the punishments applied to slaves in Brazil.[36] Such a concern was not foreign to the Spanish Crown either, which was much more meticulous in its resolutions.[37] All this notwithstanding, the master's private right to punish slaves always prevailed. Moderation in punishment could be exercised or not, depending on average not so much on the master's temper but on the objective demands of the slave economy.

In any case, we should not assume that slave owners had any interest in rendering their slaves useless, who were, after all – as the Bible said – their property. In most cases, masters knew how to measure punishments, distinguishing those that were necessary to maintain daily labor to the cruelest exemplary kinds aimed at terrorizing the mass of slaves. For that reason, as Koster noted in Pernambuco:

> Corporal punishments are resorted to (…), and though great cruelties are not often committed, still the mode of punishment produces much suffering, much misery, much degradation.[38]

Slave Labor and the High Cost of Supervision

Managing slave labor was therefore unimaginable without overseers and drivers armed with whips. This led to an inherent characteristic of the slave economy: *the high cost of supervision*.

It is worth clarifying what this means. Any collective work requires a certain amount of centralized management. This management is a necessity of the labor process itself, but it is also a form of *productive* work, whether exercised by the community chief in pre-modern social forms or by a capitalist acting as production manager. The same is not true of the management required exclusively for the supervision of exploited workers as they carry out their tasks. This type of management does not derive from the intrinsic demands of the collective labor process and consequently does not have a productive character. It is only an unproductive expense, whose necessity stems solely from the antagonistic nature of production relations. In a slave regime, this necessity acquires is most extreme expression in the form of overseers of slave gangs. Marx writes in this regard:

> …this work of supervision necessarily arises in all modes of production that are based on an opposition between the worker as direct producer and the proprietor of the means of production. The greater this opposition, the greater the role that this work of supervision plays. It therefore reaches its high point in the slave system.[39]

The high cost of supervision has a structural nature in slave production. Even though it is a false production expense, it is indispensable. It is a fixed expense that must be included in the final cost. It is not a matter of expenses relative to the state's repressive apparatus, which is financed through taxes, but of private expenses. The particularities of supervision and its high cost in slave regimes differentiate it from the cost of supervision in other modes of production.

In slave modes of production – whether patriarchal or colonial – the cost of supervision aimed at maximizing the efficiency of the work force, preventing slave escapes, capturing fugitives and punishing them. The cost of supervision includes the loss of days not worked by fugitive slaves, which could add up to months or even years. Let us first examine the issue from the perspective of escapes.

In Ancient Rome, the large number of slave escapes led to the emergence of professional catchers, the *fugitivarii*.[40] When the colonial slave mode of production developed in the Americans, it made use of the Roman experience. In the Southern United States, hunting fugitive slaves became a professional activity financed by slave owners. Slave hunters' equipment included horses, fierce dogs, weapons, and chains. In addition to professional catchers, plantation owners organized patrols composed of regular citizens who walked the country roads at night and captured slaves without permits from their masters. In Cuba, professional catchers called *rancheadores* also used fierce dogs trained to hunt slaves. In Saint-Domingue, a special troop to hunt fugitive slaves was created, called *marechausée*.

In Brazil, destroying large marron communities (called *quilombos*) required organizing costly expeditions that placed a heavy financial burden on the population, which was obliged to pay extraordinary fees. The category *homens do mato* (literally "men of the backwoods") was created, regulated with special laws and with its own hierarchy: soldier, private, captain, sergeant major, commander. Anyone with the rank of captain (*capitão do mato*) or higher had to obtain a patent from the government. This rank was bestowed not only on White men, but also on free Black men and even slaves. In fact, in Cuba too, slaves actively hunted their fugitive cohorts. In Jamaica, maroons led by Cudjoe after the 1738 Peace Treaty with the British governor diligently pursued fugitive slaves and destroyed maroon communities. The *capitães do mato* – as the category became known in Brazil – charged the owners of the recovered slave the *cost of capture*, which varied depending on the distance covered and other circumstances and could also include the legal cost of incarceration. In the state of Minas Gerais, with the decline of mining, the slave owners from Vila Rica and Mariana twice requested – in 1759 and 1783 – a reduction in the cost of capture, without success. In the nineteenth century, following the creation of the printing press, the cost of capture increased with the inclusion of a new item: the price of newspaper advertisements. The fact that those ads described fugitive slaves according to the brands inscribed on their bodies with hot iron or scars and other injuries resulting from punishment did not disturb the moral code of the time or embarrassed the owners. In the short story "Pai contra mãe" (Father against Mother) included in the anthology *Relíquias da casa velha* (Relics of an Old House), Machado de Assis made a masterful description of a professional hunter off fugitive slaves based in Rio de Janeiro, who obtained information from newspaper advertisements. While they were indispensable to the slave regime, slave hunters also posed a problem, since they often kept the captured slaves longer than allowed and exploited them to their own advantage, stole them to extort capture payments or other rewards, and illegally detained slaves with travel permits and even free Black people.[41]

Lashing required employing a slave specialized in applying this habitual form of punishment and resulted in lost workdays, since the punished enslaved was at least temporarily disabled. The "Regimento de Feitor-Mor" (Regulations for the Head Overseer), dating from the mid-seventeenth century, stipulated that, after being "well whipped," enslaved should be cut with a razor or knife; the wounds should be rubbed with salt, lime juice, and urine; and the slave should be

kept "a few days in chains." In larger towns during the colonial period, lashing was performed in public in the pillory square. This practice continued in Brazil after independence. The owners would take their slaves to be punished with imprisonment and lashing at a police station for a certain fee. Debret described and drew a scene of a line of slaves at a square in Rio de Janeiro, awaiting their turn to be tied to the pillory and publicly lashed.[42]

Let us now examine the issue from the standpoint of the productive process. To ensure that the slaves performed as expected, it was necessary to employ overseers and drivers to supervise and punish them immediately in case of negligence. These overseers and drivers were not agents of production; they represented an expense, whether they were slaves or paid laborers.

Using a broadened model of transaction costs, Fenoaltea argued that the cost of supervision was adequate for rural slaves, whose work was characterized by brute force instead of skill. Being poor workers due to their lack of skills and disinterest, the more they were threatened with punishment, they more they should produce. High levels of anxiety did not hinder performance, but rather increased it. This was not the case with qualified slaves, whose work required skill and therefore could not me made more efficient with strict supervision and greater anxiety. Craftsmen's performance should increase with rewards for productivity and the promise of emancipation. But rural slaves, Fenoaltea underscored, predominated in slave regimes.[43]

Regarding Brazilian slavery in the last decade of its historical trajectory, Louis Couty noted that more drivers were needed to supervise 300 slaves in a coffee plantation than supervisors for 1200 free laborers: "hence a new and important difference in the labor cost."[44]

If for the sake of reasoning we were to accept this conclusion by the French professor, we could say that the cost of supervision under slavery has a specific weight of, *grosso modo*, at least four times as much as in capitalism. This is so because, in slavery, laborers' opposition to the exploiter manifests itself, more than in any other mode of production, as an *opposition to labor itself*.

In his renowned pages on the dialectic between master and slave, Hegel did not undertake the task of a historian or researcher of concrete social regimes, but an analysis of the stage of consciousness on the path to acquiring *Absolute Knowledge*, where *Subject and Object, Thought and Being*, identify with each other. Let us not embark on a reproduction of the meanders of Hegelian phenomenology and instead highlight only the moment when the slave's consciousness of himself goes from servitude to self-sufficiency thanks to two consecutive and interrelated experiences: fear and labor. After trembling helplessly before the absolute master, the slave's consciousness conquers self-sufficiency through labor, reaching an awareness of being-in-itself and for-itself. While the master only enjoys the product of labor, consuming it but not creating it, the enslaved on the contrary establishes an essential relationship with the object of his work:

> In contrast, work is desire *held in check*, it is vanishing *staved off*, or: *work cultivates and educates*. The negative relation to the object becomes the *form* of the object; it becomes something that endures because it is just for the laborer himself that the object has self-sufficiency. This negative mediating middle, this formative *doing*, is at the same time *singularity*, or the pure being-for-itself of consciousness, which in the work external to it now enters into the element of lasting. Thus, by those means, the working consciousness comes to an intuition of self-sufficient being as *its own self*.[45]

No philosopher of Classical Antiquity could have written an apology to work, especially in Hegel's terms, as a synthesis of man's own humanization. For them, work debased human beings; it was not worthy of free men and could never dignify slaves. A dignifying understanding of work was only developed in classical bourgeois political economy, which discovers in it the substance of value. This scientific discovery had a decisive influence on Hegel and explains the

terms in which he established the dialectic between master and slave. In the latter, the working humanity that gives form to nature, that dominates it, establishing an essential relationship with it, incarnated abstractly. There is no need to highlight the importance of this thesis for Marxism.

Yet Hegel – as Sanchez Vasquez observes – viewed society indistinctly through a bourgeois lens, obscuring the existence of antagonistic classes and the class struggle. He saw work as objectification and not as an *alienated* objectification.[46]

However, if we turn to real history, to the *real* enslaved person, the dialectic appears to be the opposite of Hegel's thesis. Because real slaves only conquered an awareness of themselves as human beings by *rejecting* work, which constituted their most spontaneous expression of *repudiation* of the master and of their own condition as slaves. Humanity was created by means of work, and through it, it conceived itself as human – therein lies the truth of Hegelian phenomenology. But slaves were only able to recover their own *personal* humanity by rejecting work. That was the concrete dialectic at a certain moment of social development.

Types of Slave Laborers

The antagonism between slaves and labor produced peculiar effects. Considered as a whole, especially in agricultural settings, slaves were deficient workers, capable of performing only simple tasks requiring unqualified brute force. Their possibilities of technical progress – with rare exceptions – were extremely limited. In Brazil, in fact, Imperial law forbid even elementary education for slaves, equating them to those who suffered contagious diseases. The same was established by provincial legislations, such as the one from Rio Grande do Sul.[47] Unlike free laborers, slaves as a class were therefore incapable of technically advancing collectively. On the other hand, slaves lived as *irresponsible consumers*. Their food was always the same, whether they worked well or poorly. The incentive of a wage per unit – which is peculiar to capitalism – did not exist for slaves. Free workers are masters of their own consumption once they receive their wages. They can waste their salary on alcohol or use it carefully for a useful purpose. No matter how they use it, that fact generates in them a sense of individual responsibility, which is extremely important from the standpoint of the development of class consciousness. In the slave's case, their personal consumption does not belong to them, but to their master.[48]

We shall now briefly examine the types of employment and social existence of slaves. Slavery developed in predominantly agricultural societies. The vast majority of slaves were therefore destined to work and live in agricultural establishments. Rural slaves were the predominant and, from an economic standpoint, fundamental type.

Slaves' employment in mining was practically identical to their employment in agricultural activities. In general, it was even more devastating.

In cities, slaves' fate was less harsh and their employment was more diverse. In Ancient Athens and Rome, they worked together in workshops and produced handcrafted goods. In Brazil, master artisans usually employed skilled – and therefore more expensive – slaves. A common form of work for urban slaves in both Greco-Roman and modern slavery was employment under their own initiative and without strict supervision. As a result, we find slaves working in workshops of their own or established by their master, doing small business on the streets, and performing manual services hired by third parties. In Brazil, these slaves were called *negros de ganho* ("Negroes for profit") and had a special relationship with their master, handing over a fixed amount of money per day or per week and keeping the rest for their own sustenance. Unlike slaves in rural slave houses, we can consider these slaves to be *lessees* of their own bodies, since the latter were sellable objects that belonged to their master.

Two limited *concessions* appear here: partial freedom of movement and the slave's individual property. Many urban slaves enjoyed a certain freedom of movement denied to rural slaves. With the owner's permission, they could even live in their own home. However, the *Philippine Ordinances* forbid it, under penalty of 20 lashes for the enslaved and a fine for the owner who allowed it.[49] Regarding slaves' individual property, the general rule was to deny it. Everything the enslaved earned belonged to their master. Slaves could have nothing of their own, everything derived from their work belonged to their master: that was a principle from Roman law incorporated into modern slavery. Nonetheless, Roman law formally allowed the institution of *peculium*, that is, a slave's individual property with the master's explicit or implicit consent. In the slave legislation applied in Brazil, *peculium* was not legally instituted until very late, in 1871, with the enactment of the Free Womb Law.[50] But customary praxis admitted slave's individual property early on, through an agreement with the master, as was the case with *negros de ganho*, through donation or inheritance, or through the usufruct of plots of land granted in agricultural establishments.[51]

Finally, *domestic slaves* always constituted a special category at the personal service of the owner's family in both rural and urban residences, whether in Asia, in Ancient Greece and Rome, or in American colonies. The original meaning of *family* in Ancient Rome was precisely the set of domestic servants – *famuli* – living in the same house. These included those who performed crude and sordid manual services all the way to richly attired luxury slaves that composed the master's ostentatious retinue when he left home. It was a form of ostentation that became common not only among Roman masters, but also among Luso-Brazilian ones. Unlike modern colonial slavery, however, Roman slavery included individuals with a high cultural level. For that reason, while in Brazil slaves performed almost exclusively manual tasks, moving up, at most, to perform supervision functions and very exceptionally to administer an agricultural establishment, in Roman homes they often served as butlers, teachers, doctors, artists, librarians, secretaries, copyists, etc.[52]

As we can see, the slave's social existence had a much broader range of possibilities in Ancient Rome than in the Americas, although those possibilities did also exist in the latter. Those differences established a certain hierarchy within the slave class itself, with a few privileged slaves who enjoyed certain benefits in the context of their servile condition, thus standing out from the large mass of slaves crushed by extenuating labor. As Max Weber writes:

> Historically, we find all imaginable transitions from almost total mobility to complete regimentation in barracks under the master's exploitation.[53]

Enslaved People as Property

Slaves were commodities like any other commodity, subject to identical relations of buying and selling, and therefore freely alienable. Slavery implied a mechanism for commercialization that included importing slaves, public markets, and private sales. Slaves were not *entailed* personal property, but alienable property at the owner's will. Slave families therefore were not legally recognized even if married by the Church, as was the case in Brazil. Husband and wife, parents and children could be legally separated and sold to different masters. It was only during the decline of the Roman Empire that the law started to forbid separating the members of a slave family.[54]

As freely alienable property, slaves were the object of all sorts of transactions in the context of commercial relations. Therefore, given the owners' right of ownership over them, wrote Perdigão Malheiro, masters can put their slaves up for rent, lend them out, sell them, donate them, transfer them through inheritance or bequest, pawn them or put a lien on them, offer

them in usufruct, and exercise, in short, all legitimate rights as full owner or proprietor. As property, slaves were also subject to being kidnapped, confiscated or arrested, used as collateral, deposited, auctioned off, allotted, applying to them all the terms relative to their condition as property, without further considerations.[55]

In colonial times in Brazil, slaves could be the object of life insurance *in favor of their master.* Anonymous Author, who studied the economy of the district of Salvador in the late-eighteenth century, included the payment of life insurance among the normal expenses relative to slave property.[56] Imperial law regulated those operations, for which a number of companies were created.[57] It is very telling that insurance companies were not held responsible when the slave's death was the result of maltreatment by the owners themselves.[58]

The only case of entailment was as mortgage lien, also covered by Imperial law in Brazil. Rural slaves, like animals, could be mortgaged as accessories to certain real estate properties. The children of slaves born during the course of the mortgage had the same fate as their mothers, like animal offspring.[59] Evidently, this type of entailment derived from the commercial and alienable nature of slave property. However, for the sake of maintaining the integrity and continuity of operations in agricultural establishments, at various moments the slave laws of a number of colonies allowed slaves to be bound to the land, extending to them the character of *real estate*. In another chapter, I will examine the issue of the right to protection from seizure enjoyed by plantation owners in Brazil, which included slaves. In other colonies, laws restricted or prohibited the alienation of slaves of productive establishments separately from them, in cases of debt collection or inheritance. Hence, the existence of so-called "field slaves" in English, French, and Dutch colonies. Brion Davis believes that such vagueness in the status of slaves as self-moving assets resulted from economic but also humanitarian reasons. He points out, however, that nowhere in the Americas were slaves bound to the land as *colonists* or in any other way that limited the owner's freedom to do as he liked with the enslaved and to alienate him.[60] Therefore, whether in mortgage contracts or in laws that established conditional bonds, nothing likens the slave's situation to that of the serf.

Subjected to the norm of perpetuity, slavery for the individual only ended with death. Nonetheless, this attribute of full slavery coexisted with written or unwritten laws of manumission. The most common fate of slaves was the perpetuity of their status. Nonetheless, in all slave-holding countries, both ancient and modern, there were an increasing number of freed slaves subordinated to a special condition that rendered them inferior to men who were born free.

According to the principle of *partus sequitur ventrem*, the children of slaves remained enslaved for their entire life, inheriting their mother's status and belonging to her master. As a result, in addition to capture, birth was one of the habitual and established sources of slavery. In Portuguese legislation, this principle was always applied and was formally reiterated in the charter of March 10, 1682, in the law of June 6, 1755, and in the charter of March 16, 1773.[61] The analogy between slaves and domestic animals continued here. The children of slave mothers constituted *fruits* of property, just like the offspring of irrational animals. In Brazil, it was in fact common to call the children of slaves *crias* (offspring), an expression that made its way to legal language, as observed in the law of April 26, 1864, and its regulations of April the following year.[62]

Slavery, Serfdom, and Wage Labor

That which we call *slavery* and *slave* was called by Ancient Romans *servitus* and *servus*. After the decline of Ancient Rome, four centuries of upheaval followed, from which emerged the European medieval world with a society molded by feudalism. Ancient slaves, which the Romans called *servus*, no longer existed, except in a residual manner, especially as domestic slaves, in the Mediterranean

basin or here and there in isolated nuclei. In most of the territories that belonged to the now extinct Western Roman Empire, they were substituted by a new social category of exploited workers – peasants bound to the land and subjected to the feudal lord. In several modern languages, however, those peasants and their condition were denominated with terms directly derived from the Latin word *servus*: in English, *serf* and *serfdom*; in French, *serf* and *servitude* or *servage*; in Italian, *servo* and *servitú* or *servaggio*; in Spanish, *siervo* and *servidumbre*; in Portuguese, *servo* and *servidão*. In none of those languages did there exist terms that corresponded to slave or slavery.

This confusion between two social categories was not only linguistic, but also appeared in legal theory. Medieval jurists transplanted the norms of Roman slave law and applied them to feudal serfs, including the absolute authority of the master and their free alienability as self-moving and venal property. Legal theory did not reflect, however, the new social category of serf and its concrete economic relations.

According to Charles Verlinden, the term *sclavus* was employed by the Germans during a certain period in the tenth and eleventh centuries, applied to captives of Slavic origin brought from Eastern Europe. *Sclavus* (*Sklave* in German) therefore denoted foreign captives of Slavic origin, thus distinguishing them from *servus*, of German origin. The new term died off with the end of the traffic of Slavic captives sold in Germany. However, when in the thirteenth century the Venetians and Genovese started to take to the Mediterranean basin a constant flow of captives from the Black Sea, the term *sclavus* was applied to them once again and became common in Italy. From there it traveled to other countries in the West, and was adopted in French and British texts to differentiate native serfs from foreign captives. This distinction, however, which at first conveyed only an ethnic difference, became a distinction between social categories, through a long and irregular process examined by Marc Bloch.

In the Iberian Peninsula, the terms *captivus* and *sarracenus* gradually substituted the term *servus*, a change that can be explained by the large number of Muslims captured during the Christian *Reconquista*. But the traffic of captives from Slavic countries also introduced the term *sclavus* into fourteenth-century Spain. In Portugal, it was in the fifteenth century that the new term *escravo* became common – significantly, observes Brion Davis, at a time when the traffic of Black captives was beginning to take shape. Here as well, the distinction of ethnic or racial origin acquired a social content.

The delay in the linguistic evolution relative to the social evolution was not devoid of a sociological cause. Servitude in the early Middle Ages, as Engels observed, still contained much of slavery.[63] Between ancient slaves and serfs, there was not only a historical succession, but also some similar characteristics, which explain the identical lexical designation and the efforts by jurists to transplant Roman slave law to the new reality of feudal serfdom. However, European feudalism transcended serfdom and, in fact, its period of greatest growth took place without it, with peasant villeins exempt from bondage and subjected to a softer form of serfdom, limited to the duties owed to the lord for the use of the land and a few other obligations according to their personal status. Although with similar roots, the distinction between feudalism and slavery became entirely clear.

In his examination of tenth-century documents on the territory where the Portuguese state would be established, Gama Barros faced the problem of different legal attributes assigned to the same term of *servus*. The term indicated the situation of both slaves and serfs, in its post-Roman connotation. How to determine the difference from the standpoint of social classification? The historian rightly adopted the criterion of defining serfs according to their bondage to the land:

> In most legal documents involving transfer of ownership, the property and the men who till it are understood as an undividable whole […]. An inextricable link between the serf and the land and its perpetual conservation in the same family – that is the form of bondage presented to us.[64]

Further down, he concludes with precision:

> But what accentuates the fact of bondage, differently from slavery, is the hereditary nature of the serf's bondage to the land; it is the perpetuity of possession in successive generations of the same family; it is, finally, the reciprocal relationship between the bonded serf and the land, so that neither the serf can abandon the land, nor can the land be taken from him.[65]

This essential difference between slavery and serfdom became perfectly clear in the theory of historical materialism, which defined them as relations of production inherent to strictly specific modes of production. In *Capital*, when examining labor rent, and referring to medieval serfs, Marx wrote:

> The direct producer, according to our assumption, is to be found here in possession of his own means of production, the necessary material labor conditions required for the realization of his labor and the production of his means of subsistence […]. Under such conditions the surplus labor for the nominal owner of the land can only be extorted from them by other than economic pressure, whatever the form assumed may be. *This differs from slave or plantation economy in that the slave works under alien conditions of production and not independently.*[66]

The possession of an independent economy with means of production of their own and managed autonomously distinguishes serfs from slaves. This should be taken into account when considering that Marx lumped together slavery and serfdom in the same era or general formation of humanity's social development. It is true that he did so in works that he did not publish, which constitute in fact a laboratory test. Nonetheless, let us examine the text for what it says, without any other considerations. Reflecting on the Russian commune (the *mir*), Marx considered it one of the various types of *primitive* formation of society. This type of formation he called archaic or primary. Elaborating on his reasoning, he stated:

> As […] the latest phase in the primitive formation of society, the agrarian commune […] is at the same time a phase in the transition to the *secondary* formation, and therefore in the transition from a society based on communal property to one based on private property. *The secondary formation does, of course, include the series of societies which rest upon slavery and serfdom.*[67]

What slavery and serfdom have in common is extra-economic coercion of the direct producer, although their concrete modalities differ. The category of secondary formation does not entertain social formations. It is, in my opinion, a category that enunciates something broader, that is, a *general* era of social development. Although slavery and serfdom represent essentially different relations of production, they have a common characteristic, which is why Marx included them in the same secondary formation.

In his draft of the *Formen*, Marx emphasized their common condition. In both of them, "one part of society is treated by another as a mere inorganic and natural condition of its own reproduction […]."[68] In both slavery and serfdom,

> …*the workers themselves*, the *living labor capacities* themselves, still belong *directly among the objective conditions of production*, and are appropriated as such – i.e. are slaves or serfs.[69]

Marx's analysis in *Formen* was the basis for the notion of secondary formation, developed much later in his work, whose social base is private property and which includes societies structured

around slavery and serfdom. In both of them, the workers' personal subjection transforms them, in the exploiter's eyes, into *natural* and *objective* elements of the process of production and reproduction, not unlike the land, with its arable areas, pastures, forests, rivers, etc.

The dissolution of primitive communities or of the primary formation (on whose multiplicity of forms Marx so emphatically insisted) can take place in the *immediate* direction of either slavery (as in the case of the Greeks and Romans) or serfdom (as in the case of the Germans). In both slavery and serfdom, exploitation of the direct producer takes place through *extra-economic coercion*, which places them under one single general type of personal subjection. However, when we examine the *concrete relations of production*, the economic structure and its laws, the difference between them is *substantial*.

For that reason, it seems to me that, in their essay on the *models* of historical development, I. Stuchevski and L. Vassiliev confused things by including slavery, serfdom, and the Asian community in the secondary formation, arguing that the difference between them is unessential. The authors assert that

> …similar productive forces in terms of their degree of development give rise to very similar relations of production in terms of their essence, based on an extra-economic system of exploitation of slaves, of serfs, or of peasants members of the independent agrarian community, partially or even formally free.[70]

It turns out, then, that the *economic* is treated as an accessory, while the *extra-economic* becomes essential to infer a similarity of relations of production between slavery, feudalism, and the Asian community (the latter, it should be noted, not based on the *private* property of the means of production). I do not believe that, from a Marxist methodological standpoint, it is correct to treat the economic as an accessory, nor is it possible, without incurring in an implicit logical/formal contradiction, to define the essence of the relations of production outside of the economic sphere.

We can move on now to a conceptual comparison between slavery and free wage labor. Marx not only excluded the latter from the secondary formation, but viewed it as contrary to it. One of the historical assumptions of the capitalist system is precisely that:

> …the worker can be found as a free worker, as objectless, purely subjective labor capacity confronting the objective conditions of production as his *not-property*, as *alien property*, as *value* for itself […].[71]

Wage workers, who are intrinsic to capitalism, are the first type of exploited worker in which the last remnants of personal appropriation by the exploiter disappear, and for that reason integrate the process of production as a *purely* subjective force. They possess their labor power – the set of their physical and mental energies – and "freely" sell it to capitalists like any other owner of commodities.

However, in order for the labor power to become a commodity, instead of the worker himself, it is indispensable for the latter to sell his labor power only for a short period at a time, recovering possession of it after the end of each contractual transaction with a given capitalist. Otherwise, Marx emphasized, the worker would become a slave:

> The continuance of this relation demands that the owner of the labor power should sell it only for a definite period, for if he were to sell it rump and stump, once for all, he would be selling himself, converting himself from a free man into a slave, from an owner of a commodity into a commodity.[72]

This was the first essential condition for a wage laborer to become a *free* man. We shall see in another chapter that this has nothing to do with the time limits established in some incomplete forms of slavery. The second essential condition is that the worker be *free* also of any alienable property other than his personal labor power. This marks the difference not between wage workers and slaves, but between the former and serfs, peasants in general, and artisans, who do not sell their labor power, but use it for themselves, applying it to the means of production they possess.

I will return to the comparison between wage workers and slaves later in this work, but it is important to say here that, having made a rigorous distinction between them, in other parts of his work Marx saw them in the same light. At times, he did so in an apparently metaphorical manner, as when he wrote that "slavery *sans phrase*" in the New World was necessary as a pedestal for "the disguised slavery of wage workers" in Europe. Or when he referred to "wage slaves" and soon afterward differentiated them from "real slaves." But the metaphor is more than a mere stylistic recourse, because what Marx is examining is the fact of *subjection*. In the case of slaves, subjection derives from *extra-economic* coercion, which gives it a *personal* character. In the case of free wage workers, it results from *economic coercion*, which gives it an *impersonal* character. No matter how much it appears to be the result of a freely consented contractual convention, wage labor that produces surplus is still in essence forced labor.[73]

In addition to Marx, one of his most outstanding ideological adversaries also recognized this. With cold "neutrality," Max Weber also discovered the reality of subjection underneath the appearance of wage workers' freedom:

> Rational capitalistic calculation is possible only on the basis of free labor; only where in consequence of the existence of workers who *in the formal sense voluntarily, but actually under the compulsion of the whip of hunger,* offer themselves, the costs of products may be unambiguously determined by agreement in advance.[74]

The "whip of hunger" is certainly a metaphor that well expresses the Marxist concept of *economic* coercion.

Finally, Marx drew a parallel between wage workers and slaves when studying the formation of the modern working class in the process of primitive accumulation of capital. The modern working class did not emerge in its finished state from a spontaneous mechanism of the economy; rather, it had to be "educated" through methods of brutal coercion sanctioned by the state. Peasants dispossessed by enclosures in England were removed from vagrancy on the roads and forced to work in exchange for pre-established wages, through the imposition of a draconian law that punished those who resisted with formal slavery, hot iron branding with the letters *S* (meaning "slave") or *R* (meaning "rogue"), incarceration, lashing, or the gallows. This law, current in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries but inaugurated in 1349 by the Statute of Labourers enacted by Edward III, was reproduced in France, Holland, Germany, and other European countries, as the process of primitive accumulation of capital advanced there as well.[75]

Emerging capital resorted to extraordinarily coercive and even slave-like legal measures because, as capital – wrote Mark in the *Grundrisse* –, it had not subsumed production, nor had wage work reached its ideal mode of existence.[76]

It was necessary for both capitalist production and workers to mature together in order for extra-economic coercion to become unnecessary. On one hand, education, tradition, and habit led to a *spontaneous* acceptance by workers of the demands of wage labor in the capitalist mode of production. On the other hand, its mechanism developed somewhat and broke all resistance by creating a relative overpopulation resulting from intensive technology that diminished the need for human labor. Then, and only then, in the ordinary course of things:

the laborer can be left to the "natural laws of production," i.e., to his dependence on capital, a dependence springing from, and guaranteed in perpetuity by, the conditions of production themselves.[77]

Notes

1 Aristotle. *Politique*, book I, chap. II, § 6, p. 14.
2 Montesquieu. *Do espírito das leis*, book XV, chap. I, p. 221.
3 Davis, David Brion. *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, p. 46.
4 Marx, Karl. Formas que preceden la producción capitalista. Op. Cit., v. 1, p. 457.
5 Ibidem, p. 453–454.
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7 Cf. Hegel, G. W. F. *The Philosophy of History*, p. 18.
8 Cf. Montesquieu. Op. cit., book XV, chap. I, p. 221.
9 Cf. Davis. Op. cit.
10 *Ecclesiasticus*, 33:25.
11 Cf. Aristóteles. Op. Cit., book I, chap. I, § 6, p. 5.
12 Cf. Gouveia, Maurílio de. *História da escravidão*, p. 17–18.
13 *Ordenações Manuelinas*. Book IV, title 16. *Ordenações ilipinas*, Book IV, title 17.
14 Cf. Ramos, Artur. Castigos de escravos. *RAM*, v. 47, p. 86–87 and 1010; Moraes, Evaristo de. *A campanha abolicionista (1879–1888)*, p. 218–219; Barléu, Gaspar. *História dos feitos recentemente praticados durante oito anos no Brasil*, p. 339; Documentos — negros escravos marcados com ferro em brasa, n. 4, p. 21.
15 Tollenare, Louis François de. Notas dominicais (Part relative to Pernambuco). *Jornal do Recife*, 1905, p. 100.
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19 *Exodus*, 21, 20–21, 26–27.
20 Aristotle. Op. Cit., p. 94 and 230, Book II, chap.VI, § 4; Book IV, chap. IX, § 9.
21 Idem. *Les économiques*. Book One, 1344b, 15, p. 26–27.
22 Davis. Op. Cit., p. 74.
23 Malheiro. Op. Cit., Part One, p. 28.
24 Stampp, Kenneth M. *La esclavitud en los Estados Unidos (The Peculiar Institution)*, p. 238–245. See also Degler, Carl N. *Nem preto nem branco: escravidão e relações raciais no Brasil e nos Estados Unidos*, p. 38–45.
25 Goulart, José Alípio. *Da palmatória ao patíbulo: crimes de escravos no Brasil*, p. 171–180. See also Motta Sobrinho, Alves. *A civilização do café: 1820–1920*, p. 49–52.
26 Goulart, José Alípio. *Da palmatória ao patíbulo*, p. 142–155. See also Queiroz, Suely Reis de. *Escravidão negra em São Paulo: um estudo das tensões provocadas pelo escravismo no século XIX*, p. 55–56; Stampp, Op. Cit., p. 231, 245–248.
27 *Ecclesiasticus 33:24*.
28 Aristóteles. Op. Cit., Book One, 1344a, 35, p. 25.
29 *Ecclesiasticus 33:25*.
30 Benci, Jorge. *Economia cristã dos senhores no governo dos escravos*, especially p. 31–32.
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33 *Ecclesiasticus* 33:30.
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35 *Ordenações filipinas*. Book V, title 36, § I.
36 See, for example, Cartas Régias [Royal Charters] from 20 March 1688, 23 February 1689, and 1 March 1700. In: Goulart, José Alípio. *Da palmatória ao patíbulo*, p. 186–187; Amaral, Luís. *História geral da agricultura brasileira no tríplice aspecto político-social-económico*, v. 1, p. 325–326.
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38 Koster, Henry. *Viagens ao Nordeste do Brasil*, p. 514.
39 Marx, Karl, *Das Kapital*, Book Three, p. 397.

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41 Cf. Goulart, José Alípio. *Da fuga ao suicídio: aspectos de rebeldia dos escravos no Brasil*, p. 69–123; Burlamaque, Frederico Leopoldo César, *Memória analítica acerca do comércio de escravos e acerca dos males da escravidão doméstica*, p. 82; Freyre, Gilberto, *O escravo nos anúncios de jornais brasileiros do xéculo XIX*; Eisenberg, Peter L. *Modernização sem mudança: a indústria açucareira em Pernambuco, 1840–1910*, p. 192; Guimarães, Carlos Magno, *Uma negação da ordem escravista: quilombos em Minas Gerais no século XVIII*, p. 41, 99, 106, 113, 118; Genovese, Eugéne D., *Da rebelião à revolução*, p. 73–75; Hall, Midlo, *Social Control in Slave Plantation Societies*. Op. Cit., p. 76–77.
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49 *Ordenações Filipinas*. Book Five. Title 70.
50 See Law 2040 of 28 September 1871, Art. 4., *CLIB*, 1871. See also Malheiro. Op. Cit., Part One, p. 50–60.
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3

THE PLANTATION FORM OF ORGANIZATION OF SLAVE PRODUCTION

> In all forms of society, there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination, which bathes all the other colors and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether that determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it.[1]

These words by Marx in the Introduction to *A Critique of Political Economy* apply to the plantation form. It was the *dominant* form of organization in colonial slavery. Slave work spread from there to other sectors of production and to social life in general. Non-plantation productive units were modeled according to the plantation form, and all economic forms, including non-slave ones, revolved around the plantation economy. Together with slavery, the plantation was a fundamental category of the colonial slave mode of production.

Main Traits of Slave Plantations

Leo Waibel's historical and conceptual analysis serves as a point of departure for this study. This does not imply my agreement with the German geographer's opinion regarding the capitalist nature of plantations, which "depended entirely on slave work."[2] The plantation form had different socioeconomic contents through history, but here the only and well-delimited objective is to examine slave plantations.

For that reason, I believe it would lead to confusion to understand slave plantations in terms of the types of haciendas and plantations systematized by Wolf and Mintz. Their analysis is applicable to socioeconomic entities from the first half of the twentieth century in a specific area (Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean). This does not mean, however, that as abstract constructions, they are heuristically effective when applied to social realities from a different historical period. Nor can the problem be resolved following Marvin Harris's proposal, which views colonial sugar plantations as a midpoint in a taxonomic continuum between the extremes of the hacienda and the plantation. It is precisely for the purpose of unambiguousness that I approach the slave plantation as a form of productive organization defined by its own historical determinations.[3]

From this standpoint, based on factual elements of the history of colonial slavery, I now examine the main traits of slave plantations.

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Specialization in the Production of Commercial Goods for the International Market

The colonial slave plantation is an economic organization directed to the market. Its main function does not consist of promoting immediate consumption of the items produced, but to supply the international market. It is the market that brings it to life and constitutes the basis for its existence. Founded on slave work, the mode of production organized together with the plantation does not provide an internal market with dimensions compatible with its large-scale specialized production.

Specialized agricultural production is synonymous to *monoculture*. But this characteristic should not be interpreted in an absolute manner, which would result in a unilateral understanding. Slave plantations contain a sector of natural economy, whose production is consumed within the productive unit itself and that, however secondary it might be relative to specialized commercial production, is nonetheless a *structural necessity*. This necessity is independent of the peculiarities of the metropolis or the colony, since we find it in Brazil, in the Antilles, and in the Southern United States. Ruled by laws that are specific to the mode of production, the correlation between the mercantile economy and the natural economy makes monoculture a *trend*, essential no doubt, but only fully accomplished in exceptional cases. Even in extreme cases of monoculture, which were always temporary, the natural economy remained as a *structural possibility*, brought into being as soon as a change in conditions demanded it. As a result, slave plantations never *fully* constituted a mercantile organization. There was always an internal duality that tended toward monoculture, its vital motivation, but was always in conflict with the limits of the natural economy.

Labor in Teams under a Unified Command

Plantations are establishments for large-scale production, with the family unit as a point of reference. In the context of their own value system, plantations could be small, medium, or large, but always larger than an agricultural family unit.

The workforce could therefore vary in size, performing the main tasks organized in teams (gangs, as they were called in English colonies), under the *sole* command of the plantation owner or the main overseer. With the exception of the tiny crops cultivated by the enslaved people – when allowed – there were no autonomous activities; all of them obeyed an *integral management* in time and space, from preparing the land to transporting the product for sale.

Thanks to the characteristics of *unified management*, *strict discipline*, and *integration of all tasks*, the plantation was an adequate form of economic organization for the employment of slave work, in which the autonomous initiative of the direct agent of labor was nonexistent. Plantations and slave labor could combine and expand as a single entity in colonial America.

It is evident that slave plantations differ radically from the form of organization typical of feudalism. In the latter, small, tributary, family units with their own autonomous and stable means of production constituted the basis of the system. When exploitation by the lord was also present – which only happened at certain moments and under certain circumstances – the serf's labor, imposed as corvée, was the same as the one performed in the family land. The organization of work and production in slave plantations was entirely different. The workers enjoyed no autonomy whatsoever, always forced to serve their owner and his means of production.

As Caio Prado Júnior emphasized four decades ago, this constituted a profound difference with enormous consequences:

> …it is not only a matter of large landed estates, which can be exploited in parcels through various forms of leasing or copyhold, as is the case to a greater or lesser extent in every country in Europe. This is not what happened in Brazil, but large estates *and* large-scale exploitation, which is not only not the same thing, but also entails entirely different consequences.[4]

A feudal character was attributed to slave plantations due to a number of commonalities with medieval manors: large agricultural estates, isolated villages, the will of the plantation or hacienda owner imposed as the law, the vitality of the rural world in the context of feeble urban development. Those aspects, when dissociated from the economic structure, which was entirely different in slavery and in feudalism, created an illusion that permeated part of the historiographical and sociological literature in Brazil.

Strait and Indispensable Conjunction of Farming and Complex Product Processing within the Same Establishment

Slave plantations – and plantations in general – are never a purely agricultural production unit, where product processing, when it exists, is limited to separating the grain from the chaff, basic drying, etc. Given the intrinsic peculiarities of the product, the scale of production, and its commercial destination, product processing in plantations requires special facilities and instruments and a complex and relatively difficult and time-consuming cycle of operations, without which the product cannot be elaborated, conserved, prepared, and advantageously transported to distant destinations. Sugar was the most typical and extreme case, since transforming sugarcane into sugar is not only a matter of processing, but of industrial transformation, performed in the plantation itself. Although processing other products is not as complex, it does involve diversifying the set of operations: in the case of cotton, cleaning the fiber, ginning, pressing, and bailing; in the case of tobacco, purging and curing, striping, flavoring, pressing, and rolling for bailing; in the case of coffee, drying, depulping, fermenting, and selecting the grains; in the case of indigo, successively infusing it in three different tanks, each one involving different operations.

However complex the process and however profuse the equipment involved, product processing is never substantial enough to prevail over strictly agricultural activities. This is evident in tobacco, cotton, and coffee plantations, where processing is limited to preparing the product as a raw material for further transformation outside of the establishment, where it will be conditioned for individual consumption. It is not as evident, however, in sugar plantations. In this case, what left the establishment was no longer an agricultural raw material, but the result of its industrial elaboration (sugar) ready for individual consumption, even in Brazil. This level industrial processing required expensive facilities and instruments, considerable resources, and extensive labor. Koster correctly observed, regarding sugar plantations: "It is a factory and a hacienda, both with equal tasks that must be performed together in accordance to the seasons."[5]

Nonetheless, the industrial sector of slave sugar plantations was not separate from them and was integrated in such a way that the agricultural aspect of the establishment prevailed. Unlike industrial processing, agricultural tasks were performed uninterruptedly the whole year and required the most labor. In addition, pre-modern processing methods were only able to extract half of the juice, with the other half of the raw matter going to waste.[6] It suffices to examine the largest sugar plantations in colonial Brazil, which produced from 150 to 250 tons of sugar per year, and compare them to today's factories, which commonly produce 60,000 tons per year. The term *engenho* (mill), in fact, was used to refer to the plantation as a whole, which included both sugarcane production and its industrial transformation.

Some authors posit that separating the mill from agricultural activity was the norm, so that the mill owner was only concerned with sugar production. According to Noel Deerr, while in English and French colonies the planter and the mill owner were the same person, in Brazil owners of *engenhos* were only exceptionally planters.[7] This belief is founded on information regarding a very short period of the seventeenth century, which includes the Dutch occupation of the Brazilian Northeast. However, with the exception of this period, mills were always part of the plantations, often receiving varying amounts of sugarcane from autonomous farmers as well.

Although significant, that contribution was usually less than half of the total sugarcane processed at the mill. Considering the relationship between mills and sugarcane farms, a parish priest in the Recôncavo region of Bahia correctly characterized the establishments that provided sugarcane as "separate farms that are part of the plantations."[8] In another part of the present work, we will see that separating the sugar mill from the sugarcane plantation could not be economically advantageous but, on the contrary, was impracticable due to the laws inherent to the colonial slave mode of production.

Quantitative and Qualitative Division of Labor

Slave plantations were economic units that integrated multiple tasks performed by teams of workers. The division of labor inside them was practiced in *quantitative* terms in the form of identical tasks performed by different consecutive teams or simultaneous teams in contiguous spaces. The quantitative division of labor involves simple cooperation between several workers performing the same task, one person at a time doing the same thing as the others (for example, transporting the cut sugarcane to the mill or the juice to the caldrons).

However, as establishments devoted to large-scale production, plantations already displayed an advanced division of labor relative to sixteenth-century European methods – a division that was not only quantitative, but also *qualitative*. First, the great division between agricultural activities and product processing. While agricultural activities involved only a rudimentary technical level, processing involved significant complexity in sugar mills, from crushing to boiling, purifying, draining, crystalizing, decolorizing, drying, pressing, and packing. In addition, the product had to be stored and transported to the port for export, activities that were also part of the plantation's centralized operation. Plantations also generally required other sectors within its borders: brickworks, sawmill, carpentry, construction work, blacksmith's workshop, furniture shop, etc. In order to power the mill and/or transport the product, oxen and horses were needed, as well as stables, pastureland, and men to tend to them.

As we can see, it was a *vertical* integration of different activities *within* the plantation itself, differently from what happens in a capitalist economy, where vertical integration takes place *outside* the companies as such, creating connections between firms with different owners or belonging to trust or conglomerate.

Finally, given the type of workforce used, the qualitative division of labor in slave plantations implied little individual specialization. With the exception of a few activities, performed by wage workers or not, enslaved people usually performed *interchangeable* functions. Depending on the establishment's demands at the moment, the same enslaved person could perform agricultural tasks, product processing, transportation, or work in any other sector requiring unqualified labor.

Peculiarities of Plantations

The association between the plantation form and certain agricultural products is not inevitable. Cotton, tobacco, and coffee can be grown by small farmers under favorable economic conditions, as was the case with the first two, even in Brazil under slavery.

Even sugarcane was grown in small farms when the end product was brown sugar or liquor. In those cases, small mills known as *engenhocas*, which required much smaller investments than full-blown mills, sufficed. Vilhena mentioned more than 500 *engenhocas* that produced brown sugar in Ceará, with an intense commercialization of that product in the internal market.[9] In fact, not only in Ceará, but in the entire Northeastern *sertão*, there were small mills that produced brown sugar and liquor since the eighteenth century, usually with twelve to fifteen enslaved people per

production unit. As Manuel Correia de Andrade writes, they constituted "a miniature version of the sugarcane civilization of the Mata region, at a distance from it in both space and time."[10] Even the poor were able to distill *cachaça*: they purchased the raw matter – molasses, a subproduct of the sugar-making process – and distilled it in simple, homemade alembics.[11]

While it was possible to make brown sugar or liquor with little equipment, combining moderate investments with a moderate consumption of raw matter, this was not the case with sugar. The latter required large investments and significant amounts of raw matter. The plantation form was therefore inevitable. In Bahia, where plantations were larger on average than in other regions, Father Fernão Cardim observed in the late sixteenth century that a minimum of sixty enslaved people were required to operate the plantation on a day-to-day basis, but most of them had from one to two hundred enslaved people. Two centuries later, Vilhena said that a plantation owner in the Recôncavo region of Bahia with less than eighty enslaved people was considered weak. In the early seventeenth century, a reputably sized plantation in Pernambuco had at least fifty enslaved people, according to Ambrósio Fernandes Brandão. In the early nineteenth century, sugar plantations in Pernambuco required an average of forty enslaved people, according to Koster.[12]

Regarding other agricultural products, we could say that the production *tended* toward the plantation form, sometimes fully incorporating it. That was the case especially with tobacco and cotton, which allowed large and small enterprises to coexist.

Processing tobacco was difficult, slow, and demanded a great deal of work, but the basic equipment was accessible to small farmers. In Bahia and Sergipe, the main tobacco-producing region, Vilhena estimated that there were 1500 "tobacco haciendas," both large and small, while sugar plantations in the same region totaled slightly over 400.[13] And Anonymous Author, writing a few years earlier, mentioned farmers who produced twenty tobacco bales, while others produced 200 or more (each bale weighing fourteen Portuguese *arrobas*[14]). Since the same economist calculated the average productivity per enslaved person at almost seven bales, we can conclude that the farmers who produced twenty bales had at least three enslaved people, while those who produced 200 had at least thirty enslaved people. As we can see, tobacco production included full-blown plantations as well as many small slave-owning farmers, whose family members also participated in the agricultural work, especially harvesting and drying the leaves. The hardest and dirtiest part of the processing work – twisting and flavoring – was done by enslaved people, in teams of at least three or four, according to Antonil.[15] Small farmers, however, found it difficult to process the product in a timely manner, which prompted Amorim Castro to suggest to the Portuguese government to create *casas públicas de enrola*, i.e., state-owned processing establishments.[16]

Smaller tobacco growers can be classified as hybrids between plantations and small family enterprises, but the large profits that could be derived, especially during the most intense phases of African slave trafficking, led to the consolidation of the plantation in its pure form.

Cotton production also led to the development of plantations and small enterprises. Tenant farmers and even enslaved people grew it on their own. According to Tollenare, anyone with modest capital to invest could profitably begin a cotton field with ten enslaved people. While tobacco was processed within the plantation itself, it became common for cotton to be processed elsewhere. Given the emergence of many small cotton growers with a limited workforce, product processing was done by entrepreneurs who traveled to cotton-growing regions with portable equipment, purchased the seed cotton, and processed it. At the time when the entrepreneur Tollenare was in Pernambuco (1816–1818), the town of Bom Jardim, 120 kilometers away from Recife, was home to most businesses that purchased and processed cotton. In Minas Gerais, those businesses were mostly in São João del Rei at the time of harvest. However, most of the

cotton did not come from small producers. Koster visited a cotton plantation with 150 enslaved people. Tollenare spoke of cotton plantations with 150 enslaved people in Paraíba and 300 in Ceará. In Maranhão, the largest cotton producer in slaveholding Brazil – an establishment considered typical by Gayoso – had fifty enslaved people and produced 600 *arrobas* of cotton lint per year extracted from 2000 *arrobas* of cotton wool.[17]

Gayoso mentioned rice "shelling factories," also called *engenhos*, which employed enslaved people. There were many in São Luís and elsewhere, which received the raw product from the growers and processed it. Yet other growers processed it themselves.[18] In 1820, a few years after Gayoso's text was written, there were twenty-two animal-driven and one vapor-powered rice-shelling machines in São Luís, which gives us an idea of the large number of small growers without processing capabilities.[19]

Measured by the number of enslaved people, coffee plantations in the nineteenth century were undoubtedly the largest plantations. According to Stanley Stein, in the municipality of Vassouras, typical of the Paraíba Valley, the average plantation employed between eighty and one hundred enslaved people.[20] But while sugar mills with more than 200 enslaved people were very rare, there are many references to coffee plantations with 200–400 enslaved people. There is no mention of coffee processing performed separately from farming, except in the last decade of slavery, when small European farmers paid haciendas to process their production.[21]

Slave plantations had considerable advantages over small producers, which explains why they became the main form of economic organization. Thanks to their large number of workers, they had the superiority of simple cooperation over individual work and could harvest large extensions relatively fast. They were also able to process the product in a timely manner and with fewer losses of raw matter. Finally, they were able to perform a qualitative division of labor within the same establishment, integrating the various phases of the main activity and correlated occupations. It is therefore understandable that, even though slave labor was not very profitable for individual producers, it became the axis and the foundation of the colonial economy.

Aspects of the Productive Forces of Slave Plantations

The establishment of slavery in the American continent at the time when Western Europe was beginning to move toward free wage labor is apparently a paradox. But paradoxes are always explanations of that which cannot be explained, for history itself is never paradoxical.

Medieval agriculture was much more productive than that of the ancient world. First of all, because peasants, serfs, and even villeins subject to feudal obligations owned their own means of production and had a personal interest in the development of their family land. This made them more productive than the enslaved people of Roman latifundia and *villas*. Cattle raising provided organic fertilizers, which were regularly employed on associated crops. The predominance of a natural economy encouraged mixed farming, and with it, horticultural techniques developed. Tilling the land improved and productivity stabilized thanks to the system of three crop rotations per year.

All of this was unsettled by slave plantations. Actively engaged peasants were replaced by poor slave workers. The regular employment of organic fertilizers was not adequate for the extensive exploitation of large tracts of land dissociated from cattle raising, since cattle and horses were only used as workforce. The system of three crop rotations per year was incompatible with specialization, especially in the case of perennials capable of successive harvests. Finally, the predominantly commercial destination of production, which created a tendency toward monoculture, and the characteristics of slave work, imposed strict limits on the coexisting natural economy and kept it from flourishing in the same way as medieval peasant mixed farming.

These conditions represented in fact a regression from the standpoint of productive forces, but it would be simplistic to reach that conclusion without examining other aspects that also contributed to define the historical role of colonial slave plantations.

Slave plantations anticipated modern capitalist agriculture and did so by associating large-scale farming with the hoe. As a result of their structure and operational laws, slave plantations excluded or hindered technological advancements, while capitalist agriculture is forced to develop it continuously in response to market demands, to land and workforce price increases, etc. Despite all of this, colonial slave plantations were able to surpass family agriculture thanks to the employment of collective work teams under a unified command and the division of labor. Whenever it had to compete with plantations, family agriculture was displaced or eliminated, as was the case with small tobacco producers in the Antilles or Virginia. Although slave plantations used the land in a destructive manner, it should be noted that in the American continent there was a large availability of land, freely appropriable or purchased at a low cost, without the burden of feudal obligations. As a result, the land was a resource that could be squandered for a long time. Hence the *itinerant* nature of agriculture, since producers preferred to clear virgin and fertile lands through the brutal process of slash and burn, instead of recovering the exhausted lands through intensive fertilizing. With the exception of tobacco farming, this was the almost absolute norm in Brazil. In places where land with the fertility of Northeastern *massapé* soil was unavailable, as was the case in the small Caribbean islands and Louisiana, sugarcane producers had to resort to alternate the use of the arable land available, with one part dedicated to sugarcane production and another one left fallow for a year or two.[22]

When examining the level of productive forces employed in agriculture, and especially agriculture from previous centuries, it is necessary to take into account the natural conditions. The same amount of work can be more or less productive depending on the existing natural conditions. This was shrewdly observed by plantation owner Gabriel Soares de Sousa, when he compared the sugarcane plantations of the Recôncavo region of Bahia with those of the Portuguese Atlantic islands and other competing regions. He wrote that, in the Atlantic islands, sugarcane plantations required irrigation and manure, the canes were very short and were cut after two years, ratooning in three years, with the land sustaining no more than two yields. In Bahia, irrigation and manure were unnecessary, newly planted sugarcane was cut in fifteen months, ratooning in one year, with some lands producing for thirty years.[23] In general, however, sugarcane fields in Bahia were productive for four to seven years, although at the time of Vilhena some were active for fifteen or twenty years. In the Province of Rio de Janeiro, according to information collected by Saint-Hilaire, there were plantations that lasted twelve years.[24]

While favorable natural conditions increase productivity, they can also discourage the development of productive forces. The need to irrigate turned agriculture in ancient Egypt and tropical Asia more costly, but also exceptionally fertile. In the Antilles, a much more limited availability of agricultural land and less favorable weather conditions led farmers to use compost, crop rotation, and irrigation. Because there was soon a shortage of firewood provided by nature, in the Antilles, much sooner than in Brazil, planters started substituting firewood with sugarcane bagasse and building more fuel-efficient furnaces.[25] In Brazil, the very abundant forests provided inexpensive firewood at first, after which the irreparable devastation caused by plantations backlashed against their owners. As early as 1609, the *Regimento da Relação da Cidade do Salvador*, cited by Manoel Ferreira da Câmara, ordered the governor of the State of Brazil to take the necessary measures to guarantee the firewood supply, whose shortage could paralyze the mills. The authorities should therefore prevent burn clearing and unnecessary deforestation.[26] The problem is likely to have worsened, since the Royal *Regimento* of 1677, addressed to the governor-general of Brazil Roque da Costa Barreto, dealt with the issue specifically.[27] A Royal

Provision dated November 1681 determined that mills should be established at a distance of half a league from each other in order to guarantee the supply of firewood.[28]

Those legislative measures were unable to stop the unbridled devastation of natural sources of fuel. In the late eighteenth century, most mills no longer had nearby forests and had to pay high prices for firewood brought from afar, but bagasse, which had been used for a long time in the Antilles, continued going to waste. In Rio de Janeiro in 1801, the shortage of firewood interrupted the operation of nine mills. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Koster and Tollenare coincided in their observations regarding the waste of sugarcane bagasse in Pernambuco. It was around 1820 that Martius observed the use of bagasse in Bahia, and Saint-Hilaire in Campos dos Goitacases. However, both of them noted the excessive fuel consumed by outdated furnaces. Further information on the topic can be found in Wanderley Pinho's detailed account.[29]

The degree of compatibility between slave plantations and manuring and other agricultural techniques will be examined later in this work. For now, it is worth noting that tobacco plantations were the only ones under Brazilian slavery that systematically employed organic manure. In that respect, Silva Lisboa wrote:

> It is the only crop on which manure is used. The method employed is to build portable cattle pens and use them to successively introduce cattle in the entire land where tobacco will be planted, for however long it is deemed necessary to fertilize what they call *malhadas*, i.e., the plots of land where the cattle is kept.[30]

Since tobacco is a crop that quickly exhausts the soil, manure becomes indispensable, and hence the association with cattle raising. In addition, growing tobacco required garden-like care, applied to each plant independently, including covering and watering the seedlings, transplanting them from the seedbeds to the previously fertilized cattle pens, careful weeding, topping every eight days, almost daily pest control, etc.[31] For all those reasons, tobacco growing was less dependent on the quality of the land than sugarcane, sufficing, as an anonymous author wrote, "leftover lands that are not appropriate to plant sugarcane or other products."[32] Precisely because it depended more on human effort than on natural conditions, tobacco growing stimulated an improvement of productive forces within the plantations, which were superior to those employed in other plantation crops.

Regarding sugarcane processing, the techniques employed to transform the raw matter were at the same level of development as European techniques in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. An example of this is the use of a driving force that only the steam engine would later substitute – the water wheel. However, the water wheel was less common in Northeastern Brazil, employed mostly in larger mills, called *reais*. Natural conditions also contributed to this, and not, or not exclusively, the unfortunate Portuguese practices. Although the water wheel had a better performance per unit of time, it could be affected by sudden changes in the water flow, which was not the case with horse- or ox-powered mills. Furthermore, the construction effort to build the weir required for the water wheel involved upfront costs that were unavailable to many mill owners.[33] Because of the enormous availability of pastureland, which lowered the cost of draft animals, their use was economically feasible and became more frequent as the driving force of mills. As Alice Canabrava demonstrates, in the British and French Antilles, the use of the water wheel was limited due to the shortage of rivers. The use of draft animals became generalized, later partially replaced by wind power, which does not seem to have occurred in Brazil.[34]

The mill – with its wooden parts and finely carved gears, its copper cauldrons, and its successive operations to transform the raw matter – and other facilities of the plantation constituted a *primitive*, albeit somewhat sophisticated, manufacturing unit, first invented by Persian and Arab

Muslims. Although mills still lacked two basic elements of modern factories – wage labor and automation – they anticipated their *structure*, since they observed, albeit in seminal form, the same organizational principles of large-scale transformation of raw matter, division of labor by sectors (and not only by tasks), and nonmanual techniques. In sixteenth-century Europe, with the exception of a few industries such as mining and metal foundry, craftsmen's workshops and home enterprises prevailed, which were inferior to factory settings. In the seventeenth century, manufacturing proliferated, greatly contributing to develop an internal division of labor and paving the way for the emergence of factories, but still within the bounds of manual techniques.

It is also worth noting that Brazil under slavery produced mainly white sugar, ready for individual consumption. A smaller part of the production was brown sugar, less crystalized but not entirely raw. As Noel Deerr informs, raw brown sugar made up almost the entire production in the French West Indies.[35] Obviously, the generalized use of the draining technique by Brazilian mills, which made further refining unnecessary, responded to the fact that there were no refineries in Portugal, unlike in Holland, France, and England.

Ginning cotton was performed with a device that, as Fernandes Brandão observed, was used since the seventeenth century – an ancient Asian invention known by the Hindus and Arabs, consisting of two cylinders driven by a crank, which moved in opposite directions and produced, with two workers, between eight and fifteen pounds of cotton lint per day. Although it was adequate for tree cotton with long fibers, it had a low productivity. Yet it continued being used well into the nineteenth century because it was portable and therefore useful to the tradesmen who purchased seed cotton from small producers. The plantation owners who processed the cotton themselves introduced an innovation that consisted of using several devices simultaneously powered with hydraulic force, which saved time and considerable labor. It should be noted that in Maranhão, in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, not even that device was used for ginning, but was done entirely by hand, which involved a greater workforce and much longer time. Yet a statistical account from 1820 recorded 521 cotton gins in the Maranhão hinterlands, which indicates that they were widely used in plantations. In the 1860s, the introduction of shrub cotton with short fibers in São Paulo was accompanied by a certain proliferation of the saw gin, invented by Eli Whitney seventy years earlier, with much greater productivity than the manually operated cylinder gin. Until the nineteenth century, cotton lint was baled using the extremely rudimentary process of pressing it with the weight of an enslaved person, who stepped on it inside a sack. This process – which was harmful to the enslaved person's health and extremely time-consuming – was substituted by a wooden press composed of a threaded vertical bar attached to a moving compression board.[36]

Slave Plantations and Technical Progress

When viewed as a whole and not from an anachronistic standpoint, we can conclude that colonial slavery was not the product of backward techniques in the modern era. The negative aspects of slave work were compensated by the organizational advantages of the plantation form. The latter in turn was successful because it was adequate to slave work. Plantations also incorporated technological inventions, which contravenes the idea that slave work is entirely incompatible with technological advancements. On the other hand, the US historiographical current New Economic History asserts that slave work and technical progress are entirely compatible, to the point of eliminating the distinction between slave work and wage labor in capitalist regimes. Hence the need to examine the matter succinctly. To that end, I will focus on what can be considered the most expressive case, i.e., sugar production.

As early as the sixteenth century, the technique employed in the first Brazilian plantations, imported from the Portuguese Atlantic islands and adapted to a very small-scale production, was

improved with the introduction of the mill with two horizontal wooden cylinders. Still, the sugarcane was insufficiently milled with those cylinders and required supplementary processing with *gangorras* (primitive, manual mills). Not only was the process slow, but the equipment was complicated and required a significant investment. Given the growing demand for sugar in the European market, this mechanism represented a bottleneck, which was only overcome around 1610 with the introduction of the mill with three vertical wooden cylinders with "gears," i.e., with matching cogs, so that the torque applied to the central cylinder propelled the other two. Milling was faster and the sugarcane could be pressed twice, on both sides, without much effort. The *gangorras* were no longer necessary and the use of draught animals as the driving force was simplified. The new mill technology prevailed and expanded because it required a smaller investment and was more productive.[37]

There was therefore a veritable "technological mutation" compatible with slavery, which drove its expansion throughout Brazil. This change was similar to the introduction of Ely Whitney's invention of the saw gin in 1793, which eliminated the technological bottleneck to gin shrub cotton with short fibers and allowed slavery in the South of the United States to experience previously unseen growth. However, after the introduction of the three-vertical-cylinder mill, from the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, no important innovations in sugarcane processing were made, as can be observed by comparing the descriptions by Fernandes Brandão, Antonil, and Vilhena in different centuries.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, two factors contributed to overcome that long technological stagnation: a significant increase in the international market demand and the emergence of competition from beet sugar produced in capitalist Europe. Increasing productivity became a vital and urgent matter of survival for slave sugar plantations in the Americas. The process of innovation that took place then allows us to examine the degree to which slave labor constituted a barrier for technological progress.

Couty observed the extent to which enslaved people in Brazilian coffee plantations were unwilling to and uninterested in learning any procedure that differed from the habitual, which they performed with indifference. Couty's assessment may be infused with racism, but that does not disqualify the author as one of the most critical and clear-sighted writers on slavery. His observations coincide with those of Kenneth Stampp, who it would be unfair to accuse of racism. According to Stampp and also to Blassingame, the typical enslaved person in the Southern Unites States was good at pretending to be ignorant and diseased, purposely or negligently damaged tools and animals, and was indolent at work whenever he was free from the overseer's direct supervision. Fraginals emphasized the extraordinary simplicity of the tools employed by Cuban enslaved people, extremely heavy and large, very resistant, but inefficient. Tools suitable for enslaved people, not for free men.[38]

The extent of the antagonism between technical progress and slave work is best illustrated by the Cuban case, precisely because, with the island's extremely fertile lands and privileged geographical location, its sugar production was stimulated by an intense demand from the United States and Europe.

As demonstrated by Fraginals, the only innovation introduced to the agricultural sector in Cuban slave plantations in the nineteenth century was a better variety of sugarcane called *Otaheite* (known in Brazil as *Caiana*). Otherwise, the land continued to be manually tilled with hoes, no manuring was employed, and the fields were used in an itinerant manner. With the increase in production resulting from the introduction of the Otaheite variety, sugar processing became more difficult due to the large amount of raw matter produced – we should remember that Cuban plantations often employed over 300 enslaved people, with some employing up to 1000.

Since the Otaheite variety was thick and hard, it damaged the wooden cylinder mills. It was therefore necessary to switch to vertical cylinders covered with iron or made entirely of iron. Around 1820, some of the mills with three vertical cylinders were replaced by a new device composed of two horizontal iron cylinders. This type of mill took better advantage of the speed provided by the steam engine, which became common after 1817. Around 1840, conveyor belts to transport the sugarcane were incorporated into the mills.

This semi-automatized arrangement permitted a significant reduction of enslaved people and oxen and increased performance, but it did not conform an industrial revolution. Examining the technological evolution of sugar production, Fraginals and Ruy Gama, both of them based on Marx, underscored that it was not the steam engine which led to the Industrial Revolution in England. Its driving force was the invention of machine tools, which substituted the elaboration of raw matter through manual work, characteristic of preindustrial manufacturing. And it was precisely in the elaboration of raw matter that slave plantations were unable to implement any qualitative change. It was only in the process of boiling the juice that the *Jamaica train* (also called "English oven" in Brazil) was implemented, which saved fuel and was well adapted to use bagasse. In the process of clarification and crystallization, clay molds were replaced with tin molds, which enslaved people could maneuver more easily. Given the unqualified nature of slave labor, it was impossible to adopt a precise process of decantation. The steam engine was manned by wage laborers. The modernization of transportation began in 1837 with the inauguration of the first railway (in Brazil, the first railway was built in 1854).

In the meantime, capitalist production of beet sugar in Europe led to the inventions of vacuum cooking or concentration and centrifugation. It was these inventions that became the axis of the industrial revolution in sugar production. They arrived in Cuba in the 1940s, where entirely automatized modern factories emerged, mostly financed by US capital. In 1860, those factories provided 14% of Cuba's sugar production. In addition to a much greater quantitative performance, the sugar these factories produced was entirely white and of a higher quality. Although they continued to receive sugarcane grown and harvested by enslaved people, the need for free wage laborers increased in these factories. Wage laborers were trained to operate precision instruments that required attention and skill.

Unable to incorporate the innovations of vacuum concentration and centrifugation, slave mills merely eliminated the draining sector. This allowed them to reduce the workforce by 10%, but they started producing only raw brown sugar. Slave labor not only hindered advancements but, in the face of competition, led to a technical regression, which caused slave plantations to give way to large, centralized factories based on wage labor.

A similar process of antagonism between slave labor and technical progress took place in Brazil, although at a much slower pace than the fast changes that occurred in Cuba. Brazil's slave sugar production succumbed to competition in the nineteenth century and fell to a marginal position in the international market, slowly incorporating some of the technical innovations created by European capitalism. Modern factories were founded in the late nineteenth century after the abolition of slavery.[39]

Notes

1 Mark, K. Introducción. Op. cit., p. 27–28.
2 Waibel, Leo. Op. cit., p. 268.
3 Cf. Wolf, Eric R.; Mintz, Sydney W. Haciendas y plantaciones en Mesoamérica y las Antillas. In: Florescano, Enrique (Coord.). *Haciendas, latifundios y plantaciones en América Latina*, p. 493–531; Harris, Marvin. *Patterns of Race in the Americas*, p. 44–45.
4 Prado Júnior, Caio. *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo*, p. 117.

5 Koster, Henry. *Viagens so Nordeste do Brasil*, p. 429.
6 Cf. Canabrava, Alice P. Introdução. In: Antonil, André João (João Antônio Adreoni). Op. cit., p. 70.
7 Deerr, Noel, *The History of Sugar*, v. 1, p. 108.
8 Notícia sobre a Freguesia de S. Sebastião das Cabeceiras do Passé, do Arcebispado da Bahia, pelo Vigário colado o Reverendo Licenciado Felippe Barbosa da Cunha (data provável – 1757). *ABN*, v. 31, p. 207.
9 Cf. Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 3, p. 658–659.
10 Andrade, Manuel Correia de. *A terra e o homem no Nordeste*, p. 185–186.
11 Cf. Koster. Op. cit., p. 435 and 449.
12 Cf. Cardim, Fernão. *Tratados da terra e da gente do Brasil*, p. 320; Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. *Diálogos das grandezas do Brasil*, p. 129; Vilhena. Op. cit., p. 182; Koster. Op. cit., p. 442.
13 Cf. Vilhena. Op. cit., p. 173–174 and 199.
14 A Portuguese arroba is equivalent to 32 pounds. (T.N.)
15 Cf. Autor Anônimo. Op. cit., p. 96–98; Antonil, Op. cit., p. 243–244.
16 Cf. Castro, Joaquim de Amorim. Manufatura do tabaco. In: Lapa. Op. cit., p. 222–224, Appendix 2.
17 Cf. Koster. Op. cit., p. 103 and 452; Tollenare, Louis François de. Notas dominicais (Part on Pernambuco), *Jornal do Recife*, 1905, p. 156 and 231; Gayoso. Op. cit., p. 263–264; Saint-Hilaire, Auguste de. *Viagens pelo Distrito dos Diamantes e litoral do Brasil*, p. 207.
18 Cf. Gayoso. Op. cit., p. 182 and 293–294.
19 Cf. Spix and Martius. *Viagem pelo Brasil (1817–1820)*, v. 2, p. 314.
20 Cf. Stein, Stanley. *Grandeza e decadência do café no Vale do Paraíba*, p. 193.
21 Cf. Taunay, Affonso de E. *História do café no Brasil*, t.V, v. 7, p. 372 and 378.
22 Cf. Deerr, Op. cit., v. 1, p. 250; v. 2, p. 332 et passim.
23 Cf. Sousa, Gabriel Soares de. *Tratado descritivo do Brasil em 1587*, p. 165–166.
24 Cf. Antonil. Op. cit., p. 176–179; Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 174 and 178–179; Saint-Hilaire. Op. cit., p. 250.
25 Cf. Canabrava, Alice Piffer. *O acúcar nas Antilhas (1697–1755)*, p. 80–85, 134–141.
26 Cf. Câmara, Manoel Ferreira da. Resposta. In: Brito, Rodrigues de. *A economia brasileira no alvorecer do século XIX (cartas econômico-políticas sobre a agricultura e comércio da Bahia)*, p. 150–151.
27 See Regimento de S. A. Real, que Trouxe Roque da Costa Barreto. *RIHGB*, t. v., § 27, p. 323–324.
28 Cf. Varnhagen, Francisco Adolfo de. *História Geral do Brasil*, t. III, p. 285.
29 Cf. Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 180 and 193; Koster. Op. cit., p. 427, 432 and 439; Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 56; Saint-Hilaire, Auguste de. *Viagem pelas províncias do Rio de Janeiro e Minas Gerais*, p. 400; Idem, *Viagem pelas províncias do Rio de Janeiro e Minas Gerais*, p. 26; Spix and Martius. *Através da Bahia*, v. 6, p. 158; Pinho, Wanderley. *História de um engenho do Recôncavo: 1552–1944*, p. 217–252.
30 Lisboa, José da Silva. Carta muito interessante, para o Dr. Domingos Vandelli. *ABN*, v. 32, p. 503.
31 See Antonil. Op. cit., p. 238–240; Castro. Op. cit., p. 193–201; Vilhena. Op. cit., p. 197–199.
32 Autor Anônimo. Op. cit., p. 95.
33 Cf. Koster. Op. cit., p. 431.
34 Cf. Canabrava, A. *O açúcar nas Antilhas*, p. 120–133.
35 Cf. Deerr. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 109; v. 2, chap. XXVIII.
36 Cf. Brandão. Op. cit., p. 143–144; Saint-Hilaire. *Viagem pelas províncias…*, p. 172, 228 and 236; Gayoso. Op. cit., p. 308 and 317–321; Spix and Martius. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 282 and 314; Do algodão. In: Wernek. Op. cit., p. 195–196; Canabrava, A. *O algodão em São Paulo*, p. 190–192.
37 Brandão. Op. cit., p. 127; Gama, Ruy. *Engenho e tecnologia*, p. 123–125; Castro, Antônio Barros de. Brasil, 1610: mudança técnica e conflitos sociais. *Pesquisa e Planejamento Econômico*, v. 10, n. 3.
38 Couty, Louis. *Étude de biologie industrielle sur le café*, p. 100–102; Stampp, Kenneth M. *La esclavitud en los Estados Unidos (The Peculiar Institution)*, p. 112, 118; Blassingame, John W. *The Slave Community – Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, p. 208–211; Fraginals. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 30.
39 Cf. Costa, Emília Viotti da. O escravo na grande lavoura. *Hgcb*, t. II, v. 3, p. 168–175; Canabrava, Alice. A grande lavoura. *HGCB*, t. II, v. 4, p. 102–110; Eisenberg, Peter L. *Modernização sem mudança: a indústria açucareira em Pernambuco, 1840–1910*, chap. 3–5.

PART II

Genesis

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4

PORTUGUESE SOCIETY AND OVERSEAS EXPANSION

Colonizers and Colonization

Beginning in the fifteenth century, and with greater intensity in the sixteenth century, Western Europe initiated a process of international historical significance. This process entailed the following main aspects:

a. Overseas commercial expansion interconnects all continents and for the first time creates a world market with an intercontinental division of production.[1]
b. Modern colonialism begins and develops, with all other continents economically and politically subordinated to Western Europe. In the subordinated continents, various forms of European colonization emerge.
c. The creation of the world market and colonialist exploitation foster the original accumulation of capital and accelerate the capitalist formation and mode of production in a number of Western European countries.
d. For the first time, the history of humanity becomes universal.[2]

Portugal and Spain gave rise to this process in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the seventeenth century, Holland, England, and France entered the competition and surpassed the former. Other European countries also participated to various extents.

In the fifteenth century, these countries were not substantially different from each other in terms of their economic and social development. From the standpoint of the dominant relations of production and productive forces, they resembled each other and integrated the same civilizational group. The most important differences were a matter of degree and, in some respects, Portugal was not behind, but ahead. With time, the feudal structure turned out to be more long-lasting in Iberian countries, further accentuated by their overseas expansion. On the other hand, the countries that began their colonialist expansion later did so at a moment of significant capitalist development, which benefitted them in the dispute for external markets and put them in a superior position. Nonetheless, regarding their *economic* performance in the colonized regions, every country produced identical results. In Asia, they merely exploited the existing modes of production. In the Americas, the modes of colonization were conditioned by the geographical possibilities of each area and, to a certain extent, the characteristics of the

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native populations. But in all favorable tropical regions, colonization, whether Iberian, French, or Dutch, established without exception the colonial slave mode of production.

Therefore, the succinct analysis undertaken in this chapter does not aim at deducing the colonial slave mode of production from the Portuguese social formation as a major premise, but only aims at apprehending the elements that are peculiar to Portugal's colonization of Brazil.

A Conceptual Clarification

Herculano and Gama Barros denied the existence of a feudal era in their country's history. Their thesis was challenged by other Portuguese historians working with a different methodology. Resolving the issue first calls for a definition of the category of feudalism.

Like the terms mercantilism and capitalism, the term feudalism was created by the adversaries of the social fact designated by that category. But while the terms mercantilism (or mercantile system) and capitalism are based on their economic aspect, this is not the case with the term feudalism, which derives from *feud* (fief), thus strictly indicating a legal/political form of organization or, in Marxist terms, an element of the superstructure. The consequence of this was a semantic confusion between those who abided by the term's legal/political meaning and those who attempted to attribute a specific economic content to it.

Contrary to the British empiricist tradition of downplaying discussions on definitions, Maurice Dobb carefully examined the issue and demonstrated the insufficiency of the legal/political approach.[3] An example of such an approach can be found in Max Weber, who examines the "purest" form of feudalism – Western Europe's – as an extreme case of the patrimonial structure in terms of stereotyped and unchanging relations between lords and serfs. Understood *prima facie* as a contract for military service, these relations are associated with the very origin of feudalism, identified as a certain, primordial military necessity. Hence, Weber asserts that feudal organization was merely favored (or not) by certain forms of economic organization.[4]

Dobb removed the problem from the realm of the relations of servitude – with the premise of the existence or lack of fiefs – and transferred it to the realm of relations of production. He therefore characterized feudalism as a mode of production whose essence is *servitude* – an obligation imposed on the producer through coercive force to satisfy a lord's economic demands in the form of services or fees paid with products or money.[5] This correct formulation should be amended by two caveats. First, that the concept of servitude should be understood as a matter of gradation and not in exclusive reference to serfdom. Second, as Engels observed, that servitude is not a specifically feudal form. Feudal servitude is only *one* of its modalities.

I believe that the category of *feudalism*, not necessarily implying the existence of fiefs, can be characterized by the following essential features:

1. Land ownership – a socially decisive factor for the dominion over production – unfolds into *eminent* rights exercised by the lord and *usufruct* rights exercised by the peasant, whether a serf or not. In either case, land property is incomplete in the sense of allodium in Roman law or capitalist law. For the lord, land ownership means the right to receive dues in various forms. For the peasant, land ownership is limited to the right to use it and to transfer it through inheritance, together with mandatory seigneurial dues.
2. Land rent in its typical form absorbed the totality of the user's – the direct producer's – surplus product.
3. Small, family, agrarian economy and small, independent, artisan occupations constitute the basic forms of organization of production.
4. The communal tenure of pasturelands and forests is a necessary supplement to small peasant production.

5. The imposition of seigneurial dues is enforced through extra-economic coercion (military, legal, etc.), ranging from serfdom to freedom of movement with the possibility of a contractual change of landlord.

An observation is necessary regarding the notion that feudalism is related to an entirely closed natural economy. It is a false notion with no grounding on the historical reality of European feudalism. With an unquestionable predominance of a natural economy in its classical form, the feudal regime entailed more intense commercial relations than ancient slavery. But while capitalism leads to the complete commercialization of economic relations, feudalism only involves a limited degree of commercialization. Beyond a certain limit, commercialization can lead to a regression to serfdom – hence, the *second* servitude in Central Eastern Europe of which Engels speaks[6] – or delay the development of capitalism, as was the case in parts of Western Europe after the fifteenth century. Dobb correctly emphasized feudalism's compatibility with commercial relations but, in my opinion, he underestimated that compatibility's unavoidable limitation. In other words, commerce is insufficient to dismantle the feudal mode of production, and the development of productive forces does not impel commerce to grow beyond a certain level, in the context of the set of concrete circumstances.

Finally, a matter of terminology. Since the opposite of peasant servitude is seigneurial dominion, Genovese proposed employing the term seigneurialism instead of feudalism.[7] In effect, if we consider the terms according to their literal meaning, seigneurialism has the advantage of a general quality absent in the term feudalism. However, Marc Bloch and other French historians apply both terms to concepts that are considered different. For that reason, it seems to me that Armando Castro convincingly demonstrated that it was unnecessary to employ the concept of seigneurialism as a partial or complete replacement of the concept of feudalism.[8] If we were to respond to strict etymological motivations, we would have to proceed to a revision of terminology in other cases for the same reasons. Genovese himself scorned the objection to the notion of *rural bourgeoisie*, which is also accused of a semantic inadequacy: bourgeoisie derives from *bourg* and should therefore be inapplicable to an agrarian class.[9] In fact, independently of Genovese, Armando Castro also found himself needing to refute that objection.[10] We therefore conclude that terms like feudalism and bourgeoisie are no longer constrained to their etymological roots and are valid for the meaning attributed to them today by social sciences.

Feudalism in Portugal

In the Portuguese state, which started developing in the twelfth century, fiefs were not created – i.e., seigneurial land property was not associated with political/legal sovereignty, which included military power, legal power, the right to mint currency, etc. – as was the case, with local particularities, in France, England, Germany, and many other European countries in the Middle Ages. But if we disregard this aspect of the superstructure and we approach feudalism as a mode of production, in accordance with the conceptual observations made above, we see that, despite their theoretical viewpoint, Herculano and Gama Barros provide factual elements conducive to the conclusion that the feudal era did exist in Portuguese history. With its own chronology and in accordance with national peculiarities, Portugal identified with feudal Europe in terms of the emergence of serfdom and its transition to less coercive modalities of servitude, as well as the development of class forces and the class struggle.[11] The employment of indefinite expressions such as "atypical feudalism" or "a sort of feudalism" is therefore unjustified. The correct thing would be to follow C. R. Boxer and talk about "the Portuguese form of feudalism."[12] A form that, in light of the conditioning, resulting from the struggles against Muslims and the Spanish,

as well as the level of development of productive forces, was ahead of the rest of Europe in terms of the consolidation of monarchic power, national unification, and the extinction of serfdom.[13]

After the end of bondage to the land, which disappeared around the thirteenth century, serfs became *malados*, peasants who were free to change lordships but were subjected to the *complexum feudale* of seigneurial dues. As Montesquieu observes, these dues "were economic and not fiscal rights; exclusively private in nature, and not public ones."[14]

Let us examine Portuguese feudalism in the thirteenth century and beyond. Almost the entire agrarian production came from small landholdings occupied by tenants under contracts of emphyteusis. The *terra indominicata* held a clearly secondary position: the *quintas*, landholdings reserved for nobility, tended to be small, although there were some larger ones belonging to monastic orders. Product rent prevailed – sometimes a sixth, sometimes a fourth or a third, and eventually up to half of the production. Product rent was accompanied by money rent at an increasing rate, which ended up favoring the tenants thanks to the devaluation of Portuguese currency. Labor rent persisted, often at a rate of one day per week. The three typical expressions of feudal rent coexisted simultaneously.

In his thorough categorical/systematic study, Armando Castro analyzed the objective reality of the *complexum feudale* in Portugal. The Crown, nobility, and the clergy –the three sectors of the dominant seigneurial class, which had the privilege of being exempt from paying dues – levied rural produce with an extensive and varied list of tributes: *terrádigo*, *direitura*, *jugadeira*, *fossadeira*, *jeiras* and *anúduva* (corvée), *aposentadoria*, *relego*, *gaiosa*, *lutuosa* or *mortuária* (funerary), *miunça*, *foragem*, *dádivas*, *pedidos*, etc. In addition, two types of tributes were levied by the Church: the tithe and the firstfruits, which together made up between 11% and 12% of the total rural production. Alienations of emphyteusis were charged a laudemium – one half of the sales price in the twelfth century, from one-fourth to one-eighth in the following centuries. It should be noted that it was not a transfer of alodial property – unknown to medieval peasants – but of alienations necessarily accompanied by dues that were hereditary or valid for long periods. Since facilities to process agricultural produce (mills, furnaces, presses, etc.) were a monopoly of the seigneurial class, peasants could only use them by paying the so-called *banal rights*. Transportation and circulation of merchandise was levied with *portagens*, *peagens*, *açougagens*, *alcavalas*, etc.

In addition to performing a qualitative analysis, Armando Castro estimated the total land rent, i.e., the rent directly identified with agricultural surplus. Due to the local peculiarities of the feudal regime and the differences within the peasant mass itself, in the midst of which a bourgeois-like layer already stood out, feudal land rent underwent a number of variations. The author of *A evolução econômica de Portugal* (The Economic Evolution of Portugal) classified such variations according to six types. The heaviest dues reached 50% or more of the total gross product. In exceptional cases, they could reach up to 70%. The lowest, applicable to villein knights, was between 11% and 13%. For a significant number of peasants – the *jugadeiros* – land rent ranged from 15% to 25%. Evidently, the numbers listed above did not include eventual dues such as the funerary tribute, paid in the case of death of the vassal heir, and the laudemium, paid in the case of transfers of possession of land.[15]

In an avowedly estimative manner – the only one possible – Armando Castro made a quantitative assessment of the fundamental items of the Gross National Product (GNP) of Portuguese society toward the end of the first quarter of the fourteenth century. The total feudal rent corresponded to 27% of the GNP. Land rent made up two-thirds of the total feudal rent, derived from agriculture, cattle raising, and forestry. The rent from farming alone made up 30% of the total feudal rent.[16]

In short, villein peasants, independent in the management of their economy and personally free, were obliged through extra-economic coercion, sanctioned by the law and customs, to hand over the surplus of their work to the lord of the manor.

One historic peculiarity of Portugal, considering the process of early consolidation of centralized monarchy, was nobility's weaker position relative to other feudal countries. The Crown and the clergy appropriated approximately equal sums of rent, while nobility received somewhere between a fourth and a half of the rent received by the former. There were a relatively significant number of minor noblemen, lords of tiny manors. The association between feudalism and latifundia is therefore not absolute; in addition, in northern Portugal, feudal estates were fragmented, oftentimes with no spatial contiguity. But nobility compensated for their small rents with their share of the royal rent in the form of *maravedis* or *contias* paid by the Crown to nobility in general. Through the *comendas* (commandery), nobility appropriated part of the Church's rent as well. There was therefore a distribution of feudal rent among lords, under constant transformation due to the disputes between the three sectors. After Portugal's civil war of 1383–1385, new and powerful noble families arose, most prominently the Bragança family.[17]

Another Portuguese particularity was the scant development of artisanship and the lack of early forms of capitalist industry, such as emerged in Italy and Flanders during the decline of the Middle Ages.[18] On the other hand, an early form of a rural bourgeoisie – the villein gentry – arose in Portugal. Subjected to fewer feudal obligations and allowed to retain part of the surplus product, this embryonic rural bourgeoisie, still part of the feudal order, disputed the exploitation of laborers with the nobility and the clergy. In the feudal context at the time, those laborers were not free wage workers of the capitalist type, but individuals forced by law to provide their services in exchange for fixed wages.[19] One of the resolutions of the famed *Law of Sesmarias*, enacted by Ferdinand I in 1375, dealt precisely with the forced recruitment of laborers in response to the demands by the rural bourgeoisie. Other better known resolutions of the Law, related to the distribution of uncultivated land – also in favor of the rural bourgeoisie – were much less effectively enforced.[20]

In the context of Portuguese feudalism, a commercial bourgeoisie also developed, located mainly in port cities. Although it was still integrated into the feudal system, bound in many ways to the Crown and nobility, this commercial bourgeoisie would leave its mark, with the influence of its specific interests, on the historical process in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that propelled Portugal to its overseas expansion.[21]

Finally, an observation regarding the thesis by Celso Furtado and Darcy Ribeiro on feudalism as "regression" or "involution."[22] In my opinion, this thesis derives from the myth of the market as an engine for economic development and a qualitative progression of social life. It is true that European feudalism arose from a process of contraction of commercial relations and expansion of the natural economy since the end of the Roman Empire. But this process was the point of departure for a new form of development. Without resorting to Marxist historians, but to Weber instead, we observe that European feudalism brought about a significant improvement in the standard of living, production, and commerce relative to Classical Antiquity.[23] Regarding the development of productive forces in the feudal society of Portugal and Europe, I recommend consulting Armando Castro's factual study.

Socioeconomic Significance of the Overseas Expansion

There are two questions to consider: (1) Why was Portugal able to be, and was, the pioneer of overseas expansion?; (2) Why, despite this pioneering role, Portuguese society was so extraordinarily late in developing capitalism compared to other Western European countries? I do not intend to examine these questions in detail, a task that has already been admirably undertaken by Portuguese Marxist historians. Based on them, I shall discuss only their most significant aspects.

On the first question, the first thing that comes to mind is Portugal's privileged geographic position. There is no doubt that such a position was a highly advantageous *condition*. However,

it is still necessary to answer why, given that the geographic factor is unchangeable, the voyages and discoveries happened at a certain moment and not at a different time. The answer to this requires an examination of social factors.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Portugal had a few significant advantages over most other European countries. While the latter were still embroiled in exhaustive internal and external wars, and some, like Spain, were still far from completing their unification, Portugal had well-defined borders, was free from serious internal problems, and state power was in a solid process of centralization. These factors were favorable for an enterprise like the overseas voyages, especially the centralization of monarchic power, which was completed during the reign of John II, the first absolute monarch in Europe (1481–1495). The civil war of 1383–1385, which took the form of a successful war against Castilian usurpation, did not alter the socioeconomic structure, but did bring about very important changes. The seigneurial class was still the dominant class, but rejuvenated – a part of the old nobility, allied to the national enemy, was eliminated and substituted by ennobled members of the bourgeoisie. In turn, the rural and commercial bourgeoisie, although they did not reach the status of a dominant class, did acquire greater influence, benefiting from their alliance with the Crown.

Although with different economic objectives, the nobility and the commercial bourgeoisie coincided in their expansionist interest. Historic experience had demonstrated the unfeasibility of expanding toward the European continent. Seaborne expansion toward Africa and Asia made perfect sense. And Portugal undertook it with the advantage of its accumulated seafaring experience, introducing leading-edge innovations in open sea navigation technology.

I believe that Stanley and Barbara Stein commit a historical anachronism when they characterize late fifteenth century Portugal as "colonially dependent on Western Europe."[24] The fact that Portugal's foreign trade consisted of exporting primary products and importing industrialized products does not imply a situation of dependence, if we take into account European conditions at the time. The bulk of consumption of manufactured products was still satisfied everywhere with domestic artisan production, and there was no industrial power capable of subjugating agrarian countries solely through foreign trade. Portugal was in fact a powerful nation at the time, capable of leaving its mark on world history with a feat of transcendental significance.

For that very reason, the second question stated above arises. I believe that the answer is found in the same premises established to answer the first question.

Once the trading post network was organized, extending from the western coast of Africa to the Far East, the monopoly of Asian products and the African slave trade enriched the commercial bourgeoisie, but the enterprise's control remained in the hands of the Crown, whose authority was recognized by the seigniorial class as a whole. The Crown financed the overseas expansion and exploited it through a direct state monopoly or through well-paid concessions. Consequently, an enormous revenue flowed to the royal treasury, which was then distributed among the nobility, thus reinforcing its parasitism.[25] At the same time, the economic and social position of the commercial bourgeoisie was reinforced. The dominant class reacted to this contradiction by strengthening the feudal institutional order and, to do so, it made use of the political instrument of the Inquisition, introduced into Portugal during the reign of John III (1521–1557). The class dimension of this and of the entire workings of the Portuguese Inquisition was brilliantly examined by Antônio José Saraiva's historiographical critique. For more than two centuries, the political orientation of the Portuguese state was characterized by the repression of the commercial bourgeoisie, equated to the so-called new Christians or Crypto-Jews, and by the obscurantist defense of the class positions of the feudal nobility and clergy.[26] This effectively blocked off one of the possible avenues for the capitalist development of Portuguese society – a non-revolutionary and conservative avenue, as Marx observed, consisting of the introduction of capital accumulated by the

commercial bourgeoisie into the internal process of production. Furthermore, another avenue – this one authentically revolutionary – consisting of the endogenous formation of an industrial bourgeoisie based on the work of master artisans, was also precluded.[27]

The idea put forth by Eric Williams and emphasized by Fernando Novais, that the colonial system constituted "the main driving force in the development of modern capitalism" or "a decisive element in the creation of the prerequisites of industrial capitalism,"[28] is a simplistic notion refuted by both Marx and Weber, even though their explanations of the origins of capitalism differed.[29] Nonetheless, when we understand capitalism as a mode of production whose agent can only be industrial capital,[30] the category of "commercial capitalism" has no theoretical grounding. Used and abused by Frédéric Mauro, Fernando Novais, and other Brazilian historians, the inconsistency of this pseudo-category was unveiled by Horacio Ciafardini's analysis.[31]

Colonialism undoubtedly contributed significantly toward the primitive accumulation of capital and the consequent capitalist development in Western Europe. But this took place only in those countries whose socioeconomic structure was previously altered by *internal* revolutionary factors conducive to the capitalist mode of production. It is those internal factors that are fundamental in the process. Once this is taken into account, Eric William's position is justified precisely because what he had in mind was the connection between colonialism and the formation of capitalism *in England*. However, while the development of the capitalist mode of production was bolstered in England by colonialist exploitation, the opposite happened in Spain and Portugal. In Iberian countries, colonialist exploitation did not favor, but rather hindered the development of the capitalist mode of production.

For centuries, the Portuguese state practiced an inferior sort of mercantilism that was content with colonialist exploitation and did not evolve toward protectionism of the national industry, as the British and French states did. The Count of Ericeira's protectionist proposal in the late seventeenth century went unheeded, and the Methuen Treaty signaled the victory of agrarian interests over industrialization. Only in the mid-eighteenth century would Pombal foster a state-driven mercantilist development of Portuguese industry, with not entirely fruitless results, but belated and unsubstantial. Consequently, during the entire mercantilist period, Portugal acted as a specialist in intermediary international trade or *carrying trade*, as understood by Adam Smith, which withdrew capital that supported productive work in the country of origin and transferred it to support production in other countries.[32]

It is a habit of Brazilian historians to imagine the Portuguese social formation that colonized Brazil as an urban capitalist society.[33] However – as demonstrated by Magalhães Godinho – at the height of Portugal's imperial power, the 1527–1531 census showed that the urban population constituted only 12.7% of the total population of the Portuguese kingdom.[34] From the same author, we can also infer that the structure of Portuguese society from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, under the new conditions of overseas expansion, crystalized rigidly along the preexisting lines of the feudal order.[35]

The best way to describe the socioeconomic effects of the overseas expansion in Portugal is to reproduce J. Saraiva's words:

> It might be possible, without erring much, to compare the Portuguese Crown to a large monopoly whose profits are distributed among employees and shareholders in the form of wages and dividends, where these employees and shareholders do not personally practice an industrial or commercial activity […]. Thus, while the Portuguese state in the sixteenth century had an externally "modern" appearance, in the sense that it was a large economic enterprise, it also ensured the persistence of an archaic society within the country, by guaranteeing the dominion of a traditionally dominant class whose spirit was the antithesis of bourgeois mentality.[36]

Origins of Portugal's Connection to Modern Slavery

Slave work was not unknown to Portugal's medieval society. Its source was the Saracens captured during the Christian Reconquista. But the impact of slave work was limited and ephemeral, since it was incompatible with the social stage whereby serfdom gave way to free tenure. Hence the tendency toward a gradual conversion of Muslim enslave people into vassals or free tenants. In the context of the feudal society, slave work was no more than an accidental return of an extinct relation of production.[37]

An entirely different situation arose in the mid-fifteenth century with the growing influx of Black enslave people brought by the navigators who traveled down the African west coast. The Portuguese became the pioneers of a new type of slave trade in modern history, with a triple destination at the time. First, the Crown and traders with concessions found an enormous source of profit in the sale of enslave people to Spain, Italy, and the owners of sugarcane plantations in the Mediterranean islands. Second, the Portuguese developed their own slave plantations in the islands of Madeira and São Tomé, and to a lesser extent in the Azores and Cape Verde. This gave them experience in plantation organization, sugar manufacturing, and exploitation of slave work, and thus the Atlantic islands became an embryo of what would be reproduced on an immensely larger scale in Brazilian territory. Finally, slave labor was introduced into Portugal's metropolitan territory itself. Thousands of Black enslave people were employed in domestic service and a wide variety of urban services, especially in Lisbon, whose enslave population reached a tenth of its total population. More importantly, African enslave people were introduced into the agricultural sector, employed in clearing virgin lands and even in everyday tasks of agricultural production.

In my opinion, the return of slave work in Portugal had two causes. One of them – a *structural* cause – demonstrates the persisting rigidity of the dominant feudal order as a counterpoint. Precisely because peasants' ties to the manor continued, the formation of a capitalist labor market was impossible, unlike what happened in England at the same time. In response to the need to expand agricultural production, slave work was reinstated as a substitute for the scarce wage laborers, who were also forcibly recruited. Employed as a *complimentary* workforce, slave labor could only stabilize the feudal order, instead of dismantling it. The other cause – a *circumstantial* cause – derived from the absorption of human resources by the overseas expansion. At the time, Portugal had approximately 1.5 million inhabitants. Between 1497 and 1527, 80,000 people left for India, only a tenth of which returned to the metropolis, according to Costa Lobo. Magalhães Godinho estimates that, from 1500 to 1580, Portugal lost 280,000 people to overseas migration. The introduction of Black and even Asian enslave people partially compensated that demographic loss.[38]

Therefore, for the purpose of this work, it is worth noting that, when the Portuguese began colonizing the Brazilian territory, they already had a combined experience with slavery and plantations.

Notes

1 Cf. Mauro, Frédéric. Acerca de um modelo intercontinental: a expansão ultramarina europeia entre 1500 e 1800. In: *Nova História e Novo Mundo*.
2 Marx, Karl. Introducción. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 31.
3 Cf. Dobb, Maurice. *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, p. 32–37.
4 Weber, Max. *Economia y sociedad*. Mexico City; Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1964, v. 2, p. 810.
5 Cf. Dobb, Maurice. *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*.
6 Cf. Engels, Friedrich. Cartas a Marx de 15 e 16 de dezembro de 1882. Op. cit., p. 411–413.
7 Cf. Forner, Laura; Genovese, Eugéne D. (Eds.). *Slavery in the New World (A Reader in Comparative History)*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969, p. 96–112.
8 See Castro, Armando. *Portugal na Europa do seu tempo (História socioeconômica medieval comparada)*, p. 105–107 and 123–124.

9 Cf. Forner, Laura; Genovese, Eugéne D. (Eds.). Op. cit., p. 249, n. 8.
10 Castro, Armando. *A evolução econômica de Portugal*, v. 5, p. 131 and 377–378, n. XIV.
11 Cf. Herculano, Alexandre. *História de Portugal*, t. II and III; Barros, Henrique da Gama. Op. cit., p. 160–199 and 354–369; t. IV. chap. III; t. VIII, p. 13–133. See also Martins, Oliveira. *História de Portugal*. Book Two, chap. III, p. 104 et seqs.
12 Boxer, C. R. *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire (1415–1825)*, p. 10. For a summary of the particularities of Portuguese feudalism, see p. 5–12.
13 Cf. Castro, Armando. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 47 et seqs. See also Herculano, Alexandre. Op. cit., t. II, p. 167–168 and 247–249.
14 Montesquieu. *Do espírito das leis.* Book 30, chap. XV, p. 494.
15 Cf. Castro, Armando. Op. cit., v. 1, v. 2, v. 3, especially the latter; idem, A sociedade medieval portuguesa: algumas das suas características históricas peculiares. As well as O trabalho na História. In: *Ensaios sobre cultura e História*. Regarding changes in the feudal system derived from the dissolution of serfdom, see Herculano, Op. cit., t. III, p. 287–320; Takahashi, H. K. Uma contribuição para discussão. In: Sweezy; Dobb; Takahashi; Hilton; Hill. *Do feudalismo ao capitalismo*, p. 77–119.
16 See Castro, Armando. Op. cit., v. 9. Tables I and II on p. 198.
17 See Castro, Carmano. Op. cit., p. 120–127, 131–138, and 154–155.
18 Montesquieu. Op. cit., p. 66–68 and 231–232.
19 Castro, Armando. Op. cit., v. 5, chaps. XVIII and XIX; Lobo, A. de Souza Silva Costa. *História da sociedade em Portugal no século XV*, p. 524–529; Azevedo, J. Lúcio de. *Éocas de Portugal econômico*, p. 25; Coelho, Antônio Borges. *A revolução de 1383*, p. 49–52.
20 Cf. Barros, Gama. Op. cit., t. VIII, cap. II; Sérgio, Antonio. *Breve interpretação da História de Portugal*. 2nd ed. Lisboa: Liv. Sá da Costa, 1972, p. 28–29; Coelho, Antônio Borges. Op. cit., p. 55–57; Castro, Armando. A crise nacional de 1383–1385. In: *Ensaios*, cit., p. 191–192 and 201.
21 Regarding the characteristics of the Portuguese mercantile bourgeoisie and its behavior prior to the overseas expansion, see Castro, Armando. Op. cit.; Idem, A sociedade medieval portuguesa, Op. cit., p. 161–162; Azevedo, J. Lúcio de. Op. cit., p. 17, 21–22, and 30; Coelho, Borges. Op. cit.; Martins, Oliveira. Op. cit. Book Three, p. 168–174.
22 See Furtado, Celso. *A economia brasileira*, p. 26–27 and 76–77; Idem, *Formação econômica do Brasil*, p. 66; Ribeiro, Darcy. *Teoria do Brasil*, p. 47–48; Idem, *O processo civilizatório*, p. 113–117.
23 Cf. Weber, Max. Op. cit., p. 122–126. For a succinct analysis of Pirenne's theses, see Hilton, Rodney. Comentário. In: *Do feudalismo ao capitalismo*, p. 141–159.
24 Stein, Stanley J.; Stein, Barbara H. *La herencia colonial de America Latina*, p. 24.
25 Cf. Martins, Oliveira. Op. cit., Livros Terceiro e Quarto; Lobo, A. de Souza Silva Costa. Op. cit., p. 444–445; Azevedo, J. Lúcio de. Op. cit., p. 70, 97 and 109–110.
26 See Saraiva, Antônio José. *A inquisição portuguesa*; Idem, *Inquisição e cristãos-novos*. Porto: Inova, 1969. On the same topic, see also Boxer, C. R. Op. cit., p. 266–272 and 333–335.
27 Cf. Marx, Karl. *Das Kapital*. Book Three, p. 347–349.
28 Novais, Fernando A. Estrutura e dinâmica do antigo sistema colonial. *Cadernos Cebrap*, n. 17, p. 11 and 12; Williams, Eric. *Capitalism & Slavery*, p. 126.
29 Cf. Marx, Karl. *Das Kapital*, Book Three, chap. XX; Weber, Max. *Economia y sociedad*, p. 255 and 294–297.
30 Marx, Karl. *Das Kapital*, Book Two, p. 61.
31 See Ciafardini, Horacio. Capital, comercio y capitalismo: A propósito del llamado "capitalismo comercial". In: *Modos de producción en América Latina*. Op. cit., p. 111 et seqs.
32 Cf. Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations*, v. 1, Book Two, chap. V, p. 331.
33 See Simonsen, Roberto C. *História econômica do Brasil (1500-1820)* t. I, p. 124–127.
34 Godinho, Vitorino Magalhães. *A estrutura na antiga sociedade portuguesa*, p. 12 and 26.
35 Ibidem, chap. III.
36 Saraiva, A. J. Op. cit., p. 53–54.
37 Cf. Castro, Armando. Op. cit., v. 5, chap. XX.
38 Cf. Lobo, A. de Souza Silva Costa. Op. cit., p. 48–50; Martins, Oliveira. Op. cit., Livro Quinto, chap. I, p. 323; Azevedo, J. Lúcio de. *Épocas de Portugal econômico*, p. 20 and 68–75; Godinho, V. M. Op. cit., p. 42–50 and 64–67; Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 283; Boxer, G. R. Op. cit., p. 31; Goulart, Maurício. *Escravidão africana no Brasil (das origens à extinção do tráfico)*, p. 17–18 and 21–27.

5

ORIGINAL SOURCES OF SLAVE LABOR FORCE

Modalities of Contact with Indigenous People

It is beyond the purpose of this book to examine in detail the autochthonous society found by the Portuguese in the territory that would be called Brazil. For the sake of delimiting the analysis, it suffices to say that indigenous people assembled in nomadic tribes that belonged to a social formation known as primitive communism. There were differences in their level of development – the tribes along the coast were more culturally advanced than those of the distant countryside, with the exception of those in the Paraná Basin, which were closer to the Inca Empire. The tribes along the Atlantic coast – the first ones encountered by the Portuguese – had an arsenal of productive knowledge that indicated a significant evolution in the context of their pre-modern nature. In spite of their nomadism, they already cultivated corn and cassava, and the simple fact that they mastered the technique to process the latter demonstrates an accumulation of complex productive experience. They also had rudimentary knowledge of cotton weaving and ceramics. A number of elements of the indigenous material culture, as anthropologists have pointed out, helped the Portuguese to adapt to the geographic environment of Brazil. At the same time, the colonizers entirely rejected indigenous peoples' social organization. They obtained from it no constitutive element of the mode of production and the social formation they established in the conquered country.

It is well known that the Portuguese Crown, occupied as it was exploring trade avenues with Asia, paid little attention to its American colony in the first three decades after the discovery. During this phase, the Portuguese contented themselves with extracting brazilwood, establishing a relatively peaceful *modus vivendi* with the indigenous tribes with which they made allies. In exchange for European industrial articles, the small Portuguese settlements obtained food and labor to cut and transport the wood that was used as a dye. It should be noted that, thanks to the interrelation between the development of their productive forces and the level of their needs, indigenous people had plenty of leisure time, which was inconceivable to the colonizers' mentality. As a result, to acquire useful or simply decorative European products, indigenous people had a potential reserve of free time for work, which they willingly dedicated to perform difficult tasks they had never done before.[1]

In this phase characterized by barter, the Portuguese had to compete with the French, who set up interlopers at various points of the Brazilian coast and created alliances with tribes that were rivals of those that supported the Portuguese. The Portuguese and the French became thus

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enmeshed in the traditional hostilities between indigenous tribes, for whom war was a normal part of life.[2] In this regard, Capistrano de Abreu observed,

> The fact that the Tupinambás constantly allied with the French and the Portuguese with the Tupiniquins does not figure in history, but it is an irrefutable fact and it was important – for years, it was unclear whether Brazil would belong to the Pero (the Portuguese) or the Mair (the French).[3]

The form of contact between the Portuguese and indigenous tribes changed radically once the Crown made the decision to occupy the territory through settlement and permanent economic exploitation. The point now was to expel indigenous people from large and successively broadened stretches of land and force them to perform slave work. War and indiscriminate extermination became inevitable, no matter how much the Crown and the Jesuits attempted to discipline the colonizers' actions and impose at least a few norms of coexistence capable of saving the demographic heritage represented by the natives from complete destruction. Stuck between the pressure exerted by the Jesuits, whose efforts focused on catechizing the indigenous population and establishing reductions under their control, and the avarice of the colonizers, exclusively interested in occupying the land and enslaving the natives, the Portuguese Crown created extensive and contradictory laws that endowed the slavery of indigenous people with a peculiar character. It varied from complete slavery to different incomplete forms, as we will see in Chapter 23.

While during the phase of simple barter, indigenous people maintained certain superiority over Europeans, even in the cultural sense, the next phase was characterized by its destructive effects on the native population. The process of change in the contacts between the Portuguese and the natives in the sixteenth century and the main aspects of the repercussions of the process of colonization in the indigenous society were examined in Alexander Marchant's study and in Florestan Fernandes's synthesis, which I recommend to the reader.[4] Instead of a "nearly complete cultural reciprocity" between conquerors and the conquered and the "greatest accommodation possible of the arriving culture to that of the natives," as Gilberto Freyre wrote,[5] the reality was one of enslavement, detribalization, and physical and spiritual destruction of the natives.

Indigenous People and Slavery

The native social formation was unacquainted with slavery before the colonizers' arrival. War prisoners who were not devoured in ritual feasts were assimilated by the tribe, at first in a condition of inferiority and, later, under equal social conditions. Nonetheless, a number of chroniclers referred to prisoners as enslave people. But these same chroniclers did not describe any *economic* difference between the original members of the tribe and their prisoners. The latter, even when sentenced to be sacrificed in a ritual feast, were not forced to work more than the rest and enjoyed an equal distribution of the product. Even though he repeatedly mentions enslave people among indigenous people, Southey himself demonstrated the concept's inadequacy to the real situation:

> In fact, those prisoners who are not sacrificed are looked upon as members of the tribe, and the inferiority of their condition is soon forgotten in a context where there are no other real or imaginary inequalities.[6]

Writing about the Guaicurus, who were apparently stratified according to a well-defined social structure and among whom prisoners' inferior status was permanent, Southey emphasized,

> The state of these prisoners is slavery only by name, since compulsory work is never demanded of them.[7]

Colonization was unable to introduce slavery at the heart of the tribal formation, but it accustomed it to the slave trade. The prisoners, who were formerly devoured or assimilated, started being traded for European trinkets.[8] What at first should have been only incidental became customary, and the Portuguese created alliances with tribes that systematically engaged in capturing prisoners to offer them as enslave people to the colonizers. Later, the Dutch and the French participated in the barter of enslave people with the indigenous tribes of the Amazon region.[9]

However, it is worth noting that Portuguese colonizers called for the introduction of African enslave people very early in the process, when the native population was probably still abundant.[10] This fact can be explained by the previous knowledge of Black enslave people's capacity for work and the greater ease with which they were subjected in a foreign habitat, unlike indigenous people, whose enslavement faced tribal resistance in native territory. Furthermore, with time, the stereotype of indigenous people as weak and indolent workers was internalized by the colonizers. In a letter to the Council of Pará in the mid-seventeenth century, Father Antônio Vieira summarized what he considered to be the causes of indigenous people's inefficiency as enslave people compared to African people: (1) indigenous people are less capable of work; (2) they are less resistant to illness; (3) they escape with greater ease; (4) they die of yearning for their previous life.[11]

It is curious that, to this date, historians have done little more than follow Vieira's line of reasoning, accepting it without a critical examination. Vieira's explanation is only partially true, and he failed to examine deeper aspects of the matter. At the time of the famous Jesuit's writing, it was already well known that African enslave people were also decimated by infectious diseases and that they were no less inclined to rebel and to flee than indigenous people, in spite of their disadvantage in a foreign habitat. The difference was most likely one of degree, of intensity, and not always greater in indigenous people. But the point where Vieira's explanation, reiterated by so many historians, is further from the truth is in regard to indigenous people's capacity to work and to learn. With his long experience with matters of Brazil, Gabriel Soares de Sousa wrote about indigenous people:

> …they are also quite clever at incorporating whatever White people teach them, as long as it is not a matter of accounting or logic, for which they are quite barbarian; but they are very good as carpenters, sawyers, brick makers, cart drivers, and at any occupation in sugar mills, for they soon learn these trades; and in cattle raising they are very skillful and mindful.[12]

The Jesuit priest Antônio Sepp, who headed Guarani reductions for many years, confirms the Portuguese chronicler's observations. Referring to a simple everyday inspection, Father Sepp writes,

> After instructing the musicians and dancers, I visited other workshops, the mill, the bakery. I observed what the blacksmiths and the carpenters were doing, what the sculptors were doing, what the painters were painting, what the weavers were weaving, what the turners were lathing, what the embroiderers were embroidering, what the butchers were butchering.[13]

Note that the cultural level of the Guaranis from the River Plate region in their original life was no different from that of the natives of the Atlantic coast. The extraordinary development

of the Guaranis' skills in the reductions is no less significant considering the fact that the Jesuits employed coercive and sometimes brutal methods. In fact, the River Plate reductions, as I have stated elsewhere, were an anomaly in the overall landscape of European colonization, possible only in an area devoid of precious metals and inappropriate for a plantation economy – an area that the Spanish Crown found no other way of defending from São Paulo *bandeirantes* than by entrusting it to the Jesuits. However, regarding the type of colonization, the River Plate reductions were the most adequate form possible given the original structure of indigenous society. I do not intend by this to downplay the violence of the Jesuit enterprise against the native culture – I merely compare it to nonreligious colonization. And I understand why Mariátegui, who was an admirer of the Inca community, the *ayllu*, considered the work of the Jesuits the only one that was constructive in the general process of Iberian colonization.[14]

In order to understand the profound reasons for indigenous people's *inefficiency* relative to African people and in the context of slavery common to both, it is necessary to go beyond Vieira's ideologically questionable explanation. First, indigenous people seemed weak at work and died soon because they were a very cheap commodity, carelessly employed and worn down by their owners. I will return to this point when examining slave prices and the forms of indigenous slavery. Second, the set of ideal representations by indigenous people, which constituted a form of self-awareness in the context of their flourishing primitive communism, very strongly resisted acculturation. If the Jesuits of the River Plate reductions obtained better results than the settlers, it was because they took advantage of that primitive communism, introducing new productive forces into it and building a new type of social orientation based on it. Finally, the stereotype of the incapable Indian was convenient to the Crown and to slave traders, who found an extraordinary source of profits in the African slave trade. In today's terms, we could say that the stereotype served as a marketing technique. This was further promoted, whether deliberately or by coincidence, as Maurício Goulart suggests, by the Vatican's policy of protecting indigenous people and approving of the enslavement of Africans.[15]

In any case, indigenous labor force predominated in plantations approximately up to the late-sixteenth century. It seems to me that Maurício Goulart's assertion that "it was after the mid-seventeenth century that Blacks took precedence over Indians in colonial slavery"[16] is inexact. In 1618, when Fernandes Brandão wrote his *Diálogos*, he emphasized the presence of Africans, to the point of stating:

> …in Brazil, a new Guinea has been created with a large number of slaves—in some provinces there are more Africans than natives and every man who lives there invests all his assets in that commodity.[17]

In turn, Van der Dussen, in a report on Dutch Brazil written in 1639, asserted that Blacks were the fundamental workforce of plantations, while Indians were employed only in secondary tasks.[18]

Everything seems to indicate that, as early as the first half of the seventeenth century, Black enslave people constituted the main workforce of the regions where a plantation economy prospered, with indigenous workforce prevailing or exclusively employed in poor regions where the production of profitable export commodities was unfeasible.

Africans

Unlike indigenous peoples, who confronted the colonizers organized in a tribal society, Africans arrived in Brazil already detribalized, torn from their original milieu, and forcefully transformed

into desocialized individuals. The slave trade brought together Black people from many ethnic groups that differed in terms of social evolution, language, traditions, customs, etc.

The social standing of African peoples was already quite diverse in the fifteenth century, when the slave trade began. For the purposes of this work, it is unnecessary to take sides in the debate regarding the modes of production and social formations in Africa. It suffices to make the distinction between peoples with a class division constituted in states and stateless tribal societies with various degrees of primitive communism. Consequently, the level of economic development also varied; peoples organized in states were more developed than most pre-Columbian indigenous societies and were closer to India's traditional society. Through endogenous evolution – and not thanks to Arabic influence, as racist historians assume – these Black peoples had attained remarkable progress in farming and craftsmanship, most importantly in metalwork, a specialty in which Europeans were more advanced only in some respects. However, regardless of their social stage, communal land property and various forms of collective work prevailed among African people.

Regarding slavery, it was undoubtedly practiced in Black Africa before the arrival of the Portuguese. But it was a very different form of slavery from the one that would be imposed in plantations in the Americas. Among the Africans, slavery was *patriarchal* and secondary as a relation of production. It had little relevance in tribal societies, where prisoners of war were incorporated into the extended family with certain differences in status and sometimes with greater work responsibilities. In societies organized in states, captives served as domestic servants in the royal court and in the homes of noble families, or as miners, bearers, artisans, and farmers in the domains of the king and members of the aristocracy.

Usually, the servile condition diminished in the second generation and ended in the fourth. It was a rule that enslave people born in captivity could not be sold. The main source of enslave people was war; only exceptionally family members were sold in cases of hunger and people were enslaved as a punishment for crimes or as a consequence of debt. In the latter case, however, the relationship between master and slave acquired the hard and impersonal form of exploitation, contrasting with patriarchal customs. Although purchasing enslave people individually was also rare, there was already an enslave person trade with the outer world, on an extremely smaller scale than the mercantilist slave trade. It is true, however, that slavery and the slave trade were established institutions in the Sudanese states of Western Africa from the eleventh to the sixteenth century. When the Portuguese arrived in Lower Guinea in 1480, they noted that the commercial importance of enslave people was already well known. At first, they operated as agents of that internal African slave trade, which provided workers for the gold mines.[19]

Since distant times, Arabic or Arabized merchants channeled a small flow of Africans to the harems and to domestic slavery, which persisted in the Mediterranean Basin in the Middle Ages. Displaced by Europeans in the sixteenth century, Arabic or Arabized merchants competed with them in the nineteenth century, when they dominated the slave trade in the Eastern African coast and sent thousands of Black enslave people to the plantations of the islands in the Indian Ocean. Zanzibar became an important slave outpost, also employing enslave people in the local clove plantations. Slave sugarcane plantations emerged in Réunion and Mauritius, and the slave trade extended to the Comoros and Seychelles archipelagos.[20]

The mercantilist slave trade initiated by the Portuguese introduced a destructive external factor that paralyzed or perverted Black peoples' endogenous evolution. At first, the Portuguese themselves attacked defenseless villages and captured the people. Soon, however, they left that task to Africans. Seduced by European or American goods and provided with weapons, Africans undertook a human hunt at an unprecedented scale. Capturing prisoners for the slave trade became the most important activity of tribes in remote regions of the countryside and of solid

coastal states such as Dahomey, which was born out of the slave trade in the seventeenth century and was founded on the royal monopoly of that trade. In addition to an exacerbation of wars, whose main purpose or byproduct was to capture enslave people, there were systematic kidnappings, especially against weaker tribes, and there was an increase in penal enslavement due to debts, as well as the sale of relatives motivated by hunger. Confrontations between opposing groups led to the enslavement of members of the aristocracy and the clergy. However, the rule not to sell enslave people born in captivity prevailed. *It is therefore important to emphasize that there was no slave breeding for sale in Africa.*

Prisoners were traded for textiles, ironwork, wheat, salt, horses, and especially firearms and ammunition. These products of European origin were complemented, with enthusiastic acceptance, by others from the Americas, such as tobacco, spirits, sugar, sweets, and seashells, the latter used as currency by Africans. The dissemination of firearms turned them into a necessity for survival and forced one tribe after another to try to obtain them by capturing men and women from other tribes.

Protected by forts like those of Arguim and São Jorge da Mina, the Portuguese organized a slave-trading system that grew and became consolidated. From the port cities of São Paulo de Luanda and São Felipe de Benguela, fortified trading posts reproduced along the coast, and in the countryside, military prisons emerged along the roads where the slave caravans traveled, serving as intermediary warehouses. Slave traders had a network of agents – the *pombeiros* or *pumbeiros* – that went on long voyages by land or water through the countryside to the *pombos* – the markets where enslave people were bartered with the local tribes. From there, the prisoners were led in chains to the ports, where they awaited the ship that would take them to America. The *pombeiros* were White, more commonly mulattoes, free Black former enslave people, or even trusted enslave people. The Portuguese Crown in turn maintained relations of tutelage or alliances with many *sobas*,[21] who were in charge of supplying the network of trade agents and, in some cases, of paying tribute in the form of captives. For example, Salvador de Sá imposed on the Congolese king a tribute of 9000 enslave people after recapturing Angola. Eventually, the Portuguese themselves went on assault expeditions in search of prisoners, aided by Jaga warriors, similarly to São Paulo *bandeirantes*, who commanded Indians to hunt down other Indians. While these hunters had the support of the Dominicans and the Jesuits and the Vatican itself, the enslavement of Black people was always sanctioned by the Catholic Church. The Jesuits, in particular, not only recommended the employment of Africans in Brazil but also exploited Black enslave people in their many plantations and cattle ranches, obtained profits from the slave trade, and even practiced it directly in Africa.[22]

From the facts mentioned above, we can conclude that the colonizers did not need to occupy and populate the African territory, as they did in Brazil, resulting in a new social formation. African social structures remained intact but perverted by the exacerbation of the slave trade, which reinforced the power of tribal chiefs, heads of state, and aristocratic casts, augmenting their despotic and despoiling character.

Initially holding the absolute monopoly over the slave trade, after the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Portuguese faced competition from their colonialist rivals. In the eighteenth century, with the power of its mercantile capital and its military force, England dominated the world slave trade.

Economic Nature of the Slave Trade

The African slave trade had two sides: on the side of the African sellers, it was only a matter of *barter* to obtain use value; on the side of the European traders, it was genuine commerce, an

interchange of exchange values, commercial circulation for the sake of profit. And it was precisely due to that double character of the slave trade that it became one of the most profitable businesses of the mercantilist era.

Even in the most developed African formations at the time, there existed no process of accumulation of the capitalist sort, not even restricted to the sphere of circulation. Inter-African transactions took the form of barter of use values for both parties involved. Even though a number of products were already used as currency, it served as a means of circulation and a means of accumulation, but it never functioned as capital, as a value to be added as an end in itself. When Africans sold prisoners to the slave traders, they only thought of obtaining greatly appreciated exotic products that directly served for individual consumption or accumulation. In the latter case, African chiefs were motivated by the need to reinforce their social prestige through ostentation and redistribution of products as a means to guarantee loyalty.

Captives in turn did not embody labor and therefore did not have the social cost of a product, much less of a value. They were obtained through war and kidnappings, as well as other means exercised as a common and necessary social activity, whose cost was not understood as the cost of productive work. In short, raids allowed them to take possession of a free man and turn him into an enslave person, *but that man had not been raised by them as a human individual*. Therefore, the enslave person's cost was *equal to zero* for the Africans who captured and used him as barter with the slave traders.

This was evidently quite advantageous for slave traders. They made an initial investment in building the ships, paying the crew, and purchasing the products with which they would acquire the enslave people to be sold in ports of the Americas. Since for the African providers, enslave people had a cost equal to zero and the purpose of the barter was only to obtain use values, without regard for the exchange value; the European traders could obtain the enslave people for a price that, including all expenses incurred, represented only a fraction of the final price in the American market – whereas the enslave person had no *value* in Africa, the opposite was true on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Here the enslave person was considered a commodity from the start, with a certain initial cost and a final cost established according to the relationship between demand and supply at a given moment. The difference in price at the selling market and at the buying market could therefore be very large and provided exceptional profits relative to other uses of mercantile capital.

Obviously, there were variations in the mechanism's operation, and such variations were not always beneficial to slave traders. With the growing flow of buyers, Africans learned to take advantage of the competition and increased their demands in terms of the amount and quality of the products they received in exchange for enslave people. On the other hand, the price of enslave people in the Americas varied depending on plantation owners' demand and slave traders' supply, although the dynamic variable in the equation was *usually the* demand. However, to a greater or lesser extent, the purely economic mechanism described above was subjacent to the slave trade during its entire existence.

At this point, some reflections regarding the high mortality rate of Black people during the Middle Passage are necessary. During most of the sixteenth century, the mortality rate was high for free men and more so for enslave people. However, improvements in navigation made transoceanic voyages safer in later centuries, resulting in a drop in the mortality rate for free men to about 1%, as can be deduced from many accounts, although the conditions of comfort were far from today's standards even for privileged passengers. For Black people brought to the Americas, the mortality rate only dropped to about 50%, according to a quite probably optimistic estimate. In 1659, referring to Black people on board slave ships, Friar Thomaz de Mercado said that it was "a wonder that they did not diminish to 20%." Maurício Goulart estimates that

in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the average mortality rate of Black people in slave ships could be safely be set at 10%.[23] Curtin observes a declining mortality rate from an average of 23% in the seventeenth century to 15% in the eighteenth century, to 9% in the nineteenth century. In the period when the slave trade was entirely illegal, a sample from 1844 to 1864 indicates that the mortality rate increased to 17%.[24] In spite of their overstatements, which historians must correct, abolitionists were right regarding the essential aspects of the matter.

Racial discrimination cannot be singled out as the cause of the phenomenon, because poor White people brought from Europe as indented servants – an incomplete form of slavery – traveled in similar conditions and also died onboard.[25] The phenomenon was not the result of gratuitous perversity either, since slave traders were entrepreneurs with a practical spirit and had no interest in losing enslave people in transit. It should be noted that the Portuguese had effective organizational experience with transportation and that the Dutch learned from them when they entered the business during their occupation of Northeastern Brazil. Nonetheless, the Portuguese Crown was later compelled to enact the Law of March 18, 1684, which imposed detailed regulations on slave ships in order to avoid overcrowding and other adverse conditions responsible for the high mortality and morbidity rates. The severity of the penalties specified gives us an idea of the seriousness of the abuses practiced, a number of which were discussed in the initial considerations and in the articles of the law.[26] However, this legal imposition was disregarded as much as any other whenever it affected the interests of powerful sectors that were not easy to control. This is confirmed by Conrad's description of the massacre of captives on their voyage from their point of departure in the African continent to their point of arrival in some slave market in Brazil. The information collected by José Capela points in the same direction.[27]

The cause of the high mortality rate of Black captives on slave ships has to do with the significant gap between their purchase price in Africa and their sale price in Brazil. Certain basic items of the travel expenses – especially the cost of building and using the ships and the expenses with the crew – were inevitable no matter how many people traveled in the hold. Therefore, increasing the number of enslave people transported only implied the added cost of purchasing additional enslave people and a moderate increase in expenses for their sustenance. In those circumstances, the risk was worth taking. Any decrease in the mortality rate increased the trader's profits. Overcrowding was probably the norm, and the mortality rate aboard increased or decreased depending on a number of factors (duration of the voyage, meteorological conditions, the health of the enslave people at the moment of boarding, hygiene of the food and drinking water, etc.).

Let us suppose that transporting one hundred enslave people guaranteed zero losses – not counting accidents, an unforeseen delay in the travel time, epidemics, etc. But if the ship carried 200 enslave people instead and incurred a loss of no more than 10%, the profit would be considerably greater for the slave dealer both in absolute terms and relative to the total investment. This agrees with Tollenare's observation:

> A slave ship from Mozambique that loses 10% of its cargo is thought to have had a good trip.[28]

If the loss was 20%, it was probably still profitable, although much less than the average in this business. That being the case, and especially during times when prices were high in Brazil, why not risk overcrowding the ships with enslave people bought inexpensively in Africa?

Consulting random issues of a Bahian newspaper between March and June 1821, Maria Graham examined the voyages of five slave ships that arrived in Salvador.[29] The result resembles a sample, obviously without the rigor of modern statistical methods. Maria Graham's sample is

certainly not representative of the entire slave trade that year, but it is a model of an extreme case, since three of the five ships examined left from Mozambique, transporting 63% of the total cargo on the longest trade route. The two other ships left from Malembo, Congo, which was a much shorter route to Bahia. Nonetheless, the general mortality rate of the slave cargo from Mozambique (20%) did not differ significantly from the mortality rate in the ships that traveled from Malembo (17%). The variations in the mortality rate for the five ships were as follows: 38%, 14%, 3%, 27%, and 8%. Note that the first three numbers correspond to the ships from Mozambique. It is evident that the traders of the first and fourth ships incurred in losses, while the second obtained a lower profit than was considered good, while the traders of the third and fifth ships obtained profits that ranged from good to excellent.

The slavery of Black people always assumed its complete form until the Law of the Free Womb or Rio Branco Law of September 1871, which eliminated the hereditary nature of slavery. For that reason, and because it served to stabilize the mode of production, a systematic study of colonial slavery presupposes a study of *Black* slavery.

Notes

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5 Freyre, Gilberto. Op. cit., t. I. p. 128.
6 Southey, Robert. *História do Brasil*, v. 2, p. 132.
7 Ibidem, v. 6, p. 194.
8 Sousa, Gabriel Soares de. *Tratado descritivo do Brasil em 1587*, p. 325. See also p. 62 and 122.
9 Cf. Southey, Robert. Op. cit., v. 3, p. 248 and 290; v. 5, p. 15–18; v. 6, p. 109 and 234.
10 See, for example, the requests by the donataries Pero de Góis (Letter to Martim Ferreira, August 18, 1545) and Duarte Coelho (Letter to D. João III, April 27, 1542). In: *HCPB*, v. 3, p. 262 and 314.
11 Viera, Padre Antonio apud Dourado, Mecenas. *A conversão do gentio*, p. 128.
12 Sousa, Gabriel Soares de. Op. cit., p. 313.
13 Sepp, Padre Antônio. *Viagem às missões jesuíticas e trabalhos apostólicos*, p. 91. See also p. 82 et passim.
14 Cf. Mariátegui, José Carlos. *7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana*, p. 15 and 61–63.
15 Cf. Goulart, Maurício. *Escravidão africana no Brasil: das origens à extinção do tráfi co*. p. 54. See also Moura, Clóvis. *Rebeliões da senzala*. Rio de Janeiro: Conquista, 1972, p. 31–32.
16 Goulart, Maurício. *Escravidão africana no Brasil*, cit., p. 99–100.
17 Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. *Diálogos das grandezas do Brasil*, cit., p. 79.
18 Cf. Dussen, Adriaen van der. *Relatório sobre as capitanias conquistadas no Brasil pelos holandeses (1639)*. p. 87–96.
19 Regarding African social formations, see Suret-Canale, J. *África negra*, p. 50–90 and 101–128; Idem, Las sociedades tradicionales en el África tropical y el concepto de modo de producción asiático. In: Bartra, Roger. *El modo de producción asiático*, p. 178–204; Meillassoux, Claude et al. *Antropologia econômica*; Crummey, Donald; Stewart C. (Eds.). *Modes of Production in África: The Precolonial Era*; Fage, J. D. Traite et esclavage dans le contexte historique de l'Afrique Occidentale. In: Mintz, S. (Org.). *Esclave: facteur de production. L'économie politique de l'esclavage*; Genoves, Eugéne D. Le travailleur noir en Afrique et dans le sud esclavagiste. In: Mintz, S. (Org.). Op. cit., p. 71–83; Capela, José. *Escravatura: a empresa de saque. O abolicionismo (1810-1875)*. Porto: Afrontamento, 1974, p. 44–70; Klein, A. N. West African Unfree Labor Before and After the Rise of the Atlantic Slave Trade. In: *Slavery in the New World*, p. 87–95.
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21 Chief of an African tribe (E.N.).

22 On the mechanism of the African slave trade and related issues, see Boxer, C. R. *Salvador de Sá e a luta pelo Brasil e Angola (1602-1686)*, p. 236–253. Idem, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, p. 20–24, 31–32, and 96–103; Davis, Brion, cit., chap. IV and VI; Suret-Canale. *África Negra*, cit., 91–93 and 128–137; Spix; Martius. *Através da Bahia*, cit., p. 145–150, n. 69; Taunay, Aff onso de E. *Subsídios para a história do tráfico africano no Brasil Colonial*. p. 626–653; Capela, José, cit., p. 70–112 and 171–173; Goulart, Maurício. *Escravidão africana no Brasil*, cit., chap. I and II; Fage, J. D., cit.; Gemery, Henry S. e Hogendorn, Jan S. La traite des esclaves sur l'Atlantique: essai de modèle économique. In: *Esclave: facteur de production*; Gueye, Mbaye. O tráfico negreiro no interior do continente africano. In: *O tráfico de escravos negros*; *La traite des noirs au Siècle des Lumières (Témoignages de negriers)*; Kilkenny, Roberta Walker. The Slave Mode of Production: Precolonial Dahomey. In: *Modes of Production in África*.
23 Cf. Varnhagen. Op. cit., t. I, p. 434; Goulart, Maurício. *História do Brasil*, p. 278.
24 Curtin, Philip D. *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, p. 275–281.
25 Cf. Miller, William, op. cit., p. 73; Williams, Eric, op. cit., p. 13–14.
26 *ABN*, v. 28, p. 206–211.
27 Conrad, Robert Edgar. *Tumbeiros: o tráfico escravista para o Brasil*, p. 48–65; Capela, José, op. cit., p. 164–170.
28 Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 139.
29 Cf. Graham, Maria. *Diário de uma viagem ao Brasil*, p. 166.

6

ASPECTS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SLAVE PLANTATIONS IN BRAZIL

Voluntariness and Objective Conditioning

Ancient slavery developed gradually through a spontaneous process that historians therefore consider *normal*. In contrast, colonial slavery in the Modern Era emerged abruptly as a result of deliberate and planned actions, which make its development process appear *abnormal* in historic evolution. Reflecting on that contrast, Ciro Cardoso wrote:

> Colonial slave society emerged as a consequence of the export business and was structured according to the characteristics and demands of that business; as a result, it preceded structured society and conditioned it to its form. We cannot overlook this *voluntary* aspect, which translates into a conscious decision on the part of the colonists and the metropolises when enacting colonial policies to organize the slave trade. However, we should not stretch the point and see colonial slavery as the result of a *choice*, because there were no alternatives at first.[1]

Let us leave for later the issue of the lack of alternatives, correctly observed by the author, and discuss the *voluntariness* that apparently characterized the genesis of the colonial slave social formation. First of all, it is important to note that voluntariness characterizes all historical actions, insofar as men establish goals and choose the adequate means to achieve them. Roman expansionism, with its policy of subjugating and enslaving barbarian peoples, also manifested conscious and coherent decisions. On the other hand, voluntariness in the establishment of colonial slavery was far from having the neatly linear nature that seems to stand out at first sight. Actually, its genesis experienced many curves and zigzags and was essentially conditioned by objective factors that overpowered intentions. What at first appears as a deliberate and planned action was the result of attempts, errors, and frustrations that gradually adapted class interests and the conscious actions of the protagonists to existing conditions.

This fact is evident in the colonization of Brazil. For three decades, the Portuguese Crown treated the new country over which it proclaimed its sovereignty with disregard. When the territory was threatened by increasing incursions by the French, the government of Lisbon decided to defend it with a colonization policy. The *donatárias* were hence created. But that decision did not mean that the Crown's main objective was to establish a plantation economy, but rather to create the means to discover new precious metal reserves, inspired by the success achieved by

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the Spanish in that regard early on. Colonization and the creation of plantations were aimed at guaranteeing the territory's possession, which was expected to contain a mineral wealth analogous to Mexico and Peru. The documentation of the time reveals the insistence with which the Crown pressured the *donatários* and the governors-general to stimulate and organize expeditions in search of gold. In contrast, Duarte Coelho, whose captaincy was the most successful, was unable to obtain from Lisbon the material means necessary to consolidate his sugar plantations in Pernambuco. Because of the significant profits derived from selling Black enslave people to Spanish colonies, for a long time the Portuguese crown supplied them reluctantly and in small numbers to the settlers established in Brazil.[2] And as late as 1600, the interest in sugar production in the Atlantic islands was so great that the Portuguese government imposed an import tax of 20% on Brazilian sugar, in an attempt to favor the rival region that also belonged to the Portuguese empire.[3] The colonists in turn did not go to Brazil to stay, as Fernandes Brandão and Frei Vicente do Salvador wrote. In general, their intention was to acquire wealth and return as soon as possible to their homeland. But many or perhaps most of them ended up staying against their will and grew roots in colonial territory.

Therefore, the results did not correspond to the immediate intentions. Gold was only discovered a century later. In the meantime, the price of sugar rose exponentially in the world market, increasing sixfold in the sixteenth century. Colonists and traders – who financed the former and created a space to sell their product – responded to the market's impulse. Sugar plantations multiplied in Pernambuco, Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro, and by 1600, the export of Brazilian sugar represented a total of 2.3 million sterling pounds, increasing to 3.8 million in 1650.[4] In addition to high prices, another factor favored Brazilian sugar production. Antillean plantations, established by the Spanish before Brazilian plantations existed, started decaying as gold and silver attracted Spanish colonists. Brazilian sugar production easily surpassed the Atlantic Islands' and obtained the monopoly in the world market. Thanks to sugar, Brazil became an immense source of wealth, which Fernandes Brandão correctly assessed as more profitable and promising than India. Simultaneously, a new society arose and established itself firmly in the Portuguese colony.

Continuity, Diffusionism, and Evolution

Another deceiving appearance is the presumed continuity from the form of slavery that continued to exist in the Middle Ages and modern colonial slavery – one thesis regarding this continuity is present in José Antônio Saco and was recently developed based on the studies by Charles Verlinden. There is no doubt that slavery did not disappear entirely in the European Middle Ages and that its presence was particularly evident in some places.[5] But between this form of mostly domestic slavery and the form of slavery found in sugar plantations in the Mediterranean islands toward the end of the Middle Ages, there was a difference that represents a *discontinuity*. The continuity found in colonial slavery in the Americas is with regard to the slavery practiced in the Mediterranean islands (Sicily, Cyprus, and others), and not with the residual slavery characteristic of the Middle Ages. In addition, we can infer from Lippmann that slave labor was not introduced early on in the Mediterranean islands for sugar production, since at first wage labor was employed for that purpose, even in large enterprises.[6] Since plantations and the productive forces it organized were adequate for the employment of enslave people, of which Africa was a plentiful source, slave labor eventually displaced wage labor, which was only incipient in Europe.

While the notion of a continuous evolution is unconfirmed by the evidence, the phenomenon of colonial slavery cannot be explained by simple diffusionism either. Evidently, sugar production was not created in the Americas, but made a lengthy, centuries-long voyage from India, accumulating many inventions and technological knowledge as well as various modes of

production along the way, in a process of diffusion in which the Arabs played a fundamental role.[7] But it was a diffusion of the product's consumption, the technology used to produce it, and the material resources applied to it – and not of the social formations. Sugar production acquired the form of plantation slavery in the Mediterranean and Atlantic islands, stimulated by a growing market, but made a qualitative leap when sugarcane was transplanted to the Americas and to Brazil in particular. Instead of becoming a secondary and peripheral mode of production, as it did in the Portuguese Atlantic islands, in its association with the colonization of Brazil slavery became the *dominant* mode of production, at an immensely grater scale, functioning as the basis for an historically new social formation.

The explanations that attempt to relate the origin of slavery in Brazil to either the abundance or scarcity of certain factors of production are unilateral and superficial. Specifically, the abundance of land and the scarcity of the labor force.

In 1798, the Brazilian bishop Azeredo Coutinho published a work in French justifying slavery and the African slave trade, in which, among other arguments, he said:

> …in nations where there is much unoccupied land and relatively few inhabitants, where everyone can be a landowner, slavery is righteously established.[8]

The old argument reemerged in a new form in the works by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Octávio Ianni, and Fernando Novais, based on Wakefield's theory of colonization filtered with Marx's critique.[9] First of all, it must be noted that Marx conceived a situation where unoccupied lands were directly and easily available to small producers, which characterized the occupation of long stretches of land in the United States, but did not happen or happened only marginally in the regions where slave plantations were established.[10] Although an abundant availability of land was one of the essential conditions of colonial slavery, it makes no sense for the authors cited above to base their explanation on Marx's critique.

Celso Furtado proposed that the economic motivation for the employment of slave labor, considering the magnitude of colonial plantation enterprises, was the lack of wage labor and the cost required to recruit it. Without the alternative of small family units, and given the impossibility of wage labor, slavery imposed itself as the solution.[11]

The alternative between compulsory and free labor was formalized in Domar's economic model. This model was as elegant and seductive as it was simplistic, in that it looked exclusively at the opposition between the factors of labor and land, whose relative abundance or scarcity presumably sufficed to explain the choice of some form of compulsory work or the viability of free labor, without any other considerations of time and space.[12]

This sort of explanation emerges from a supra-historic standpoint, where the factors of production are detached from the social relations that people have to deal with in a given time period. Slave plantations were established in the Mediterranean and Atlantic islands, even though land was scarce compared to the American continent. In the United States, the general abundance of land did not preclude the formation of two opposite types of colonization and social life: the establishment of small family properties in the North and the West, and slave plantations in the South. The English and French colonization of the Antilles began with small farmers who produced tobacco and indigo for export, but they were displaced with the arrival of sugar plantations. Despite the differences in the legal frameworks for land appropriation established by the various colonial metropolises, slave plantations were always associated to large landed estates. It was not the existence of large estates that determined the plantation form, but the other way around, even though in the case of Brazil the influence of the legal framework established by Portugal was also undeniable. The shortage of wage labor is irrefutable, but the employment of

slave labor presupposed the characteristics of slave plantations. It was necessary for there to be a productive force to which slave labor was profitably adapted, for enslave people to be required in such an enormous scale for centuries. The old argument asserted by many historians, according to which Portugal resorted to Indigenous and Black enslave people because its own population was small, is ridiculous since, as Fernando Novais observed, France, which was the most populated nation in Western Europe at the time, also established slavery in its West Indian colonies.[13]

The genesis of colonial slavery cannot be explained with an abstract and ahistorical juxtaposition of factors of production, but rather with the dialectics between productive forces and relations of production, as it appeared in the reciprocal conditioning of multiple aspects of the existing historical situation. The productive force incarnated in plantations was adequate to the employment of slave work and it did so not only in the Americas, but also in Europe itself. The difference was that the Americas offered an immense reserve of extremely fertile and unappropriated extensions of land, which made sugarcane plantations in the American continent immensely more viable than in the Mediterranean and Atlantic islands. But that same viability depended on the fact that the American continent was a *colonized* continent. Otherwise, *colonial* slavery would be unexplained.

Geography of Slave Plantations and Typology of Colonization

The connection between slave plantations and tropical regions is irrefutable. Since slavery, latifundia, and monoculture were intertwined in plantations in colonial times, those three elements appeared as the inevitable fate of colonization in the tropics. This belief was reinforced by the fact that colonization took on an entirely different form in the cool regions of North America, where small farms prevailed. The cause of that presumed fate is not quite clear, but it has been explained with ideas such as the unfeasibility of small agricultural undertakings and the extreme difficulties faced by White men to adapt to efficient manual labor in the inhospitable conditions of the tropics.

Gilberto Freyre, who believed in that thesis, after enumerating ecological and racial reasons to dismiss the possibility of a form of colonization based on small farmers, as suggested by Varnhagen, wrote the following:

> Let us be honest and acknowledge that colonization in the form of latifundia and slavery was the only way Europeans had to overcome the immense obstacles faced in their attempt to civilize Brazil. The wealthy plantation owner and the Black man capable of agricultural labor and bound to it by the slave regime.[14]

Although not as categorical in his conclusions, which are nuanced by his constant attention to economic factors, Caio Prado Júnior still adheres to the thesis of an undeniable geographic determinism:

> The climate played a decisive role in the distribution of agrarian types […]. The influence of natural factors in this characterization of agrarian types is so great, that it takes precedence even when the initial and deliberate objective of its promoters is otherwise.[15]

The historian searched for what could be called a counterproof in the case of Barbados: Small White farmers established themselves there at first but were replaced by large sugar plantations. The fact is undeniable, but it is worth asking: were they replaced for racial and geographic reasons, as Gilberto Freyre argued, or only for geographic reasons, as Caio himself proposed?

Eric Williams's answer goes in a different direction. First, the facts demonstrate that White colonists were capable of performing efficient and economically profitable manual labor in the Caribbean islands and in North America's continental subtropics. Neither Black slavery nor large estates were inevitable results of tropical geography. The small European farms were not driven away by the climate, but by the intervention of a purely economic force embodied in plantations. The latter were financed by mercantile capital with the support of metropolitan governments interested in the profitable exploitation of their colonies and in the slave trade.[16]

There is, however, the undisputable fact of a constant connection between slave plantations and tropical products. Rejecting geography's *determinism* does not logically lead us to reject its *conditioning effect*. I have already alluded, in fact, to the influence of natural factors on labor productivity and technological progress in agriculture. What happens is that, in the context of existing historical situations (including class interests at play, economic and technical resources, etc.), geography presents *possibilities* and *impossibilities*. While in cool regions it was impossible to produce certain products demanded by the European market, these were viable in tropical areas. But this possibility only became a reality through the mediation of social factors. The dominion of slave plantations was founded on undisputable geographic *conditions* – climate, fertility of the soil, location, ease of transport, etc. But what *determined* that dominion, thus bringing the inert geographic potential to fruition, were people who belonged to social classes, who had economic and political interests, and who were involved in the social fabric of the time, which was the result of historic development.

The typology of colonization faces analogous theoretical blind alleys when it examines the phenomenon superficially or builds unilateral understandings. Leroy-Beaulieu's famous typological classification – commercial colonies, settlement colonies, and plantation or exploitation colonies – is undoubtedly operational from the standpoint of the colonizer, but it only permits descriptions devoid of theoretical depth. The most that can be obtained with those categories is a superficial understanding, and more serious attempts to operate with them immediately reveal their inadequacy. I therefore leave them aside and apply a typological method inspired on Weber instead. I am thinking of the renowned essay by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Roots of Brazil*. In that work, the author confuses the plantation mode of colonization of Brazil with *feitorias* (trading and manufacturing posts), both of them presumably undertaken by a unique and ready-made type of Portuguese colonizer – adventurous, nomadic, predatory, focused only on the seacoast, incapable of agricultural development… in short, with invariable psychological propensities. In actual fact, Portuguese colonizers, who did not follow any given subjacent and omnipresent form, adapted to the economic and social conditions of colonization, whether through *feitorias* in Asia or slave plantations in Brazil – entirely different forms with only one common characteristic: their coastal location. But plantations were not coastal due to the traits of the Portuguese colonizers, but because their economic function required the most immediate access to the world market. In this regard, Brazilian plantations were no different than those from other regions of the American continent. Leo Waibel observed the preferential location of plantations in the islands, and the examples in that respect abound, among them those of the British and French colonies in the Antilles. When the development of the means of transportation permitted it in the late-eighteenth century, plantations spread to the countryside in the São Paulo plateau. In all of this, the "character" or "type" was not a premise, it did not function as an immutable *Gestalt* but was the result of changing economic and social conditions.

It was from the Portuguese colonizers and their descendants, attached to the coast by the plantations – scratching the coast like crabs, as the much-cited Friar Vicente do Salvador said – that the men who assaulted and populated the most remote backcountry came from, once they found motivation in the profits derived from cattle and gold, whose influence in the formation of the

hinterlands' population Capistrano de Abreu studied in his pioneering work. The Portuguese proved to be just as capable of building cities as the Spanish, from the moment that, like their Iberian rival, they were able to focus on mining. In fact, the undeniable proclivity of Spanish builders for planned urbanism, emphasized by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, withered with the decline of mining. Examining this proclivity, Richard Konetzke demonstrated its limits once colonization took a different path:

> During the decline of the colonial era, there were more Spanish people in the countryside, in haciendas and farms, than in cities.[17]

Not only do human types adapt to changing circumstances, or the latter give rise to new types, but every complex society has different human types with different aptitudes. This was the case with the Portuguese society at the time of colonization. As the concrete process advanced, the human types that were most skillful in performing the tasks imposed by the demands of the moment went into action. It was not one, but several types of Portuguese that came to Brazil: from men experienced in commerce, in navigation, in war, to those accustomed to agriculture, craftsmanship, and bureaucracy. All of these types found a place in a society founded on slave labor. The actions required to explore and colonize the Brazilian territory did not allow them to insist on the *feitoria* "formula" of colonization, nor did the latter reproduce the "model" of the metropolis, which was in fact more imaginary than real. Contrary to what Sérgio Buarque de Holanda suggests in another work,[18] Lisbon and a few other coastal cities were little more than the commercial façade of a feudal agrarian society, in which the lives of eight to nine-tenths of the population continued to develop at the time of Portugal's overseas expansion.

Notes

1 Cardoso, Ciro. El modo de producción esclavista colonial en América. Op. cit., p. 210.
2 Cf. Goulart, Maurício. Op. cit., p. 41–58.
3 Cf. Lippmann, Edmund O. *História do açúcar*, t. II, p. 32 (based on the second German edition, corrected and expanded by the author).
4 Cf. Simonsen. Op. cit., t. I, p. 169. Table on p. 171.
5 On medieval slavery, see Castro, Armando. Op. cit., p. 204–214.
6 Cf. Lippmann. Op. cit., t. I, p. 386.
7 On the evolution and geographic diffusion of sugar production, see Lippmann. Op. cit.; Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 1; Waibel, Leo. A forma econômica da *"plantage"* tropical. Op. cit., p. 42–50.
8 Coutinho J. J. da Cunha de Azeredo. Análise sobre a justiça do comércio do resgate dos escravos da costa da África. In: *Obras econômicas*, p. 255.
9 Cf. Cardoso, F. H. Op. cit., p. 53–54, n. 30; Ianni. Op. cit., p. 81, n. 2; Novais, Fernando. Op. cit., p. 29–30.
10 Marx, K. Op. cit., Book Three, p. 764–765.
11 Cf. Furtado, Celso. *A economia brasileira*, p. 87–88.
12 Domar, Evsey D. The Causes of Slavery or Serfdom: a Hypothesis. *The Journal of Economic History*, v. 30, n. 1, p. 18–32.
13 Cf. Novais, Fernando. Op. cit., p. 28.
14 Freyre, Gilberto. Op. cit., t. I. p. 338 et passim. By the same author, with the same thesis, see *Nordeste*, p. 56, 149 et passim.
15 Prado Júnior, Caio. *História econômica do Brasil*, p. 33. See also *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo*, p. 21–22 and 113–116.
16 See Williams, Eric. Op. cit., p. 20–29.
17 Konetzke, Richard. *América Latina: la época colonial*, p. 38.
18 Cf. Holanda, Sérgio Buarque de. *Visões do paraíso*, p. 317–323.

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PART III

Specific Laws of the Colonial Slave Mode of Production

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7

INTRODUCTION

Methodological Criteria

My point of departure is the conviction that the type of labor force employed cannot be a contingent or accidental factor in any mode of production. On the contrary, the type of labor determines necessary and absolutely essential relations that define the specific laws of the mode of production. From a more abstract standpoint, there is no difference between enslaved people, serfs, and wage laborers. The labor of the three is divided into *necessary labor* and *surplus labor.* However, each characterizes different modes of production for the simple reason that they represent different modes of exploitation of their labor power and of appropriation of their surplus labor by the exploiter. In this regard, Marx emphasized:

> The essential difference between the various economic forms of society, between, for instance, a society based on slave labor and one based on wage labor, lies only in the mode in which this surplus labor is in each case extracted from the actual producer, the laborer.[1]

Each mode of production – and of exploitation of labor – involves relations of production that are inherent to it, governed by their own, unmistakable laws. In capitalism, "the relation between capital and wage labor determines the character of the mode of production."[2] The same can be said of colonial slavery: The relationship between planter and enslaved people determines the entire nature of the mode of production.

It is worth referring here to Ciro Cardoso's accurate critique of the simplifications that are common to popular Marxism, especially in its Stalinist form.[3] Relations of production do not constitute a self-sufficient essence; they always exist in conjunction with specific productive forces. When the latter are ignored or their decisive influence is overlooked, enslaved person, serf, and wage laborer become abstract types that would presumably define a certain mode of production on their own. But the mode of production is always the *conjunction* of productive forces and relations of production. For that reason, when speaking of enslaved people, we must take into account not just one, but various forms of slavery, as I have already noted. We therefore have a purely domestic form of slavery and a form of slavery that was ancillary to production, as it existed among many peoples of Asia and Africa, with social formations that differ from those of Europe; Greco-Roman patriarchal slavery, decisive in the social formation; residual slavery that survived in European medievalism, particularly in the Iberian Peninsula during the

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Christian Reconquista; the slavery of plantations in the Mediterranean and Atlantic islands, subordinate in nature; and finally, the colonial slavery of the Americas, dominant in nature. In each case, slavery appeared under different forms depending on the productive forces to which it was associated and its specific effect on the social formation in question. *Regarding the colonization of the American continent, it is impossible to understand slavery without studying it together with the productive forces and their fundamental organization – the plantation*. The same logic applies to servitude, which was not always feudal, and to wage labor, which appears as early as Antiquity and also existed in the Middle Ages, under different conditions and in different forms than capitalist wage labor.

Having made this point, it is important to note that it is common in Brazilian historiography to consider enslaved people a contingency or a simple resource required by the circumstances, and therefore not a *decisive* factor in determining the relations of production, their structure, and the dynamics of colonial society. This methodological standpoint is even more incoherent in those authors who had the good sense to consider the relations of production in colonial society. For example, to F. H. Cardoso, the difference between the colonial slave regime and capitalism is only a matter of degree, and not of essence. The former is presumably a backward and incompletely developed form of capitalism, which *after a certain point* becomes an obstacle to the dissemination of the capitalist mercantile system of production, a stumbling block to the development of preexisting capitalism.[4] For A. P. Guimarães, plantations were "hybrid organizations" built on a "feudal organic foundation": within its feudal-like structure, *slave labor predominated*. The latter, however, did not define the economic system, since plantations were "like the society that arose from them, fundamentally feudal in nature." After such a categorical statement, the author felt compelled to nuance it as follows:

> A more precise denomination that takes into account the fundamental aspects of its mode of production would be "feudal/slaveholding," which defines both the plantation and the entire colonial period of Brazilian society.[5]

A "feudal/slaveholding" mode of production is merely a classificatory hybridism that circumvents the theoretical difficulty at issue. Y cited these authors because they examine relations of production and, while reaching different conclusions, incurred in the same oversight: that enslaved people defined the essence of the relations of production. The methodological significance of that oversight is evident precisely when systematically discussing the specific laws of the colonial slave mode of production.

Stranger still is for someone to study the modes of production and to adopt as their primary criterion not the relations of production and productive forces, but the behavior of dominant classes in and of themselves. After *The Political Economy of Slavery*, which represents an important theoretical advancement, Eugéne Genovese backed away from his former methodological standpoint in *The World the Slaveholders Made*. Preoccupied primarily with the various abolitionist processes, his view of slavery in the Antilles and Latin America is the result of a unilateral analysis based on the attitudes of the slaveholding classes. After a series of forced interpretations, the historian's general conclusion is that only in the Southern United States and Northeastern Brazil did slaveholding societies develop. In all other regions, the slaveholding classes were characterized by absenteeism and a strong capitalist spirit, which affected the mode of production and modified the social base itself, endowing it with a "bourgeois nature."[6]

I would like to put forth a few objections that seem pertinent. The nature of the laws of the capitalist mode of production does not change depending on whether the owner or a manager is in charge of the business. A factory's productive forces and relations of production do not change in the least when an executive is in charge of them in the name of the stockholders. Likewise,

the nature of the slave plantation did not change when it was managed by the administrator in the name of an absent owner. Regarding slavery in the Antilles, the notion that many owners' absence was related to a "capitalist spirit" is also questionable. The matter must be reexamined in the light of what Eric Williams wrote about British plantation owners, for example. Plantation owners residing in Great Britain adopted an aristocratic lifestyle and formed political alliances with merchants and landlords, with whom they created a class front against the industrial bourgeoisie in the late eighteenth century.[7] The wealthy plantation owners could not be indifferent to the fact that their profits derived from slaveholding enterprises, whose survival they had every interest to defend against the ascendant industrial bourgeoisie, which was increasingly disinterested in maintaining the monopolist pact with the large colonial landowners. It is a fact that the latter used all their economic and political influence to extend the survival of Antillean slavery. In the face of the impending extinction of the slave trade and abolition, their separatist intentions did not come to fruition only because they were not sufficiently strong, as Genovese himself acknowledges. In addition, the American historian was profoundly wrong regarding the "capitalist spirit" of slaveholding coffee growers in Brazil. Genovese's methodological confusion derived from a real problem: that slaveholding societies in the Americas presented national specificities that undeniably led to a diversity of abolitionist processes. Whether the metropolis was England or Portugal was not irrelevant in each case. But this problem has nothing to do with the mode of production itself. The peculiarities in question arose at the level of other categories – those of superstructure and social formation. At the level of the social formation, in each *concrete* case, it is worth asking whether the mode of production was dominant or limited to a single enclave, to what degree the incomplete forms of slavery played a role relative to the complete form, to what extent was slavery linked to other modes of production, the level of influence of the world market, and the characteristics of the superstructure, which includes an analysis of the behavior and ideological nuances of the slaveholding classes. It is incoherent to overlook the fact that the objective laws of the slave economy in Jamaica and Saint-Domingue were necessarily the same objective laws of the slave economy in Brazil and the Southern United States.

On the Theory of Economic Laws

In Chapter 8, I will begin discussing the specific laws of the colonial slave mode of production, using the Brazilian case to obtain the elements for an empirical grounding, and making some incursions into comparative history. I am aware of the limitations of such incursions, but I am convinced that the history of slavery in Brazil provides enough factual grounding for a theoretical generalization. At the same time, with the intention of responding preemptively to possible accusations, I must say that I do not pretend to have exhausted a topic as complex and insufficiently explored as the economic laws of colonial slavery, both in terms of the breadth of the framework and the depth of the analysis. At the same time, I find it useful to say a few things regarding the conception of those economic laws. In this regard, I follow the avenues created by Marx and Engels, recently broadened by the contributions by Oskar Lange and Armando Castro.[8]

Let us begin with the relationship between economic laws and History, which is one of the central topics of historical materialism and Marxist political economy. And let us state from the start, in the spirit of *Methodological Reflections*, that rejecting structuralist formalism does not necessarily imply an adherence to historicism *à outrance*, as is common in popular Marxism. Historical materialism and Marxist political economy include certain universal or total-historical categories – among others, the categories of productive forces, labor, production goods and consumer goods, simple and expanded reproduction, relations of production, mode of

production, superstructure, and social formation. At a higher level of abstraction, these categories are interconnected in relational complexes present in all of human history – permanent relational complexes that have been denominated *general laws*. In my opinion, this denomination is redundant, since the concept of law implies generality. All laws are general, otherwise they would not be laws. What can and should be questioned is the *degree* of generality of the internal and necessary connections defined by the law: the law's *ontological* dimension and *temporality*. I therefore propose denominating the laws that are applicable to all modes of production without exception as *omnimodal*. Such is the case, in the first place, with the law of the decisive correspondence between the relations of production and the nature of productive forces.

Nonetheless, Marxist sociological theory would not be *historical* materialism if it conceived history only as a succession of "combinatorial" universal categories in time and space. Marx materialized universal categories in their temporal expression, otherwise they would be reduced to tautological abstractions, and he strove to discover the categories and laws applicable to the various modes of production. I call those laws *plurimodal*, since they do not apply to *all* modes of production, but only to more than one. One example is the law of value, which rules over mercantile relations in several modes of production. Finally, we have *monomodal* or *specific* laws, which apply only to a single mode of production. Such is the case of the law of surplus value; of the formation of an average rate of profit and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, which are exclusive to the capitalist mode of production. The laws of the colonial slave mode of production are likewise monomodal or specific.

It is now necessary to define the category of economic law. In the Preface to the first German edition of *Capital*, the author insisted on the *natural character* of the laws of capitalism, and he emphasized that, from his standpoint, "the evolution of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history."[9] It would be childish to claim that Marx identified the ontological realm of the social with its physical realm, and that he admitted only *dynamic* laws, in accordance to the mechanistic conception of the physical sciences of his time. Naturalness in Marx's works means nothing more than *objectivity*, independence of the social being, and its laws from men's consciousness and will.

Without examining the issue further, which would lead us astray from our subject matter, it is important to underscore that Marx anticipated the logic of modern sciences by defining the *tendential* laws, precisely in the realm of men's economic and social activity. Why do economic laws – the laws of capitalism, in this case – have a tendential and not a dynamic nature, i.e., of a rigid sequence of cause and effect between two individual phenomena?

Tendentiality is present in the law of value, which only comes into effect in the social average of the oscillations of individual values of the mass of commodities.[10] Value – measured according to the *socially* necessary worktime – therefore derives not from each individual commodity, but from the mass of commodities as a whole, not just conceptually, but in the reality of the facts.[11]

Yet it was when examining the laws of the formation of the average rate of profit and the tendential fall of the rate of profit that Marx had a better opportunity to clarify the tendential nature of economic laws. In his examination of the first of such laws, Marx emphasized that the existence of an average rate of profit does not put into question the coherence of the theory of value:

> Such a general rate of surplus value—viewed as a tendency, like all other economic laws—has been assumed by us for the sake of theoretical simplification. But in reality it is an actual premise of the capitalist mode of production although it is more or less obstructed by practical frictions causing more or less considerable local differences […]. But in theory it is assumed that the laws of capitalist production operate in their pure form. In reality there exists only approximation […][12]

The general or average rate of profit therefore develops in the midst of innumerable fortuitous events that compensate and neutralize each other simultaneously or in a short period of time, only gradually altering the current average rate of profit. It is this alteration and its direction that the law of the tendential fall of the general rate of profit explains. It is worth noting that, although all economic laws are considered tendential, only the latter was explicitly designated as such by Marx. In my opinion, the reason was that all other laws express themselves simultaneously or in the short run in the mass of phenomena, unlike the law of the fall of the general rate of profit, whose directionality only becomes evident *in the long run*.[13]

The Marxist category of tendential law is akin to statistical law, a concept that has been long used in present-day physical and social sciences. I say akin and only that because the category of tendential law as conceptualized in Marxism is always *causal and qualitative*, alongside its regular quantitative and functional expressions. More than a descriptive record of probabilities, of averages, or of recurring statistical trends in the mass of variations, the tendential law is formulated at the gnoseological level of necessary causes, i.e., the *essential* causality of phenomena. The law of the tendential fall of the general rate of profit, which positivist methodology identified only as a *secular trend*, was derived by Marx from the essence of capitalist economy.[14] Hence the permanent interconnection between tendentiality and contradiction. The tendential law is nothing more than a synthetic formulation of the dynamics of the internal contradictions of phenomena. Tendency is a constant and regular – not occasional – expression of the opposition and reciprocal action among immanent factors in society. Each tendential law reveals a certain set of contradictions that are constitutive of the very essence of real relations.

I must also say that the laws discussed below are not formulated at the gnoseological level of *laws of concomitance*, also called *laws of structure*. In other words, they not only account for the necessary concomitance of structural categories of colonial slavery but also define essential relations between those categories, as well as their directionality. Otherwise, if their ontological and gnoseological level was not that of the directionality of relations, they would not be tendential laws. It is therefore evident that we are not talking about laws that are isolated from each other, but of a *system* of laws of an articulate whole that theoretically reflects an organic totality.

Notes

1 Marx, K. *Das Kapital*. Book One, p. 231.
2 Ibidem. Book Three, p. 886–887.
3 Cardoso, Ciro. Severo Martínez Peláez y el carácter del régimen colonial. *Modos de producción en América Latina*, p. 95–98.
4 Cf. Cardoso, F. H. Op. cit., p. 168, 174, 189, and 199.
5 Guimarães. A. P. Op. cit., p. 59–60.
6 Cf. Genovese. *The World the Slaveholders Made*, p. 21–102.
7 Cf. Williams, Eric. Op. cit., chaps. IV and VII.
8 See Lange, Oskar. Op. cit., chaps. III and IV; Castro, Armando. *Evolução econômica de Portugal*, v. 6, Section 7; v. 7, Section 1.
9 Marx, Karl. Op. cit. Book One, p. 15–16.
10 Ibidem, p. 89 et passim.
11 Idem. Book Three, p. 836
12 Ibidem. Book Three, p. 184.
13 Idem, p. 249.
14 Ibidem, p. 223.

8

LAW OF MONEY INCOME

Predominant Form of Surplus in Colonial Slavery

Every regime of exploitation of the direct producer obeys a specific law of appropriation of the surplus labor by the exploiter, i.e., appropriation of that part of labor which results in a surplus created by the worker above and beyond the product necessary for his sustenance and reproduction. In colonial slavery, the law of appropriation of surplus labor is formulated as follows: *The productive exploitation of enslaved people results in the conversion of surplus labor into money income*.

I call *money income* the part of the surplus that is commercialized and transformed into a certain amount of money. The colonial slave economic unit also produced another part of the surplus that maintained its natural form – those goods that the owner did not commercialize but employed for direct consumption by his family and personal staff. That part of the surplus is called *natural income*. It therefore does not determine the *productivity* of the slave unit. Although it is important, its function is secondary. The productivity of slave labor is determined by money income.

The analysis of the law of surplus value says nothing of the commodity's *process of realization*. The latter belongs to the realm of circulation, with all of its circumstantial variations, including a momentary inability to realize it, i.e., to sell the product. The monetary nature of that income is not affected by the process of direct exchange either, which was common in the triangular trade of the colonial mercantilist period. In this case, what differentiates direct exchange from barter is the mediation of mercantile capital *and the fact that, for both parties, it takes place as an interchange of exchange values, through the application of an ideal monetary standard*. Before exchanging their products, both parties involved assess their value in accordance with market prices or international market rates. Although money does not intervene directly, it operates as a quantitative standard for exchange. This is evident in Gandavo's statement in the second half of the sixteenth century:

> The most profitable products are sugar, cotton, and brazilwood. With those products they pay the merchants from this Kingdom [Portugal], who offer them other products, because money is scarce in that land, and thus they sell and exchange one product for another at their fair price.[1]

According to the chronicler, the goods traded had a monetary value, contained in the "fair price." Part of that value represented money income, even if it was in the form of goods to be consumed immediately after the trade.

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The categories of natural income and money income allow us to establish a fundamental difference between two historical types of slavery: patriarchal and mercantile or colonial. Both were based on the complete form of slavery but constituted different modes of production with specific lines of development. Their common traits obfuscate a concrete analysis of their essential differences. In some passages of *Capital*, Marx made his opinion clear regarding a clear distinction between the two types, but unfortunately he did not explore the issue further. He only wrote, for example, that in the *slave economy proper*

> there is a scale (*Stufenleiter*) that goes from the patriarchal system, mainly for home use, to the plantation system, which works for the world market.[2]

Although succinct, this excerpt provides a point of departure for the analysis. Let us examine closer what this distinction between the patriarchal slave system and the plantation slave system consisted of.

Ancient Patriarchal Slavery

Some authors speak of patriarchal slavery as synonymous of *domestic* slavery. The reason for this confusion is undoubtedly the association of slavery with the ancient patriarchal family. However, as a matter of accuracy, I prefer to include under domestic slavery only those enslaved people who were *unproductive*, devoted to the master's personal service, usually living with him under the same roof. Those enslaved people belong only to the realm of consumption. Patriarchal slavery, on the contrary, involves *productive* slavery, even if that production is in the form of goods to be consumed by the economic unit itself. This is the distinctive characteristic of patriarchal slavery: The purpose of the enslaved person's exploitation is to produce natural income. When it coexists with money income, the latter has a complementary function.

In its original structure, ancient Greco-Roman slavery was patriarchal in nature. It developed as a peculiar form of the natural economy, as a set of productive units for self-subsistence. Its production consisted mainly of consumer goods, some of which would be traded for other consumer goods. In spite of the tensions created by an increasing presence of mercantile relations, this original form survived and prevailed until the decadence of the Roman world. In the first century of our era, at the height of Roman slavery, Trimalchio – a character of *Satyricon* – had no need to purchase anything with his treasures of gold and silver, since he obtained everything from his estates tilled by legions of enslaved people: "Even if you desired chicken milk, you could find it there!"[3]

Natural economy in its pure form aims at satisfying immediate needs, as Langer explains:

> That which determines the goals of economic activity are concrete needs. The diversity of goals of economic activity responds to the great variety of needs.[4]

Concrete needs therefore constitute a *limit* to production, and the latter is restricted to consumer goods, which satisfy individual consumption and ensure reproduction within the economic unit itself. Evidently, complete self-sufficiency was probably extremely rare, and for that reason part of the *oikos*'s[5] production was intended for trade and incorporated exploitation for profit. What is significant, as Weber emphasizes, is that the ultimate motive of the productive activity in the *oikos* was not accumulation, but "the natural and organized satisfaction of the master's needs."[6]

What happened was that the slave economy led to an expansion of mercantile relations as it propelled the productive forces, solidifying its superiority over the peasant economy. The development of urban life in Greek cities, as well as in Roman and other Italian cities, created a demand that stimulated an increase in the production of tradable goods. Athens and especially

Rome, with its population of one million inhabitants at the time of Augustus, were powerful administrative, liturgical, and commercial centers that attracted a constant flow of foreigners. Since it was in those cities that the aristocracy and the merchants lived, an international commerce of luxury articles flourished. Public works, executed by thousands of prisoners of war, also stimulated the demand for raw materials and foodstuffs.

As a result, in the outskirts of Rome – let us focus on this case because it is paradigmatic – *villas* prospered: medium-sized rural properties with around forty enslaved people, which ancient observers considered the *ideal* size of a servile workforce. Only rarely were there no free laborers in addition to enslaved people, usually tenant farmers or coloni who were generally in charge of growing cereals. Enslaved people were in charge of the olive groves and oil production, vineyards and wine production, raising fowl, horticulture, floriculture, and apiculture. Mining, cattle raising, and domestic services were almost exclusively slave chores. In the cities, free artisans competed with slave artisans. Slave manufacturing units were created with a maximum of about one hundred workers, who produced cutlery, ceramics, textiles, woodworks, among other products, to satisfy wealthy customers' demands.

The eminent Soviet historian Elena Mikhailovna Schtaierman observes that simple cooperation, made possible by the employment of enslaved people, favored the technical development of instruments. Agriculture became more productive with the introduction of instruments like the plow, the harrow, the harvester, and the press. But the main technical innovation was in the area of the division of labor and the specialization of enslaved people, although they continued to be laborers with interchangeable tasks.

It was precisely because the Romans formulated the concept of enslaved people as absolute private property and developed mercantile relations more than any other people of Antiquity, leading them to dissociate the private ownership of the land from its traditional communal and municipal ties, that they were able to create a highly sophisticated legal system in terms of the normativity of contractual transactions involving people and saleable goods. Roman law therefore became a source of theoretical grounding for the legal systems not only of modern colonial slave formations, but also of capitalist social formations.

For four to five hundred years – from the third century B.C. to the third century A.D., according to Finley, or from the second century B.C. to the second century A.D., according to Schtaierman – the slave mode of production predominated in classical Italy and served as the basis for the slave social formation. Westermann's denial of this predominance is unjustified, as is his critique of Weber.

Once the great slave insurrections of the second century B.C. were crushed in Sicily, and of the first century B.C. in continental Italy (Spartacus), and once the long cycle of civil wars came to an end, the Empire became the state form that stabilized and consolidated the slave regime. Schtaierman disagrees with Weber and Marc Bloch regarding the role of the wars of conquest as the main source of enslaved people, which leads to attribute the main cause of the decline of Roman slavery to the end of those wars at the time of the Empire. Although she acknowledges that external wars provided large numbers of enslaved people, Schtaierman believes that, as early as the Republic and more so during the Empire, when the law provided protection to slave families, the main source of enslaved people was internal procreation. This thesis, by the way, can be easily related to the patriarchal nature of slavery. Procreation, however, was insufficient to prevent a decrease in the number of enslaved people or to increase their number, and was therefore supplemented by pirate kidnappings outside of the Empire's borders; by the enslaved people provided by peoples not subjected to the Empire; by people who sold family members or themselves or abandoned children in Rome; and finally by the reemergence of debt slavery, even though it was forbidden since 326 B.C. In short, the slave system's crisis, which was evident as early as the third century A.D., was not the result of the shortage of enslaved people caught in external conquests.

The impasse of Roman slavery was the result of the impossibility of a *patriarchal* slave mode of production becoming a *mercantile* slave mode of production under the conditions of the ancient world. Schtaierman calls the slavery with broadened mercantile relations *developed*, as opposed to the *patriarchal* slavery of the first Roman era, when the market was insignificant. I believe that both were patriarchal forms of slavery, albeit at different levels of development. The influence of mercantile relations, even at the height of their ramifications, was never decisive to the point of displacing the prevalence of a natural economy, as Weber and Finley emphasize and as Schtaierman herself acknowledges. While international trade was limited to luxury items for a small upper layer of the Roman population, latifundia, *villas*, and peasant units continued to live off their own production and did not need to purchase much in the market. Roman enslaved people's production – especially wheat, olive oil, wine, textiles, and a few handicrafts – was the same of all peoples in the Mediterranean Basin. In addition, there were no means of transportation capable of enabling long-distance commerce on a large scale. Rome was unable to establish an export economy in its own territory or in the territories of the conquered provinces. The only exception, emphasized by Marx, was Sicily, where slaveholding latifundia grew wheat to supply the metropolis. The Roman Empire was not sustained by the direct productive work of the conquered peoples, but by tributary extortion in cash or pure and simple pillage. In Roman slavery, money income never rose above a minor level compared to the predominant natural income.

In order for slave production to acquire the form of *dominant* mercantile slavery, it would have to be connected to an external market with dimensions that ancient cities were light-years away from providing. As urban life decayed and the natural economy grew even further, centered on latifundia based on the labor of *coloni* and *servi casati* (enslaved people that were almost *coloni*), the decline of the mercantile production of rural *villas* and urban artisans was inevitable, resulting in their demise. Rome was unable to become an economic colony of itself and to engender colonial slavery – hence the unsolvable historical impasse, which translated into technological stagnation and growing production costs through slavery, which was increasingly incapable of constituting the basis of the imperial state.[7]

The notion of "capitalist slavery" can arise from a naïve and somewhat pop standpoint that sees capitalism wherever money circulates – hence the illusion of a Roman capitalism in Mommsen's works, repeatedly criticized by Marx.[8] It can also arise from a sociology like Max Weber's, which, although highly elaborated, misses the general line of historical development in its construction of ideal types.[9] That notion is disproved by an analysis of mercantile capital – the merchant's and the usurer's – in precapitalist societies. Merchant's capital appears in those societies as the first historical form of capital, which operates in the realm of circulation but is unable to dominate the modes of production, among or within which it is a conduit. Usurers' capital in turn operated almost exclusively with loans for consumption and not for production. It therefore aggravated the situation of the debtors and contributed to the disintegration of the slave mode of production. The only premise required by *capital* is production for trade and the circulation of money. All other premises are therefore insufficient to give rise to *capitalism*.[10] Finley's criticism of authors like Rostovtzev and J. R. Hicks, who view ancient classical societies as capitalist, is therefore justified.

By destabilizing the foundations of the natural economy, mercantile development in the ancient world subverted the traditional way of life and created tensions among masters and enslaved people. The tension exerted on the masters' traditional way of life was brilliantly expressed by Aristotle. Domestic economy – he said – differs from the science of acquisition (*chrematistics*). The former, the science of the use of goods, is only concerned with subsistence. It is circumscribed to the needs of good living and is therefore in accordance to nature. It is compatible with barter and money, as long as the transactions consist of exchanging consumer goods for other consumer goods according to each party's needs. But the science of acquisition arises

from the exchange of goods and money. In this science, the objective is no longer the satisfaction of necessities, but the accumulation of money – an objective that knows no limits – and it is therefore unnatural. Money no longer serves the purpose for which it was created – to facilitate exchanges – when it is employed to earn more money. Of all acquisitions, interest – money from money – is the most unnatural.[11]

While Aristotle condemned the unrestrained appetite for wealth in the name of the masters' traditional way of life, such appetite did not leave the enslaved people unharmed. The work demanded of them was no longer that which satisfied the customarily established needs of the *oikos*, but rather the complete exhaustion of their energies. The thirst for wealth as an end in itself implies a merciless extortion of surplus labor, as Marx emphasized in *Capital*:

> …in any given economic formation of society, where not the exchange value but the use value of the product predominates, surplus labor will be limited by a given set of wants which may be greater or less, and here no boundless thirst for surplus labor arises from the nature of the production itself. Hence in antiquity overwork becomes horrible only when the object is to obtain exchange value in its specific independent money form; in the production of gold and silver. Compulsory work to death is here the recognized form of overwork. It suffices to read Diodorus Siculus. Still these are exceptions in antiquity.[12]

What was only an exception in ancient patriarchal slavery became the rule in modern colonial slavery.

Colonial Slavery in the Modern Era

Colonial slavery only enables a narrow and inflexible internal market that is inadequate for mercantile production, which tends toward specialization. But this problem was solved from the start, for its solution constituted one of the premises of the creation of colonial plantations. The production of those plantations was destined to an existing and growing *external* market with an increasing demand for tropical products – the European market. Expanding mercantile capital played the role of intermediary between the extremes, making the realm of circulation autonomous from the sources of production, without determining the nature of the relations of production in each of the extremes. Thus, the objective conditions were created that enabled mercantile slavery to assume the only form that allowed its full development: *colonial* slavery, i.e., a mode of production that depended on the metropolitan market.

At this point, it is important to note that the notion of the *colonial* utilized here is purely economic. Therefore, it can refer to a colonial country also in the political sense as well as a country organized as an independent state. The *economic* significance of the colonial, characteristic of the era that began with mercantilism, is evident in my opinion in the following main traits: (1) An economy mainly oriented toward a foreign market, which provides the original stimulus for the development of productive forces; (2) farm products and/or mineral raw materials are traded for foreign manufactured products, most of which consist of consumer goods; (3) little or no control over commercialization in the foreign market.[13]

From this standpoint, the historiographic periodization that distinguishes colonial Brazil from imperial Brazil is irrelevant. Political independence did not abolish slavery, which continued as colonial as it was when the nation was subordinated to Portugal. Imperial Brazil, in fact, provides an example of an independent state with a dominant colonial slave mode of production as its economic foundation.

What is relevant here from a theoretical standpoint is the fact that a mode of production founded on slavery was compatible with mercantile goals. Ancient slavery and feudalism engaged in mercantile relations without threatening the stability of their structures, but only up to a certain level of development of mercantile relations. Beyond that level – which was higher for feudalism than for patriarchal slavery – both begin losing internal cohesion. Colonial slavery did not entail full mercantilism, since a sector of the natural economy persisted in it, but the increasing intensity of commercial transactions had no harmful effect on its structure. Colonial slavery emerged and developed with the market as its vital element. The explanation can be found in what was said above: A mode of production based on slavery is compatible with mercantile goals if it is connected to an appropriate *external* market. The prior existence of an external market is therefore an unconditional premise.

This link between colonial slavery and the world market led to the emergence of the so-called circulationist theories, which focus on analyzing the *mode of circulation* and attempt to explain the mode of production through it, when they do not simply omit it. As we delve deeper into the matter, my hope is that our study will dismantle the renewed illusion of a "capitalist slavery" generated by that methodological error. For now, in the discussion of the first law of the colonial slave mode of production, I have focused on the modality of the surplus created by slave labor. The mechanism whereby that surplus is created will be explained when discussing other laws. The sphere of circulation became autonomous from the colonial slave mode of production while simultaneously adapting to it, without determining its internal laws, its essential nature. That nature was consubstantial with the relations of production, which in turn incorporated mercantile circulation as a given and established relations of distribution that were intrinsic to the mode of production.

Although the colonial slave mode of production depended on an external market, it continued existing as an organic totality, conceptually defined by interconnected specific laws. For that reason, it is also the object of a theory of political economics that is also specific.

Notes

1 Gandavo, Pero de Magalhães. *História da Província de Santa Cruz: Tratado da Terra do Brasil*, p. 81.
2 Marx, K. *Das Kapital*, Book Three, p. 812.
3 Petrônio. *Satiricon*, p. 61.
4 Lange, Oskar. Op. cit., p. 172.
5 From the Greek for "home." (E.N.)
6 Weber, Max. *Economía y sociedad*, v. 1, p. 311–313.
7 On slavery in classical Antiquity, especially in Rome, see Schtaierman E. M. A luta de classes no final da República. In: Annequin, J.; Claval-Lévêque, M.; Favary, F. (Orgs.). *Formas de exploração do trabalho e relações sociais na Antiguidade clássica*; Idem, La caída del régimen escla vista. In: *La transición del esclavismo al feudalismo*. Schtaierman, E. M.; Trofimova, M. K. *La schiavitú nell'ltalia imperiale*; Finley, M. I. *A economia antiga*; Westermann, William L. Op. cit.; Weber, Max. *Economía y sociedad*; Idem, La decadencia de la cultura antigua: sus causas sociales. In: *La transición del esclavismo al feudalismo*; Bloch, Marc. Cómo y por qué terminó la esclavitud antigua.
8 See, for example, op. cit., Book One, p. 182, n. 39. Book Three, p. 795, n. 43.
9 On the notion of "capitalist slavery," cf. Weber. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 554 and 569. Idem, *Historia económica general*, p. 254–255.
10 Cf. Marx, K. Op. cit., Book Three, chap. 20 and 36. On the impossibility of the emergence of the capitalist mode of production in Ancient Rome, see also the end of Marx's letter to Otiechestviennie Zapiski. *Correspondência*. Op. cit., p. 372.
11 Cf. Aristotle. *Politique*, p. 25–37. Book One, chap. III.
12 Marx, K. Op. cit., Book One, p. 250.
13 On the concept of colonial economy, see Simonsen. Op. cit., t. II, p. 236. Furtado, Celso. *A economia brasileira*, p. 15, 66–67.

9

LAW OF THE INITIAL INVESTMENT TO ACQUIRE THE ENSLAVED PERSON

Capitalist employers do not purchase their laborers; they hire their workforce for a certain period of time. The serf's existence is simultaneously a necessary condition and a result of seigneurial property. Slave owners, on the other hand, can only employ the enslaved person by acquiring him, and to do so they must make an investment, expending resources in advance. This prior investment – the initial investment to acquire the enslaved person – is an economic category entirely specific to slavery.

Modalities of Acquisition of Enslaved People

The various ways of acquiring enslaved people can be summarized according to three modalities: capture, purchase, and breeding within the slave complex.

Capturing Africans was indispensable for colonial slavery in the Americas, but extrinsic to its mechanism. I have already examined the issue in Chapter 5, and here it suffices to emphasize that the prior investment for acquisition was made by the slave dealer, by the slave buyer in Africa. It was with the dealer's resources that Africans captured enslaved people in practice.

The planter bought the African enslaved person from the dealer, and the purchase price represented the initial investment to acquire the enslaved person. When the enslaved person was leased out, the initial investment was paid back *in installments*. The entire initial investment for acquisition was previously made by the slave owner, and the lessee paid back the lessor a part of the investment that corresponded to the period of the lease. Depending on the period, the lease price included amortization and interest on the total amount invested by the owner to purchase the enslaved person.

Raising enslaved people also required initial investment. The enslaved person could be bought as a child to be raised to adulthood by the planter. Or he could be born in the plantation as the son of a female enslaved person. In any case, raising the enslaved person implied a certain cost, an investment. This included the purchase price of the child or a reduction, however small, of the work time of the female enslaved person during pregnancy and childbirth, nursing and caring for the child, etc. In addition, the extremely high infant mortality rate among the slave population meant that the initial investment applied to raising the enslaved person was exceedingly unpredictable in terms of its final profitability. While in a purchase the initial investment to acquire the enslaved person was paid at once, raising an enslaved person implied an investment

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spread over long periods of time, until the raised enslaved person was fully productive. In Brazil, enslaved people were considered adults at the age of sixteen, although their labor power was employed before that in secondary tasks.

Economic Significance of the Initial Investment

Let us examine the most common form of initial investment – purchasing the enslaved person.

In the sphere of circulation where slave dealers operate, the purchase appears as an application of money capital. At the end of the transaction cycle, once the enslaved person bought in Africa is sold to a planter in Brazil, the money capital paid in advance by the slave dealer should return to him with a profit. But that profit does not depend on the *creation* of values – it results from the *capture* of values in the sphere of circulation.

In order to apprehend the economic significance of the initial investment to acquire the enslaved person, we must set aside the sphere of circulation and focus on the sphere of production, where both the planter and the enslaved person bought by him operate. Here too we encounter the money value paid in advance during the purchase transaction (the nature of the transaction is no different when the enslaved person is purchased on credit, as was often the case). The planter pays in advance a certain amount of money with which he purchases the enslaved person, hoping to recover it with a profit. However, the planter does not operate in the sphere of circulation – the profit over the value paid in advance must derive from the enslaved person's *productive* employment. We must therefore examine what happens to the money paid in advance and what it means for the colonial slave mode of production.

When the planter purchases an enslaved person, he acquires the right to make use of the enslaved person's labor power during his entire life. Purchasing an enslaved person has a well-defined economic function: to ensure the planter's enjoyment of a *permanently* available labor force. In the context of slavery, only the property of enslaved people – of men treated as things – can ensure the *continuity* of the production process. It is therefore evident that the purchase of enslaved people is entirely functional in slavery and summarizes its specific rationality. What would be irrational is to imagine that slave production could take place without enslaved people.

However, in order for the enslaved person's labor power to be productive, it must be *employed*. Labor constitutes the living process whereby the labor power is utilized. The purchase merely makes the enslaved person available to the owner but does not ensure the productive employment of his labor power. In order to employ it, the planter must incur another expense beyond the purchase cost: *the expense to provide for the enslaved person*. The latter must be fed daily, receive clothing, shelter, time for rest, medicines in case of illness, etc. If the enslaved person is not properly sustained, he will be incapable of working and the purchase made by the planter will have been pointless. The fact that the sustenance provided to enslaved people was extremely precarious does not alter this reasoning.

Obviously, the expenditure made to provide for the enslaved person is not analogous to the initial investment since it is not paid in advance but derives from the enslaved person's labor itself. The enslaved person's sustenance derives from a part of his own production during a day's work, i.e., with the work time necessary for the reproduction of his labor power expended in the process of production. Independently of his awareness of the phenomenon, the slave owner must yield to the enslaved person a part of his work time or risk losing the enslaved person and thus hindering the continuity of production. While the slaveholder owns the entirety of the enslaved person's labor power, under no conditions can he elude the need to give up part of it to sustain the enslaved person. Only the *surplus* beyond the necessary labor, i.e., only the enslaved person's surplus labor can be appropriated by the slave owner.

Slave labor engenders a different phenomenal appearance than wage labor. In the world of appearance, wages compensate for *all* of the worker's labor, when in fact it compensates only for the necessary work, whereas the overwork, in the form of surplus value, is appropriated by the capitalist with no retribution. With slave labor, the opposite seems to be the case: *All* of it appears under the phenomenal aspect of uncompensated, unpaid labor. The condition of property, wrote Marx, disguises the enslaved person's work for himself and gives the impression that the enslaved person's labor is entirely cost free for the owner. Both supporters and adversaries of slavery are deceived by that appearance. On the contrary, Aristotle stated that "a slave's salary is his food […]," since any slave must be sufficiently fed to maintain his strength.[1]

We therefore have two *entirely different* types of expenditures made by the slaveholder: the enslaved person's purchase price and his sustenance. The enslaved person's purchase price is not paid to him but to his seller, who has no relation whatsoever with the process of production. The slave dealer takes the amount paid for the enslaved person and leaves with it. The slave buyer sees his monetary fortune diminished by the amount that corresponds to the purchase price and finds himself in possession of the enslaved person who became his property. By law, he is also the owner of all of the enslaved person's future production. In practice, the use of the enslaved person's labor power implies giving up part of his production to the enslaved person himself. From the slave owner's standpoint, it is a new expenditure. However, while the first expenditure – the purchase price – took place *outside* the process of production, the second – the enslaved person's sustenance – takes place *within* it.

All modes of production without exception are governed by the *law of the necessary reproduction of the labor power expended in the process of production*. The degree of reproduction of the labor power varies, no doubt, but it is mandatory nonetheless. What distinguishes the colonial slave mode of production is that, in addition to the omnimodal law of the necessary reproduction of the labor power, it is also governed by the unimodal or specific law of the initial investment to acquire the laborer. This initial investment represents a *false production expenditure* imposed by the peculiar nature of the slave relations of production.

Insertion of the Initial Investment in the Process of the Slave Economy

Obviously, the critique of the initial investment to acquire the enslaved person is not new. It can be found in several authors at the time of slavery, like Koster and Rugendas. Both of them emphasized that the burden of the initial investment would be eliminated if wage laborers were employed instead of enslaved people.[2] Addressing the slaveholders themselves, José Bonifácio noted that the emancipation of enslaved people would "put unused assets into free circulation, which slavery currently absorbs […]." With the remarkable vision of a statesman of his time, he emphasized that enormous assets left from Brazil to Africa every year: "enormous assets are expended in this country to purchase slaves, who die, fall ill, are disabled, and work poorly."[3]

In his 1837 pamphlet in favor of the end of the African slave trade, Burlamaque referred to José Bonifácio in support of his arguments. He noted that, unlike enslaved people, acquiring free laborers costs nothing to those who employed them, and he added:

> Once the work for which they were employed concludes, the laborers are discharged, which results in significant savings – which is not the case with slaves, [who cannot be discharged] whether or not there is enough work for all of them.[4]

Toward the end of slavery, Joaquim Nabuco and Louis Couty revisited and further developed the argument, pointing to the investment in enslaved people as a burden that increased the cost of labor and reduced the available capital.[5]

From Koster to Nabuco, everyone who dealt with the issue was preceded by an unknown economist who in the 1790s wrote about the economy of Bahia. With admirable sagacity, an Anonymous Author quantified the cost of the initial investment for the slave economy. The questionable accuracy of that quantification is less important than its methodological conception. According to the economist's calculations, purchasing one hundred enslaved people moderately necessary for a sugar mill cost 10:000$000, considering an average price of 100$000 *per capita*. The same one hundred enslaved people demanded an annual expense of 1:440$000, which included clothing expenses (5$000 per enslaved person, totaling 500$000), healthcare (2$400 per enslaved person, totaling 240$000), 5% interest on the capital "tied up" in the purchase (a total of 500$000), and 2% for life insurance (a total of 200$000). As we can see, the author did not include food expenses, probably because it was provided by the plantation's production. In contrast, one hundred wage laborers – freed Black men – with a salary of 1$000 per month or 12$000 per year cost a total of 1:200$000 per year. Therefore, Anonymous Author concluded:

> In this speculation, beyond to the money tied up, the cost and the advance expenditure of the always risky dead fund of 10:000$000 rs, the most fortunate Owners, Plantation Lords, Planters, profit 240$000 rs.[6]

In other words, replacing enslaved people with wage laborers avoided an initial purchase investment of 10:000$000 plus 240$000 of annual expenses.

The phenomenon was only perceived and such criticism was only possible when the capitalist economy developed in Europe provided a clear contrast with slavery in Brazil. Although lacking theoretical depth, the unknown economist clearly understood the fundamental difference between slavery and capitalism, an understanding that is missing in so many present-day economists and sociologists.

Up to this point, I believe that we have made it clear that the initial investment to acquire the enslaved person represents an expenditure that has nothing to do with the production process as such. We must now clarify how that expenditure fits in the operation of the slave economy.

If we examine the relationship between the capitalist and the laborer, we observe that the capitalist only pays the salary *after* the laborer has created a value divided in two parts: the value equivalent to the salary and the surplus. Instead of paying the laborer in advance, the capitalist receives an advance payment from the laborer corresponding to a week, a fortnight, or a month of labor, depending on the established wage period. The *fulfillment* of the value created by the laborer in the market does not come into play since that fulfillment is deferred in agriculture, in construction, and in certain branches of mechanical industry, technical characteristics of which imply a lengthy process to elaborate the final product. What is important here is that, in the daily production process, *before receiving the salary*, the laborer creates values that immediately belong to the capitalist. The advance payment is made by the laborer, not the capitalist.[7]

The opposite occurs with the initial investment to purchase the enslaved person. To simplify things, let us suppose that the enslaved person is purchased in cash. The buyer will have spent a certain amount and the enslaved person is now in his power. Before obtaining any product from him, the buyer was forced to make an advance payment that was substantial in any period whenever the enslaved person was Black. We presume, however, that slaveholders recovered the investment. We must therefore examine the peculiar insertion of the price to purchase the enslaved person in the operation of the slave economy at the level of each productive unit and of the global economy.

The commentators who criticized slavery at a time when the contrast with the capitalist economy in Europe was already clear did little more than emphasize the *unnecessary* and *expensive*

purchase cost of the enslaved person for the process of production. The difficulty therefore arises when social scientists attempt to study the slave economy and are forced to apply to it categories elaborated through research of the capitalist economy. In the latter, the category of the purchase cost of the *laborer* does not exist, only the category of the purchase cost of the labor force. Chayanov clearly understood that there were specific categories to slavery, such as the *price of the enslaved person* and *slave income*. However, the need for different theoretical criteria was obscured by the bias of marginality, when Chayanov assumed, without historiographic grounding, the operational rationality of the costs and marginal gains under slavery.[8]

Let us examine how the matter has been addressed by more recent authors: Celso Furtado, F. H. Cardoso, Manuel Moreno Fraginals, and Eugène Genovese. When approaching the issue, they all agree in simultaneously classifying the enslaved person's purchase price according to two *different and irreconcilable* categories: labor and fixed capital.

It must be noted that the critique of this double classification only makes sense from the standpoint of Marxist political economy. It is well known that, in addition to the categories of circulating capital and fixed capital, Marx added another pair: variable capital and constant capital. Each category pair explains a different level of the same reality without an overlap between them. The former has to do with the process of the *transfer* of value from capital to the product. The value of circulating capital is transferred *wholly and at once* to each product unit, including wages paid and certain means of production (raw materials, fuel, lubricants, electric energy, etc.). The value of fixed capital – facilities, equipment, production instruments – is only transferred to the product *gradually, in parts*. The second pair of categories conceptualizes the behavior of each element of productive capital *in the composition of the product's value*. While variable capital – restricted exclusively to the investment necessary to purchase the labor power – increases in value during the labor process by producing its own value increased by a surplus value, constant capital – present in *all* means of production, whether fixed or circulating – maintains its preexisting value unaltered. This means that wages are simultaneously variable and circulating capital, while fixed capital is constant capital and refers only to a certain part of the means of production.

After such a succinct summary, let us see how the authors cited above approach the matter of the enslaved person's purchase price.

Celso Furtado relied on a *description* from the standpoint of the slave business monetary accounting. The enslaved person's purchase price would be "a payment to the slave," attributable to the labor factor, but the enslaved person's daily sustenance would be accounted for gradually, as is the case with fixed assets.[9]

If we go from the descriptive to the theoretical level, that solution becomes problematic. F. H. Cardoso understood that as he pointed to the following contradiction in the "slaveholding-capitalist" system (*sic*, the quotes are the author's):

> …in a capitalist economy, variable capital is circulating capital, while in a "capitalist" economy based on slave labor, "variable capital" is "fixed capital." Evidently, the categories that allow us to describe and explain the capitalist economy appear contradictory when applied to the slave economy. This reveals once more the unfeasibility of a slave organization of labor in capitalist terms.[10]

The author acknowledged the theoretical difficulty – an unquestionable merit – but he circumvented it easily with the use of quotation marks, which add nothing to the concepts, while his reasoning admittedly results in a formal contradiction, with the euphemistic observation that it only happens *sometimes*. If F. H. Cardoso problematized what Celso Furtado only described, he

did not resolve the theoretical obstacle because he insisted on remaining in the realm of the thesis according to which the slave economy was an incomplete and backward form of capitalism.[11]

Assuming that a contradiction that is only logical or conceptual is actually real, Fraginals described it very clearly in Marxist terms:

> Due to an unsolvable contradiction, slaves were simultaneously labor power and a means of production. As a means of production, slaves constituted more than 50% of the plantation's fixed or constant capital […]. Given their nature as a means of production, they were permanently tied to the productive sphere and transferred value to the product in the same proportion as they lost, with their use value, their own exchange value. At the same time, as labor power they participated directly in production, reproducing their daily value – the cost of maintenance being equivalent to a monetary wage – and adding a certain surplus value to the product. Therefore, going back to the initial notion of productivity/man indicators, in slave production, when speaking of the relationship between sugar and slaves, we measure the slave's performance as a laborer as well as the profitability of the fixed capital invested.[12]

As we will see below, once the conceptual ambivalence of the enslaved person as both labor power and fixed capital is eliminated, the contradiction, which does not exist in reality, disappears from theory as well and simply does not require resolution.

Regarding Genovese, he paid too little attention to the issue of the initial investment to purchase the enslaved person, which is fundamental for a theoretical understanding of the political economy of slavery. In a footnote, the historian wrote:

> The initial amount spent is equivalent to the amount invested by capitalists as fixed capital and constitutes what Ulrich B. Phillips called "overcapitalization of labor" of the slave regime.[13]

By not clarifying the meaning of "overcapitalization of labor," Genovese introduces a new problem when he writes later that "the heavy of capitalization of labor" constitutes one of the main obstacles to capital accumulation under slavery.[14] Constrained to that line of reasoning by his failure to examine the matter at greater depth, he expresses himself ambiguously in his conclusions:

> It is possible that, at a strictly economic level, the perpetual capitalization of labor was profitable and must be understood as an element of the process of capital accumulation; but at the level of the overall regional development, it was undoubtedly opposed to capital accumulation.[15]

I will examine the issue of the correlation between the initial investment to purchase the enslaved person and accumulation under slavery later in my study. For now, let us focus on the fact that the research undertaken by the four authors mentioned above resulted in the logical/formal contradiction of assigning the enslaved person's purchase price to two unmistakably different factors: labor and fixed capital. Let us see how, in my opinion, the dead end represented by that contradiction can and must be avoided by maintaining a rigorous theoretical coherence.

The Enslaved Person as Money Capital

First of all, it is evident that enslaved people represent the amount of money for which they were purchased or for which they can be sold. In this regard, enslaved people functioned on certain

occasions as money in the strict sense, as a means of exchange or a means of circulation. That is what happened, for example, during the siege of Dutch Recife by the Portuguese/Brazilian armed forces, as Wátjen wrote:

> During the campaign for liberation, slaves in Recife were demoted to the condition of a means for freedom. For example, when the supplies in the warehouses of the [West India] Company were insufficient to supply the troops, the High Command resorted to free merchants to make up for the shortage, obtaining flour, bread, and meat in exchange for strong slaves that the negotiator then used as an item for trade with Spanish colonies.[16]

Second, if enslaved people represent an investment of a certain amount of money, they can be utilized as money capital loaned with interest. In Brazil, it was common to lease enslaved people, and there were many people who made a living investing in enslaved people and either leasing them or employing them as *negros de ganho*, which was in fact a form of leasing. When examining bank capital, Marx wrote in passing:

> In the slave society, the laborer has a capital-value, namely, his purchase price. And when he is hired out, the hirer must pay, in the first place, the interest on this purchase price, and, in addition, replace the annual wear and tear on the capital.[17]

Up to now, enslaved people represent a sum of money and are capable of serving as money: a means for exchange, a means for payment, and a means for capitalization or money capital. It is important to emphasize that money capital is not *productive capital*, which is the form of capital that effectively operates in the creation of value and surplus value. It is to productive capital that the categories of variable and constant capital, fixed and circulating capital apply. In the labor process strictly speaking, productive capital is nothing more than a consumer good that serves to create new products. In the process of circulation, necessary for the reproduction of its components and the elaboration of its product, commodity capital is constantly transformed into money capital and vice versa. The relative autonomy of the sphere of circulation from money gives rise to (precapitalist) usurer's capital and bank capital (capitalist in its usual connotation). The possibility, thus, arises for a certain amount of money to be applied as capital, with value added, *directly as money*: through loans with interest, the purchase of securities, etc. From the individual standpoint of the money's owner who applies it, the money is capital, regardless of what the borrower does with it. From a macroeconomic standpoint, only money that becomes labor power and production goods is capital, and in that case it goes from the money form to the productive capital form. Money capital is therefore only *potential* capital until it is transformed in the production process, which, in turn, encompasses both the labor process and the valorization process. The difference and the extremely complex relationship between money capital and productive capital deserved from Marx one of his most extensive analysis, as the reader can ascertain.[18]

Enslaved People as Subjective Agents of the Labor Process

In order to advance toward a solution of the problem, we must examine the precise function of the slave laborer in the labor process, considering the latter in and of itself in general terms, without relating it to any given concrete social form.

The authors who study the slave economy do little more than designate the enslaved person as a *means of production*. After all, the enslaved person is purchased and utilized by the owner like

any other material means included in production. Going back to Marx, we see that in *Forms which precede* he referred to the enslaved person's appropriation as an *objective condition of labor.*[19] Also in the *Unpublished Chapter* of *Capital* he mentions the enslaved person as an instrument of production or a condition of production. But in that work, he also says that the capitalist system transforms the wage laborer – the real producer – into a "mere means of production." Hence the contradiction between the development of material wealth and the individual human being.[20] We can therefore conclude that the objectification of all human producers, not just enslaved people, but also wage laborers, is inherent to exploitation regimes.

In effect, viewed through the special lens of the labor process itself, what Marx asserts about the direct producer, regardless of the social relation he is a part of, is exactly the opposite. In Chapter V of Book One of *Capital*, he analyzes the labor process as a universal process of human existence. A process that differentiates humans from animals because of the rational ends that only humans are able to give to their relationship with nature, previously determining subjectively the course of the productive action. Humans therefore act as subjective agents who master the material elements employed in the labor process. And as subjective agents, whether they appear under the condition of enslaved people, independent producers, or wage laborers makes no difference. Marx himself says:

> The labor process, as we have just presented it in its simple and abstract elements, is purposeful activity aimed at the production of use values. It is an appropriation of what exists in nature for the requirements of man. It is the general condition for the interaction between man and nature, the everlasting condition of human existence, and it is therefore independent of every form of that existence, or rather it is common to all forms of society. We did not, therefore, have to present the worker in his relationship with other workers. It was enough to present man and his labor on one side, nature and its materials on the other. The taste of porridge does not tell us who grew the oats, and the process we have presented does not reveal the conditions under which it takes place, whether it is happening under the slave owner's brutal lash or the anxious eye of the capitalist […].[21]

The fact that the laborer is always the subject of the labor process demonstrates the absurdity of Althusser's claim and his choice to eliminate the *human subject* from production and history. Althusser refers to Marx's recurrent statement regarding *people's* behavior in the economic process. There they appear with the *masks* of their functions and can only be understood as *personifications* of economic categories, as the *bearers* of economic relations. From this standpoint, capitalists and landowners – warned Marx – cannot be held individually responsible for the relations of which they are social creatures. In the economic process, both persons are merely bearers of certain class relations and interests.[22] In his "symptomatic reading," Althusser inferred that the real "subjects" were the relations of production. Nonetheless, he then amended: "But since we are dealing with 'relations,' we cannot conceive them under the category of subject."[23]

As a result, there would be no subject in economy. Laborers and capitalists intervene exclusively as *objective* factors, with the same objectivity as the material factors of production.

Balibar adds:

> We can […] say that each of the elements of the *combination* [*Verbindung*] undoubtedly possesses a form of 'history,' but *a history whose subject cannot be found*: the true subject of all partial history is the combination on which the elements and their relations depend, i.e. something that is not a subject.[24]

This entirely impersonal and subjectless mechanism sees only pure objectivity in human history, like the sky with its galaxies and solar systems.

However, Marx repeatedly referred to *men* and *individuals*, examining exploitation and alienation from their perspective, and not only from that of social classes. The bearers of social relations do not lose their experience as persons, and only persons can *personify* economic categories. In other words, the economic category here defines an historical mode of existence of human beings and not of impersonal, purely objective things. Humans, individually considered, can only be bearers of relations of production if and when, forcefully or not, they incorporate them subjectively and act accordingly, motivated by them. The objectivity of relations of production never foregoes the moment of their personification, their introjection in the subjectivity of people with agency, no matter what mystified image those people may have of their own relations of production.

The root of the mistake of the Althusserian school becomes evident when we examine *Marxist economic* theory. What would remain of the theory of value and surplus value if the fact that laborers are persons did not distinguish them from material means of production? How could we justify considering the human labor power the *only* component of the labor process capable of creating value and, therefore, surplus value? If laborers *create* useful products – which acquire their value form under certain social conditions – this happens because they are the subjective executors of the objective labor process.

In later essays, Althusser returned to the topic and introduced amendments in his original formulations. Yes, individuals have always been subjects, but *ideological subjects*. Ideology transforms concrete individuals into subjects through a process called "interpellation," which in terms of functionalist sociology is nothing more than an attribution of roles. Ideology "functions" in such a way that it imposes the *subject form* on human individuals who are the agents of social practices. But history itself has no subject: It is an immense "natural-human" system in motion driven by class struggle. History is a process with no Subject and no End(s).[25]

The theoretical question cannot be resolved, as Althusser thought, by introducing a conceptual distinction between Subject (in uppercase) and subjects (in lowercase and plural). Rejecting the Kantian transcendental subject does not imply rejecting subjectivity; it merely detaches it from apriorist and essentialist metaphysics. Humans – concrete individuals – are subjects through ideological ascription, but they are also subjects beforehand, as beings and not as consciousnesses, through economic action. The agent of the labor process, who produces consumer goods and values, is not a subject because ideology so determines, but because the structure of the economic activity itself demands the interference of subjectivity. More forcefully stated: Without subjectivity there would be no economic activity. This is true of the enslaved person and the wage laborer as well as the slave owner and the capitalist (the latter as owner of the property and the agents who organize the production process).

Althusser's use of functionalist sociology is useless in the realm of the economy, if the latter is examined without giving in to the seduction of academic positivism.

I agree with the author of *Pour Marx* in that history is a process without an End or Ends. In its objective course, governed by laws, human history does not depend on end causes and its theoretical explanation does not require teleology, whether sacred or profane. But history, driven by the class struggle, is the history of human subjects, and the latter are so because they establish ends for themselves and act accordingly. The fact that history has no ends but its subjects do is a contradiction that cannot be apprehended by logical/formal reasoning. But this dialectical contradiction forces us to conclude that history is a process *with* a Subject and *without* (an) End(s).

Recovery of the Initial Investment as a Deduction of Surplus

At this point, we can do away with the false analogy between the enslaved person's purchase price and the category of fixed capital. There is an excerpt of *Capital* where the problem is examined, and I will cite it also in the German original, precisely because its erroneous reading led to misunderstandings that the excerpt itself clarifies:

> In the slave system, the money capital invested in the purchase of labor power plays the role of the money form of the fixed capital, which is but gradually replaced as the active period of the slave's life expires.[26] Among the Athenians therefore, the gain realized by a slave owner, whether directly through the industrial employment of his slave, or indirectly by hiring him out to other industrial employers (e.g., for mining), was regarded merely as interest (plus depreciation allowance) on the advanced money capital.[27]

In order to delimit the terms of the matter, we must bear in mind the context of the excerpt above. In Book Two, Marx studied the process of reproduction of capital as a whole in relation to the circulation of money. In this context, the problem of the connection between circulation of commodity capital and money capital arises, a particularly complex problem when one considers fixed capital. Regarding the latter, the money capital is paid at once by the industrial capitalist and gradually recovered over a period of perhaps ten or twenty years, during which the material components of the fixed capital wear down or become unusable. In this regard, and only in it, the initial investment to purchase the enslaved person is analogous to the money capital employed to purchase fixed capital. The enslaved person's price is paid in advance and recovered gradually during a period of ten or twenty years of the enslaved person's productive life. However, Marx did not say that enslaved people *are* fixed capital. He does say that the *money capital [Geldkapital]* employed to purchase the enslaved person *plays the role [spielt die Rolle]* of the *money form* of fixed capital [*von Geldform des fixen Kapitals*]. It is therefore not the enslaved person as such, as a concrete human being, with his concrete labor power, in the concrete labor process, who plays the role of fixed capital, but rather the *money* applied to purchase the enslaved person behaves like the money form of fixed capital.

Oblivious to this fundamental distinction, despite the fact that he referred to the same excerpt by Marx, N. W. Sodré wrote that in the slave system "the labor power is part of the fixed capital […], the labor power is integrated into fixed capital."[28]

This confusion, also shared by Caio Prado Júnior and F. H. Cardoso,[29] must be radically dismantled, and this can be done by correctly reading Marx's words reproduced above.

If the initial investment to purchase the enslaved person cannot be identified with fixed capital as a concrete element but only plays the role of its money form, can it then be considered variable capital? Variable capital – represented by wages – is recovered as circulating capital, which is not the case with the enslaved person's purchase price. The expenses incurred with the enslaved person's daily sustenance – which are different from the purchase price – can be identified with variable capital… if we insist on the thesis that colonial slavery constitutes a form of capitalism. Understanding the enslaved person's purchase price as a payment for the labor factor is only possible within the framework of the academic theory of the factors of production, with its accounting schemes of the sort of Celso Furtado's.

We therefore arrive at the following: The enslaved person's purchase price cannot be ascribed to either fixed capital or variable capital. It remains to be determined in which form the slave owner recovers the sum of money equivalent to the enslaved person's purchase price.

Even though the initial investment to purchase the enslaved person is "tied up" as money capital, it is not embodied in any concrete element of the slaveholder's productive fund. In other words, the initial investment on the enslaved person does not operate as capital. In the real process of slave production, *this investment is transformed into noncapital*. It would be an error to assert that it is *immobilized*, for if we did so, we would include it under fixed capital. The correct thing would be to conclude that the money capital employed to purchase the enslaved person becomes *sterilized capital* – capital that does not contribute to production and is no longer capital. Therefore, we must also conclude that the initial investment to purchase the enslaved person can only be recovered by the slave owner *at the expense of the enslaved person's overwork, of his surplus product*. It constitutes an unavoidable reduction of the slaveholder's income or what could be called the slave profit. From an accounting standpoint, it makes no difference to consider it a part of the cost of production or an unavoidable reduction of profit similar to a tax. From the standpoint of economic theory, the only correct solution is to include it in the surplus product and consider the slaveholder's effective income reduced in the proportion of the amortization of the investment made to acquire the enslaved people.

Eschwege intuitively perceived this when he made the following estimate:

> If we estimate the annual income of a slave in Minas, free of all expenses, at 28$000, we can conclude that the capital tied up in the purchase will be recovered in a period of five and a half years, but only if the owner does not have the misfortune of losing the slave due to natural death. The tied up capital is therefore recovered with an interest of 17% to 20%. The income obtained in the following years can therefore be considered net profit.[30]

As we can see, the German engineer did not include the enslaved person's purchase price in the costs of production but considered it recovered by the buyer as a deduction of the *income* obtained from the enslaved person's work.

In a judgment made in 1871 at the Chamber of Deputies, Cristiano Otôni reproduced the words heard from a landowner, most probably around the 1830s: "A slave is purchased for 300$000: he harvests one hundred *arrobas* of coffee per year, with a net production equivalent at least to his cost; after that, it is all profit."[31]

Assuming that the estimate of the landowner's costs of production is right, the reasoning is correct: The enslaved person's purchase price was restituted by a year's *net* product (i.e., by the surplus product), and only after that did the enslaved person's net product constitute effective profit for the landowner. The latter was quite satisfied with that arrangement because he did not have to reason as a capitalist. From the usual standpoint of a capitalist, it would be absurd not to be able to appropriate as profit the surplus created by his laborers during a whole year (much less five years, in Eschwege's estimate). For the capitalist, this would be a failure of his enterprise or a considerable waste of his reserves. For the slaveholder, it was simply a normal and unavoidable condition of production.

In the production process, the enslaved person's purchase price resembles the purchase price of empty land, i.e., undeveloped natural land. In both the cases, we have money capital that does not contribute to production and therefore becomes sterilized capital or noncapital. For that reason, Marx wrote the following regarding the price of land:

> It forms neither a part of the fixed, nor of the circulating, capital employed here; it merely secures for the buyer a claim to receive annual rent, but has absolutely nothing to do with the production of the rent itself.[32]

Further on, Marx resorted to the slave economy precisely to make that line of reasoning more explicit:

> Take, for instance, the slave economy. The price paid for a slave is nothing but the anticipated and capitalized surplus value or profit to be wrung out of the slave. But the capital paid for the purchase of a slave does not belong to the capital by means of which profit, surplus labor, is extracted from him. It is capital which the slaveholder has parted with, it is a deduction from the capital which he has available for actual production. That capital has ceased to exist for him, just as capital invested in purchasing land has ceased to exist for agriculture. The best proof of this is that it does not reappear for the slaveholder or the landowner except when he, in turn, sells his slaves or land. But then the same situation prevails for the buyer. The fact that he has bought the slave does not enable him to exploit the slave without further ado. He is only able to do so when he invests some additional capital in the slave economy itself.[33]

To these words, which require no further clarification, I would like to add only one observation: Purchasing an enslaved person involves a specific risk that does not exist when purchasing land. The latter does not disappear and, if it is not tilled, it preserves and even improves its natural properties. This is not the case for the slave buyer. Not only must he employ the enslaved person immediately, since the enslaved person's life has an unavoidable limit, but he also faces the risk of losing the enslaved person much earlier than the end of his productive life: The enslaved person can fall seriously ill, become disabled for work, flee, or die.

Conclusion

The above results in a specific or monomodal law of the colonial slave mode of production, which can be formulated as follows: *The initial investment to acquire the enslaved person gives the slaveholder the right to permanently employ a labor force as his property and simultaneously sterilizes the fund advanced in the act of acquisition, recovered at the expense of the surplus to be created by the enslaved person himself.*

I will continue to denominate money capital the amount of money in the hands of the slaveholder, withdrawn by him from his personal consumption to employ it in any sort of investment. I will denominate *funds* the slaveholder's *productive* investments, embodied in concrete elements of the production process. Depending on their characteristics, the funds can be fixed or circulating, variable or constant. Obviously, I do not include the initial investment to purchase the enslaved person in the slaveholder's productive funds.

Notes

1 Cf. Marx, K. *Das Kapital*, Book One, p. 562; Aristotle. *Les économiques*, p. 26.
2 Cf. Koster, H. Op. cit., p. 545; Rugendas, João Maurício. *Viagem pitoresca através do Brasil*, p. 71.
3 Andrada e Silva, José Bonifácio de. Representação à Assembleia Geral Constituinte e Legislativa do Brasil sobre a escravatura. *Escritos políticos*, p. 52 and 59.
4 Burlamaque. Op. Cit., p. 80–81.
5 Cf. Nabuco, Joaquim. *O abolicionismo*. Couty, Louis. Op. cit., p. 50–51.
6 Anonymous Author. Op. cit., p. 37–38.
7 Cf. Marx, K. Op. cit. Book One, p. 188.
8 Chayanov, Alexander V. Sobre a teoria dos sistemas econômicos não capitalistas. In: Silva, José Graziano da; Stolcke, Verena (Orgs.). *A questão agrária*.
9 Furtado, Celso. *Formação econômica do Brasil*, p. 64, 66.

10 Cardoso, f. H. Op. cit., p. 201.
11 Ibidem, p. 202-213.
12 Fraginals. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 14.
13 Genovese, Eugéne D. *Économie politique de l'esclavage*. Op. cit., p. 26, n. 4.
14 Ibidem, p. 56.
15 Ibidem, p. 244.
16 Wätjen, Hermann. Op. cit., p. 490–491.
17 Marx, K. Op. cit. Book Three, p. 484.
18 Ibidem. Book Two, chap. I-VI; Book Three, chap. XXVIII–XXXII.
19 Idem, *Formas que precedem*, p. 453 and 459.
20 Idem, *Capítulo inédito*, p. 54, 76 and 112.
21 Idem, *Das Kapital*. Book One, p. 198–199.
22 Ibidem, Book One, p. 16, 100, and 177.
23 Althusser, L. L'objet du capital, p. 157.
24 Balibar, E. Sur les concepts fondamentaux du matérialisme historique, p. 245–246.
25 Cf. Althusser, Louis. Ideología y aparatos ideológicos del Estado. In: *Filosofía como arma de la revolución*, p. 120 et seqs.; Idem, *Resposta a John Lewis*.
26 In German: "*Im Sklavensystem spielt das Geldkapital, das im Ankauf der Arbeitskraft ausgelegt wird, die Rolle von Geld form des fixen Kapitals, das nur allmählich ersetzt wird, nach Ablauf der aktiven Lebensperiode des Sklaven*."
27 Marx, K. Op. cit. Book Two, p. 474–475.
28 Sodré, Nelson Werneck. *História da burguesia brasileira*, p. 38.
29 Cf. Prado Júnior, Caio. *História econômica do Brasil*, p. 180, n. 56; Cardoso, F. H. Op. cit., p. 201–202, n. 50.
30 Eschwege, W. L. von. *Pluto brasiliensis*, v. 2, p. 447–448.
31 Apud Nabuco, Joaquim. Op. cit., p. 89–90.
32 Marx, K. Op. cit., Book Three, p. 816.
33 Ibidem. Book Three, p. 817.

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EFFECTS OF THE LAW OF INITIAL INVESTMENT TO ACQUIRE THE ENSLAVED PERSON

In the previous chapter, I examined theoretically the law of the initial investment to acquire the enslaved person, which is specific to the colonial slave mode of production. We will now descend to the concrete terrain where we shall inquire into the effects of the law, encompassing the following elements: the enslaved person's price, the proportion of the initial investment to acquire the body of enslaved people in the planter's entire set of investments, the influence of the initial investment on the process of accumulation at the microeconomic and macroeconomic levels, the enslaved person as a fundamental and decisive category of the mode of production.

The Enslaved Person's Price

Our study assumes that the enslaved person is acquired through purchase and, to simplify our reasoning, through purchase in cash. Let us examine the most common factors that influenced slave prices.

Enslaved people were called *peças* (pieces). African enslaved people were called "pieces from India," "pieces from Guinea," "Negroes from Guinea," and "heathens of the Coast." Indigenous enslaved people were called "pieces from the land's heathens," "Negroes of the land." A piece was not necessarily a single enslaved person. It could be two or three of them, depending on their age, sex, and strength. The habitual quantitative assessment of the content of a piece was examined by J. Lúcio de Azevedo, Affonso de E. Taunay, and Maurício Goulart.[1] The scale of values varied and, according to Goulart, with time "piece" became synonymous to an adult Black enslaved person at the height of his physical strength.

Age, sex, and strength were factors that always influenced the enslaved person's purchase price. In the draft of the Company's charter proposed in 1757 by the main slave dealers living in Bahia, there is a detailed price scale. The following categories – most of them encompassing three qualities or "choices" – with different prices for males and females, were specified: Black adults, *molecões* (and *moleconas*), *molecotes*, *moleques*, and *molequinhos*. The first choice or first lot of Black adults had a price of 140$000. The first choice of Black female adults or *moleconas* had a price of 90$000. The cheapest ones were ordinary (male and female) *molequinhos*: 40$000.[2]

Based on empirical patterns obtained from accumulated experience combined with superstitions and prejudices, slaveholders established a common sense or a set of criteria to examine the pieces they intended to purchase. They took into account the type of crop or urban activity

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in which the enslaved person would be employed, the African "nation" of origin (assuming this implied certain skills, level of physical resistance, submissiveness or rebelliousness, etc.), the degree of their interest in acquiring women (preferred for domestic services and, to a variable extent, for certain productive tasks) or *moleques* and *molequinhos* who would have to be raised for years. Based on similar criteria, the buyers carefully assessed the qualities of the enslaved people available for sale. Tollenare described the usual transaction in one of Recife's markets as follows:

> When a buyer arrives, the slaves indicated by him are made to stand; he touches them, feels their pulse, examines their tongue, their eyes, the strength of their muscles, makes them cough, jump, and violently shake their arms. The negotiated slaves comply with these requests and even do their best to demonstrate their qualities.[3]

In addition to the enslaved person's intrinsic qualities or, in other words, their *use value*, the price was also influenced by purely commercial factors that acted on the side of both the supply and the demand in their ever-changing correlation.

On the supply side, there was the price of the goods necessary to purchase the enslaved people in Africa, the ports where the slave dealer acquired them, competition from national or foreign dealers, taxes and expenses with bribes, losses during the voyage, etc. Historians of the slave trade have highlighted those and other aspects, and it is therefore unnecessary to examine them in detail here. I will discuss some of them in a special chapter, examining the relationship between slave dealers and planters.

On the demand side, the main factor was the enslaved person's expected profitability during his or her probable useful life, which, in turn, depended on the prices of slave production in the world market.

The concept of *useful life* was common in slavery and is not the same as the concept of *life expectancy*, as has been assumed by historians and demographers. The useful life of an enslaved person indicated the period during which he or she was capable of full labor. Planters were interested in the average useful life of their slave workforce, from which he extracted the *annual replacement rate*. For a slave workforce with an annual replacement rate of 10%, the enslaved people's average useful life was ten years. An annual replacement rate of 5% resulted in an average useful life of twenty years. While some enslaved people were able to have a long useful life, it was necessary to account for factors to the contrary: the loss of African enslaved people during their adaptation period in Brazil, child mortality, etc.

The various regions of the colony competed in the demand for enslaved people, according to each region's profit expectations. During the rise and at the height of gold and diamond mining, Minas Gerais became the most attractive and most expensive market, resulting in a scarcity of supply and often ruinous prices for other regions. Prices "normalized" in the second half of the eighteenth century with the decline of mining. In the nineteenth century, the coffee boom raised slave prices again, while the difficulties experienced by the slave trade, persecuted by England, operated in the same direction. After 1850, the definitive end of the African slave trade raised their price to the highest level in the nineteenth century.

In addition to the primary economic motivation, matters of status also contributed to the demand. All free men were obliged to demonstrate their position as slave owners, and the number of enslaved people owned was an indicator of social prestige.

Current interest rates always had an impact on both the supply and the demand, since dealers and planters often paid for their operations on credit.

Since Salvador, Recife, and Rio de Janeiro were ports of direct and regular commerce with Africa and with markets that redistributed enslaved people to other regions of Brazil, those cities

usually enjoyed better prices. Thanks to its geographic location and the abundance of certain products preferred on the African coast, Salvador imported the most enslaved people up until the nineteenth century, when Rio de Janeiro took precedence. In Maranhão and Pará, slave prices were usually higher due to the greater distance to African ports and the fact that part of the supply came from redistribution markets in Bahia and Pernambuco.

Independently of other factors, the enslaved person's purchase price motivated the owner to care for the enslaved person's preservation, guaranteeing that the latter produced during a given number of years in order to be considered profitable. The slaveholder had an interest in ensuring that the annual amortization of the purchase price was as low as possible, which also induced him to extend the enslaved person's life. But that also depended on another variable: profitability. The greater the current profitability, the greater the interest in exploiting the enslaved people in order to obtain as much surplus in the shortest time, even if that meant reducing their useful life and raising the annual amortization of the purchase price. In addition, extending the enslaved people's life meant increasing expenses with everyday sustenance. Obviously, other factors also contributed to define how enslaved people were treated, as we will see below.

There is information from the nineteenth century that reveals a particular concern with preserving the property embodied in the enslaved person. This concern led the slaveholders to keep enslaved people from excessively dangerous or harsh tasks, which were entrusted to free laborers. Koster, for example, witnessed the following in Pernambucan plantations:

> Skimming is usually performed by free laborers for two reasons: it requires great skill, which slaves rarely possess, and the effort involved leads planters to hire a free man instead of exhausting a slave.[4]

In Rio de Janeiro, Maria Graham narrated the same phenomenon:

> Plantation owners prefer hiring Black men who are either free or hired out by their masters to work in the forest, because of the many accidents that occur when cutting down trees, especially in steep slopes. The death of a Black slave is a loss of value; the death of a hired Black man only leads to a small compensation; the death of a free Black man often means not having to pay his wages, unless he has children to claim them.[5]

While young and strong enslaved people had to be preserved, old and invalid enslaved people were a dead weight in the planter's budget. They consumed food and did not produce. There were certainly slaveholders who sustained their old enslaved people, and in the mid-nineteenth century the Baron of Pati do Alferes recommended assigning minor tasks to invalid enslaved people, such as raising fowl.[6] Most planters, however, resorted to a simpler solution: They liberated old and useless enslaved people, who became free men and beggars.

Some slaveholders solved the problem through an extremely direct process: they murdered invalid enslaved people. Rodrigues de Carvalho recorded this practice:

> When the old slave, tired and rendered useless by a joyless life of working without rest, unsteady, deserving care, the master (not all, but some, like in the plantations in Paraíba, Lalau, Melo Azevedo, Zé-Lopão) arranged for "an accident to happen": the old slave was discovered incinerated in the furnace, hanged, drowned, and almost always found missing.[7]

The counterproof for the motivation of that practice is found in the cases narrated by Koster and Maria Graham. The former was acquainted with the property in Jaguaribe belonging to the

Benedictine Order. They did not withhold freedom from those enslaved people who were able to gather the money equivalent to their price. But they did not extend that right to the administrator, who was the property's most valuable enslaved person, and who had bought his wife's and children's freedom but was unable to liberate himself. Although he was an enslaved person, he owned two enslaved people, whose production belonged to him. He offered them to the monks in exchange for his own freedom, but the proposal was rejected. The British author mentions another identical case: an enslaved person who was a sugar master and was denied manumission despite having saved enough money to buy it. The case narrated by Maria Graham is analogous and refers to an enslaved person from a plantation in Rio de Janeiro.[8]

We can therefore conclude that the enslaved person's life depended on three main variables: the purchase price, the capacity for work, and the profitability of the slave production in the market. In this respect, indigenous pieces were at a disadvantage compared to those of African origin: their purchase price was consistently lower. This was one of the causes for the higher mortality rate of indigenous enslaved people. Since they were inexpensive, slaveholders were less concerned with preserving them.

According to Simonsen's generalization, "on average, an indigenous slave was worth a fifth of an African slave."[9] While this might have truly been the average, the difference was much greater at the time of the great captures, when indigenous tribes were fertile sources of enslaved people. Friar Vicente do Salvador wrote that, in the mid-sixteenth century, the frightened Indians of the Northeast

> …allowed themselves to be tied by White men as if they were their sheep and goats. They were thus transported in boats packed with them down those rivers, to be sold for two *cruzados* or a thousand *réis* each, which is the price of a sheep.[10]

At that time, an adult enslaved African cost at least 25$000. His life was therefore worth twenty-five times more than that of an indigenous enslaved person. As a result, the latter was treated as poorly as his price, and in the eyes of the colonizer that made him a "poor slave" – weak, unskilled, and quickly worn out.

The price recorded by Friar Vicente do Salvador no doubt belonged to a moment of exceptionally abundant and inexpensive supply. In his work of 1574, Gandavo estimated the price of an Indian enslaved person at ten *cruzados*.[11] Apparently this price – the equivalent to 4$000 – remained unaltered for a long time. Around 1654, according to Father Vieira, an Indian enslaved person could be bought in Pará, in the first auction, for 4$000.[12] In the case of *índios de corda* ("roped Indians") – prisoners destined to die – the slave dealer could obtain them for four times less that price, i.e., an amount of hardware goods with the value of eleven *tostões*, or 1$100 per head.[13]

Sometimes prices rose due to a shortage of captures and the intervention of monopolists. Regarding the legal expeditions to capture Indians in the Amazon, J. Lúcio de Azevedo wrote:

> The expenses were prorated by the number of *pieces* that were allotted to the residents, charging each them during the distribution. Instead of the real cost, which was approximately 4$000 per head, they demanded 15$000 to 20$000. Sometimes the governor seized the entire lot and divided it among his officers and relatives. The latter would resell them immediately for 70$000 to 80$000.[14]

In São Paulo, the prices of indigenous enslaved people rose as the expeditions yielded fewer captives and the demand grew. Friar Gaspar da Madre de Deus recounted that, in 1543, the House of São Vicente established the price of indigenous enslaved people, setting a ceiling of 4$000 to

obtain them from the sellers, who were also Indians, paid "with tools, glass beads, seashells, and other similar trifles […]."[15] According to Alcântara Machado, in the early seventeenth century an adult Indian cost from 8$500 to 26$000. Around 1680, the price went up to 50$000, reaching 70$000 in 1712.[16] Let us recall that at that time, enslaved African cost 100$000 in Bahia and three times as much in Minas Gerais. We can surmise that, in addition to being less readily available, the price of indigenous enslaved people rose due to their employment during the initial phase of gold mining in São Paulo.

Initial Investment to Acquire the Enslaved Person in the Planter's Total Investments

Since the purchase price of the slave workforce was an expense that was peculiar to the colonial slave mode of production, we must inquire what proportion of the planter's total investment or, more precisely, of the market price of the plantation as a whole, that price occupied. Poor accounting records make it difficult to elaborate historical series with reasonable precision. My study did not involve a systematic research, but a collection of the most accessible data. The purpose was merely to obtain a referential assessment in the general context of the matter.

It is also important to note that colonial plantations or haciendas should not be understood as capitalist enterprises from an accounting perspective. Among the plantation's assets, there were buildings unrelated to the production process: the master's house, the chapel, dwellings for free laborers, slave houses. In wealthier establishments, the master's house and the chapel were very valuable real estate. In addition, a certain number of enslaved people did not take part in the productive process, whether because they served the master's family or because they were children, were ill, etc.

We can begin with the famous Engenho de Sergipe do Conde, in the Recôncavo region of Bahia, which was administered by the Jesuits and belonged to the Santo Antão de Lisboa School. Before it became a model for Antonil's work, one of his administrators, Father Estevam Pereira, gave us the following assessment in 1635:

> The *engenho*, with its sugar draining facilities, dwellings, pasturelands, processing facilities, and dock, with its body of slaves, cash and many other objects, together with tenant farmers' obligation to hand over their sugarcane, which was the best in the entire region, is worth forty to fifty thousand *cruzados*.[17]

The *engenho* did not have its own plantation at the time, focusing only on milling the sugarcane received from a dozen farmers who leased its lands. The price of the land leased was not included in Father Pereira's calculations, which do include, however, the tenant farmers' obligation to hand over their sugarcane, which was a purely contractual element. The *engenho* had eighty enslaved people, which Father Pereira appraised at a "cheaper" price of 35$000 per piece. A low estimate of the price of the entire slave workforce was 2:800$000. It therefore represented 18% of 40,000 *cruzados* (16:000$000) or 14% of 50,000 (20:000$000).

In 1635, Engenho de Sergipe do Conde was not the typical *engenho* of the colonial period. Not only did it not include a sugarcane plantation, but also no foodstuffs were grown either.

> Examining the Bahian economy as a whole in 1781, Silva Lisboa made the following assessment: "An *engenho* with good land, good pastures, a good mill, with eighty slaves and the same number of oxen and horses (unless it is water-powered) costs from 50,000 to 70,000 *cruzados*."[18]

With this higher estimate, and assuming an average price of 100$000 per enslaved person, the total slave workforce represented 28% of the *engenho*'s market price.

A decade later, Anonymous Author estimated the average price of *engenhos* in the Recôncavo region at 40:000$000, including a slave workforce valued at 10:000$000.[19] The slave workforce therefore made up 25% of the *engenho*'s total value.

Koster calculated the price of a top-class plantation in Pernambuco at £8000 sterling pounds, and the enslaved people at £32 per head. If we assume that the plantation had eighty enslaved people – which would not be far-fetched – the slave workforce made up 30% of the plantation's total price. An average plantation cost from £3000 to £5000 and had forty enslaved people. The slave workforce therefore represented practically the same percentage.[20]

Coffee plantations required a lower investment for processing than sugar plantations. On the other hand, coffee plantations required five to six years to reach their full production, and they produced for 25 to 40 years, constituting the main item of the fixed fund representing accumulated labor. The inventory of Fazenda Cachoeira in Rio de Janeiro, owned by Francisco José Teixeira Leite, the future Baron of Vassouras, gives us an idea of coffee plantations' investments. The inventory, elaborated in 1850 and described by Taunay, coincides with the beginning of the boom of slave coffee production and with a time when slave prices were high, but still far from the levels reached a few years later. Fazenda Cachoeira was appraised at 184:479$000, lower than the prices quoted by Taunay, if we include the coffee in stock. If we take into account only those items that are representative of significant investments for productive work in round numbers – land, coffee trees, buildings, mills, and animals – we have a total value of 179:000$000, 84:000$000 of which is the price of the slave workforce. This is equivalent to 47% of the total investment.[21]

This percentage grew after the end of the African slave trade, when slave prices increased. Stanley Stein estimated that the price of the slave workforce rose to 73% of the value of coffee plantations in Vassouras in 1857–1858, far above the value of the land, the coffee trees, the main building and other facilities, and the machinery. In 1863, the inventory of Fazenda do Barão de Guaribu calculated the value of the total assets at 635:000$000. The price of the enslaved workforce was estimated at 441:530$000, i.e., 69% of the total inventory.[22] These numbers, recorded during a period of prosperity of coffee production in the Paraíba Valley in Rio de Janeiro, reveal the extremely high cost of enslaved people relative to the total investment of colonial slave plantations.

In his work *The History of Sugar*, Noel Deerr reproduces several inventories of sugar plantations in the Antilles, which serve as a basis for comparison.

A typical plantation in Barbados in 1690 was appraised at £5625, including fifty Black enslaved people with a price of £1250, or 22% or the total. In 1798, a typical large plantation in Jamaica had a "total capital" of £30,000 on average, £12,500 of which was the value of a workforce consisting of 250 Black enslaved people. In this case, the slave workforce rose to 42% of the total value. It is interesting to note that the average price of an enslaved person in the Barbados plantation was £25, whereas the average price in the Jamaican plantation was £50 slightly over a century later. The doubled price of enslaved people coincided with an almost double percentage of the slave workforce relative to the total value of plantations, in both cases in British colonies.

In 1780, also according to Deerr, a Cuban plantation was appraised at £35,000, with a workforce of 220 enslaved people at £50 per head, making up a total of £11,000, or 31% of the total price. In the early nineteenth century, Humboldt wrote that the largest Cuban plantations employed almost 300 Black enslaved people, appraised at £60–£80 per head. The "capitalization" of such a property was valued at £73,000. Estimating the average price of a Black enslaved person at £70, we would have a workforce of 300 enslaved people at £21,000, making up 29% of the accounting value of a large Cuban plantation at the time. In 1846,

the American-owned Saratoga Plantation, also in Cuba, was appraised at £61,873. The slave workforce was appraised at £20,746, making up 33% of the total. In 1830, in Louisiana (the United States), a good plantation cost $170,000, including a workforce of ninety enslaved people for a total price of $54,000 ($600 per enslaved person). The slave workforce therefore made up 32% of the plantation's total cost.[23]

As we can tell, the proportion of the slave workforce in the total investment of a Brazilian sugar plantation was approximately the same as that of Antillean plantations.

The proportions of the slave workforce relative to the fixed fund and to the uncultivated land provide another perspective. From now on, I will denominate *fixed fund* the set of perennial plantations, buildings, equipment, production instruments, and draft animals (items that are representative of accumulated labor), excluding uncultivated land as a separate factor. I will identify the slave workforce, the fixed fund, and the uncultivated land as A, B, and C, respectively.

The accounting value of the Salgado plantation in Pernambuco, according to the inventory elaborated by Tollenare, allows us to arrive at some conclusions. The author of *Notas dominicais* estimated that doubling the area cultivated would cost "only 100,000 francs in slaves and 100,000 francs in cattle and establishment expenses." No new expense was necessary to purchase land, since the plantation possessed an enormous extension of uncultivated land. We can assume that "establishment expenses" are the expenses required to create the new sugarcane plantation and to enlarge the sugar processing facilities. We can therefore conclude that the ratio between B and A was 1:1. From Tollenare's information, we can also conclude that, since the property was purchased for 150,000 francs, its price was practically the same as the price of the land, which was much larger than what was necessary for production.[24] The ratio between C and A was therefore 1.50:1.

In the inventory of Fazenda Cachoeira cited above, we find the following items: land (about 1125 hectares) – 30:000$000; 250,000 coffee trees – 50:000$000; buildings, mills, and tools – 13:000$000; animals – 2:000$000; a workforce of 147 adult enslaved people and fifteen children – 84:000$000. This gives us a ratio between B and A of 0.77:1 and a ratio between C and A of 0.36:1.

The inventory of Fazenda Guaribu summarized by Stein includes enslaved people, coffee trees, processing facilities, land, and other items with no productive significance. The coffee trees and the processing facilities roughly composed the fixed fund. This gives us a ratio between B and A of 0.20:1 and a ratio between C and A of 0.09:1. In this plantation, the enslaved people were worth eleven times more than the land.

Let us examine the ratios in some of the inventories mentioned by Noel Deerr.

Jamaican plantations: B/A – 1:1; C/A – 0.50:1.
Saratoga plantation: B/A – 1:1; C/A – 0.50:1.
Louisiana plantations: B/A – 1:1; C/A – 0.40:1.

Obviously, we cannot expect a uniform quantitative ratio between the various components of the accounting value of plantations of different regions and periods. As we have seen, the price of enslaved people varied significantly. In Brazil, the first appropriation of lands was free, through direct occupation or *sesmaria* concessions granted by the Crown. But once the areas favorable to a certain crop were entirely occupied, the lands were valued at prices that tended to rise depending on the demand. The prices of the elements of the fixed fund, whether imported or produced on-site, also varied. But what does become evident is that the purchase price of enslaved people always represented a significant percentage of the planter's total investment, reaching over two-thirds of the total investment in Brazilian coffee plantations after 1850. Likewise, the price of the slave workforce represented a sterilization of money capital.

Influence of the Initial Investment to Acquire the Enslaved Person on the Process of Accumulation at the Microeconomic Level

As we have seen, the money capital invested to purchase the slave workforce was recovered by the planter as a fraction of the surplus produced by his enslaved people. Let us now examine that fraction with the available estimation procedures. To simplify things, I will only take into account the surplus retained by the enslaved people's immediate exploiter, i.e., the planter, without considering what was transferred to merchants and the state.

I reproduced above the words of a coffee planter cited by Cristiano Otôni. From them we can deduce that the enslaved person's purchase price was recovered with one year of that enslaved person's net production. Gallifet arrived at the same conclusion regarding the French colony of Saint-Domingue.[25] Assuming they are correct, those estimates refer to periods of exceptional prosperity. It does not seem that they can be generalized, at least not to Brazil's slave economy during a period of three centuries.

For example, Anonymous Author calculated the general state of Bahia's sugar economy in the late eighteenth century. Since the price of the slave workforce must be included in the surplus, I added an annual amortization of that investment to the total profit of the 150 plantations included in the economist's statistical analysis. With an annual amortization of 1:000$000 per plantation, we have a total of 150:000$000. Added to the global net profit of 316:000$000 of all plantations, we have a surplus of 466:000$000. Divided by the 150 plantations, each has a surplus of 3:100$000. This was the money income, to which we would add a natural income estimated at 400$000 per plantation (composed of foodstuffs produced on-site for consumption by the slaveholder's family). The total annual surplus would be equivalent to 3:500$000 per plantation. Since the slave workforce cost 10:000$000, the initial investment was recovered with the net production of approximately three years.[26]

Applying the same criteria to Gayoso's estimates regarding cotton plantations in Maranhão, we can conclude that each enslaved person's surplus was equivalent to 48$000 in a year with 300 workdays for the master. Three years and four months were necessary for the enslaved person to deliver a net production equivalent to his purchase price of 160$000.[27] But it is important to note that Gayoso was using the "fair price" of an enslaved person and the "intrinsic value" of cotton. In reality, cotton prices in 1814 were insufficient to pay for planters' expenses.

The situation of the Salgado Plantation was significantly more fortunate. Tollenare's accounting allows us to infer that the price of the slave workforce was equivalent to the surplus of two years and four months, at a moment of high sugar prices.[28]

Tollenare's estimates on cotton production are little more than guesswork based on insufficient information, as the author himself suggests. I will not examine them here, but I will make the use of his information regarding hired enslaved people in the Port of Recife, who usually earned between seven and eight francs per week for their masters. Assuming that the average price of these pieces was 900 francs (145$000), according to the author's own estimate for the Salgado Plantation's enslaved people, we can conclude that each hired enslaved person restituted their purchase price in about two and a half years of regular work (with 300 workdays per year, according to Gayoso). Later, Tollenare wrote that an ordinary, unqualified Black enslaved person who was hired out would produce 30%–40% of his purchase price per year.[29] The purchase price was therefore recovered in a period that ranged from two and a half to three years and four months.

Spix and Martius, promoters of the idea of the benign nature of slavery in Brazil, were unfavorably impressed with the situation of hired enslaved people in Bahia:

> In the cities, the situation of those who have to provide their masters with a certain daily sum (of about 240 rs) is extremely sad, because they are considered capital in action, and their masters overwork them in an attempt to recover the capital advanced, with the corresponding interest, as soon as possible.[30]

In 300 days per year of regular work, the hired enslaved person produced 72$000 for his master. The purchase price – 150$000 – was recovered in two years and one month. But only if the slaveholder incurred no expense whatsoever with the enslaved person, which was not always the case.

Apparently, Bahian slaveholders demanded too much of their hired enslaved people, even according to slavery standards. According to Myriam Ellis, during the same period, in 1816, the Armação de São Domingos, a whaling station in Rio de Janeiro, employed hired enslaved people at a daily price of 160 *réis*. Assuming that the price of an enslaved person was 130$000 and that he was hired out for 300 days per year, he would produce 48$000 per year for his owner, and the latter would recover the initial investment in two years and seven months. In actual fact, the period to recover the initial investment was probably longer, since, although the renter was obliged to feed the enslaved person, the owner had to provide for clothes and medical treatment in the case of illness.[31]

An identical estimate was made by Vicente Salles in regard to Pará. In the mid-eighteenth century, an enslaved person cost 115$000, and he was hired out for 300 *réis* per day or 89$000 per year. The slaveholder recovered the purchase price in fifteen months and a few days.[32]

In the previous chapter, I referred to an estimate by Eschwege, which I now complete. Assuming that a healthy enslaved person aged 16–20 cost between 150$000 and 200$000 in Rio de Janeiro in 1821, he estimated that in Minas Gerais, with an annual net income of 28$000, the investment could be recovered in five or five and a half years. The estimate is not quite exact, but it serves as an approximation.

The information examined above allows us to conclude that, from the mid-eighteenth century to the 1830s, the purchase price of an enslaved person was equivalent to the net income obtained by the enslaved person in one to five and a half years. However, if we examine the period from the last decade of the eighteenth century to the second decade of the nineteenth century, from which we have the most information, we see that the variation was more often between two and three years, which allows us to reasonably set the average at two and a half years. If we also reasonably assume that, in the same period, the average useful life of a work enslaved person was from ten to twelve years, we see that the purchase price of each piece represented from 20% to 25% of the total income produced by the enslaved person.

In practice, the purchase price of the enslaved person was not amortized in a set period, as assumed above, but was spread throughout the enslaved person's useful life. Once the purchase price was recovered, what did the slaveholder do? There is no doubt about it: he purchased a new enslaved person. With that, the same cycle began once more, requiring 20%–25% of the surplus of the total product to cover the initial investment to acquire the enslaved person.

From all of the above, we cannot infer that accumulation was impossible under slavery. Accumulation was possible as long as the products from the slave economy enjoyed monopoly prices in the world market. There were even moments when accumulation reached very high levels, but that will be discussed in a special chapter. What matters now is that under no circumstance was the surplus saved entirely equivalent to the *productive* investment on the slave economy. One part of the surplus saved was inevitably destined to the unproductive expense of acquiring enslaved people. Whatever the proportion of that expense to the *total* surplus was, the proportion to the *saved* surplus was obviously greater – i.e., the proportion to the part of the surplus that was not used to satisfy the personal needs of the slaveholders. The significance of that loss of savings can be inferred from Tollenare's calculations. Since the Salgado Plantation's owner had an immense area of uncultivated land, increasing the productive capacity only required acquiring more enslaved people, creating new sugarcane fields, and increasing the processing capacity. Doubling the productive capacity was possible with 100,000 francs – the equivalent of 16:000$000 – to purchase enslaved people and an additional 100,000 francs invested in the fixed fund.[33] If the plantation's owner did not need to purchase new enslaved

people, the same 200,000 francs applied to the fixed fund would allow him not to double, but to triple his productive potential. The need to purchase enslaved people therefore meant that the possibilities of accumulation were reduced by 50%.

Influence of the Initial Investment to Acquire the Enslaved Person on the Process of Accumulation at the Macroeconomic Level

The slave market was an unavoidable part of the mechanism of the colonial slave mode of production. Until 1850, the slave market's demand was met in Brazil mainly by importing Africans. The imported enslaved people were paid for with exported goods, the value of which was not compensated by material goods with equal value but was instead diverted to the slave trade. From the above we can conclude that the part of the value exported that was used to pay for the imported enslaved people represented a proportional deduction from the wealth created by the slave economy, which was, thus, sterilized. In the hands of the slave dealers, the value created by the slave economy served mainly to maintain and increase the slave trade, while the rest was employed in the dealers' personal consumption and to invest in other areas. Slave dealers could invest part of the accumulated profit in the slave economy itself, by becoming a sugar or coffee plantation owner himself. However, since most slave dealers were foreigners (Portuguese, in the case of Brazil), the slave trade channeled part of the profits from the colonial economy out of the country. Since the slave trade was controlled by residents of Europe, it is obvious that all of the trade's profits ended up there.

Without examining here the issue of the slave trade's contribution to original capital accumulation in Europe, let us inquire into its significance for the colonial slave economy itself.

As an example, let us focus on the statistics of Bahia's foreign trade in 1798, reproduced by Vilhena. That year, Bahia exported goods to Portugal with a value of 2688:354$070. The imports from Portugal and Africa totaled 2788:741$059. The import of enslaved people (from the Portuguese Gold Coast and Angola) was valued at 662:380$000.[34] The total cost of imported enslaved people was therefore 24% of the total exports and 23% of the total imports.

From data provided by Spix and Martius we can conclude that, in 1817, the import of Africans represented 35% of the total exports and 32% of the total imports in Bahia.[35] We must not forget, however, that a part of the Africans that arrived in Bahia were resold in other parts of the country.

According to information provided by Gayoso, we can see that, in 1783, the total exports from São Luís do Maranhão to Lisbon were valued at 544:980$691. That same year, the capital of Maranhão imported 1602 enslaved people for a total price of 175:738$000, corresponding to 32% of the total exports.[36]

Maria Graham included in her *Diário* the statistics of Maranhão's foreign trade from 1812 to 1821. The import statistics include information regarding the imports from other parts of Brazil. Since the number of enslaved people imported from Portuguese Africa and Brazil were recorded, but not their cost in money, I had to make some calculations based on assumptions of what the reasonable average might be.[37] With this caveat, the results shown on **Tables 10.1–10.3** were obtained:

Let us now focus on Cuiabá – a municipality with a mining economy at the time. According to D'Alincourt, from 1823 to 1824, Cuiabá exported 253:524$067 and imported 195:756$704.

TABLE 10.1 Slave imports by Maranhão (in units)

	From Africa	*From Brazil*	*Total*	*Yearly average*
1812–1816	9112	3028	12,140	2428
1817–1821	18,057	7366	25,393	5079
1812–1821	27,169	10,364	37,533	3753

TABLE 10.2 Imports by Maranhão (in thousands of *réis*)

	Enslaved people	*Total*	*%Enslaved people/total*
1812–1816	1593,197	8548,704	19
1817–1821	4047,600	13,494,166	29
1812–1821	5640,797	22,042,870	25

The enslaved people imported were valued at 60:572$800, only slightly surpassed by cotton textiles.[38] Enslaved people therefore represented 24% of exports and 31% of imports.

Up to here we have seen a proportion of 16%–35% of exports or imports, always at the regional level. We can elaborate an estimate at the national level for the decade from 1841 to 1851, when the total exports and imports in Brazil were valued at 487,540:000$000 and 540,944:000$000, respectively. In the same decade, the slave trade introduced 338,328 Africans into the country. At a probable average price of 400$000 per capita, slave imports totaled 135,331:000$000. Since the slave trade was illegal at that time and the enslaved people imported were not recorded by the Customs Office, their number must be added to the figures recorded, resulting in a total of 676,275: 000$000 in imports. The expense of introducing African enslaved people therefore represented 28% of the total national exports and 20% of the total national imports during the period cited above.[39]

It is not difficult to conclude that slave imports constituted a process of *de-accumulation*, a hindrance to the possibility of accumulating productive funds, an always substantial reduction of the resources saved for investment. This suffices to demonstrate not only the precapitalist nature of the colonial slave regime but also its anti-capitalist nature.

It is true that Brazil's slave economy grew and that it had its own resources to do so, but that growth was accompanied by a substantial reduction of its savings, i.e., of the net product not consumed by the population. If we add this de-accumulative effect to the other effects of maintaining the slave structure and furthering the colonialist dispossession that slavery implied, we understand why Brazil's economic development was far behind that of Western Europe and the United States, where a capitalist economy advanced impetuously.

The assumption that there is no conflict between slavery and capitalism is a fallacy of the school of New Economic History. Both in Brazil and the Southern United States, the point of departure for industrial development was primitive accumulation from slavery. But this was also an obstacle, a factor that contained and delayed industrial development of the capitalist kind. The exact opposite happened in the Northern United States, where the impulse of capitalist industrialization did not have to break the bonds of colonial slavery.

The argument put forth by the followers of that same school, according to which the obstacle to economic development did not derive from slavery, but from export agriculture, is equally unfounded. The predominance of export agriculture was not an accidental coincidence – it was intrinsic to the colonial slave mode of production wherever it existed. No country where colonial slavery prevailed could avoid its consequences, i.e., an economy structured around export agriculture. Thus, the attempt to rehabilitate slavery through the lens of cliometrics is not supported by either facts or logic.

TABLE 10.3 Exports from Maranhão (in thousands of *réis*)

	Total	*%Enslaved people/exports*
1812–1816	10,021,399	16
1817–1821	13,273,058	30
1812–1821	23,294,457	24

The Enslaved Person as a Fundamental and Decisive Factor of the Dominion of Production

All comparisons between slave labor and free wage labor become matters of speculation when detached from current historical circumstances. And they lead to the conclusion that slavery was composed of elements considered "irrational," as Weber did.[40] But those elements are only irrational when viewed through the lens of capitalist "rationality," established as a supra-historic standard of economic rationality. It is undeniable that slave labor was much less productive and much more wasteful than wage labor in a capitalist regime. This does not mean, however, that slave labor was irrational in that particular period. On the contrary, in that period, only slave labor was rational.

Adam Smith's viewpoint was also ahistorical. Although the great Scottish economist made some acute observations regarding colonial slavery, especially by relating it to the regime of monopoly prices that characterizes mercantilism, his ideological eagerness to justify the capitalist order led him to an abstract critique of slave labor. He wrote the following:

> It appears, from the experience of all ages and nations, I believe, that the work done by freemen comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves.[41]

In another excerpt, he argued that the reason slave labor was employed was "*the pride of man that makes him love to domineer.*"[42]

Adam Smith made the mistake of extrapolating to "all times and nations" the historical conditions of England in his times. Eric Williams critiqued this "abstract proposition."[43] Slave labor has many serious defects, but it was not adopted as an alternative to free labor – it was adopted simply because there was no alternative. And obviously also because it was economically viable. More than viable, in fact, slave labor was advantageous for the large-scale production of tropical export crops, as long as there were fertile lands that could be appropriated.

Since the early nineteenth century, free laborers were employed in Brazil as an occasional complement to slave labor in plantations. From the information I was able to gather, I inferred that free laborers' wages were regulated by the cost of slave labor, and not the other way around. Generally, the daily wage of a free laborer was equivalent to the cost of renting and feeding an enslaved person or slightly more. Considering that there was no mass of free men apt for hard labor in exchange for wages, enslaved people had the advantage of guaranteed continuity. On the other hand, an increase in the demand of day laborers immediately raised wages, which made slave labor even more advantageous.

Enslaved people were not an incidental and expedient phenomenon resulting from whim or circumstantial necessities. The same way that the ownership of *land* was a socially decisive factor for the dominion of production in feudalism, and the ownership of *capital* in capitalism, those who lived at the time of slavery were convinced that the ownership of enslaved people was a decisive and fundamental factor in the dominion of production in the existing economy in Brazil. There are many and impressive testimonies throughout the centuries. I abstain from reproducing them here to keep from overwhelming the reader with citations, but I mention a few in the footnote.[44] I will refer, however, to the Dutch experience in Brazil because it is most revealing.

When they conquered the Brazilian Northeast, the Dutch had some practice with the slave trade, but no experience directly exploiting enslaved people. When William Usselincx proposed founding Dutch colonies in the Americas, he did so imagining colonization with free laborers, arguing that slavery was anti-economic and inhuman.[45] Interested in the slave trade, the Council of the Nineteen of the West India Company itself consulted with the *predikants* regarding its legitimacy. The Calvinist clergy concluded that the slave trade was indeed legitimate, but under certain conditions, that the enslaved people were not sold to either the Spanish

or the Portuguese, since they would become papists (Catholics); that they were instructed in the true Christian religion and liberated after years of loyal service; and that they be allowed to flee from cruel masters without the risk of being restituted to the latter.[46] In the colonial context, and stimulated by large profits, those restrictions were not even considered. In a document of the time, the Dutch opinion was bluntly expressed:

> Without those slaves it is impossible to do anything in Brazil. Without them, the mills cannot operate and the lands cannot be cultivated, and therefore there must be slaves in Brazil and under no circumstances can they be deemed unnecessary. If anyone feels offended by this, it is a futile scruple.[47]

The practice of slavery was independent of the colonizing power's "national character," religion, or degree of economic development. Under all circumstances, only by employing enslaved people was it possible to produce tropical crops for export at the scale demanded by the European market. In this regard, the Dutch were no different or better than the Portuguese. Boxer wrote objectively:

> The Dutch joined the slave trade late and reluctantly – but they very soon compensated for their tardiness. In that respect, the procedure they adopted in Brazil was not the most inhuman; but what they later did in Suriname is as horrifying as anything practiced at any time by any other slaveholding nation.[48]

Referring to Gayoso's work on the cotton economy, Caio Prado Júnior observed:

> Gayoso's estimate of the cost of production is quite interesting. He excludes from it any reference to the value of land, its profit, or the interest on the capital invested. This sheds a light on the accounting system and private finances of the time; and it is all the more important because it is one of the very rare sources we have in that regard.[49]

Gayoso was not a common colonist but a man of extraordinary culture in his context. As we can observe in his *Compêndio histórico-político*, he was familiar with the French Encyclopedists and with the economic doctrine of his time. His accounting work is quite practical and reflects an objective fact: *that enslaved people were the only decisive factor in Maranhão's cotton plantations*. It was impossible to expect profits from land that was freely occupied and that was soon exhausted, which gave agriculture an itinerant character. Nor was it possible to expect interest from inexpressive "capital." As we have seen, the ginning process was entirely manual, without the use of even the two-cylinder ginning device, and fixed installations were practically the result of slave labor. Gayoso's accounts shed much more light on the economic system than on the accounting system.

A decisive factor in the dominion of production, the ownership of enslaved people was a measure of economic power, positioned the individual in the class structure, and indicated his status. Enslaved people summed up slavery. What Weber wrote about ancient slavery can be applied to modern slavery in the Americas: "All accumulation of fortune implies an accumulation of the possession of slaves."[50]

Notes

1 Cf. Azevedo, J. Lúcio de. Op. cit., p. 75; Taunay, A. E. Op. cit., p. 589–593; Goulart, Maurício.
2 See Estatutos da Nova Companhia, 3 May 1757. *ABN*, v. 2, p. 246.

3 Tollenare, L. F. Op. cit., p. 140. Also on auctions and purchases in slave markets, cf. Debret, Jean-Baptiste. *Viagem pitoresca e histórica ao Brasil*, t. I, p. 188-189; Ewbank, Thomas. *A vida no Brasil*, v. 2, p. 282–283, 287–288; Stein, Stanley J. *Grandeza e decadência do café*, p. 83–87; Costa, Viotti da. *Da senzala à colónia*, p. 51–55.
4 Koster, H. Op. cit., p. 432.
5 Graham, Maria. Op. cit., p. 313.
6 Cf. Werneck. F. P. Lacerda. Op. cit., p. 9.
7 Carvalho, Rodrigues de. Aspectos da influência africana na formação social do Brasil. Apud Goulart, J. A. Op. cit., p. 179. n. 22.
8 Cf. Koster, H. Op. cit., p. 513 and 528; Graham, Maria. Op. cit., p. 220–221.
9 Simonsen. Op. cit., t. I, p. 324.
10 Salvador, Frei Vicente do. Op. cit., p. 203.
11 Cf. Gandavo. Op. cit., p. 82.
12 Cf. Varnhagen. Op. cit., t. III, p. 207.
13 Cf. Southey. Op. cit., v. 4, p. 151–152.
14 Azevedo, J. Lúcio de. *Os jesuitas no Grão-Pará*, p. 140.
15 Madre de Deus, Frei Gaspar da. Op. cit., p. 66.
16 Cf. Machado, Alcântara. Op. cit., p. 180–181.
17 Pereira, Padre Estevam. Descrição da fazenda que o Colégio de Santo Antão tem no Brasil e de seus rendimentos, *AMP*, t. IV, p. 781 and 90–791.
18 Lisboa, Silva. Op. cit., p. 501.
19 Cf. Autor Anônimo. Op. cit., p. 34 and 37–38.
20 Cf. Koster, H. Op. cit., p. 442–443.
21 Cf. Taunay. Op. cit., t. III, v. 5, chap. CIII.
22 Cf. Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 271 and 295. Table XIX.
23 Cf. Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 249. v. 2, p. 129, 332–335, 337.
24 Cf. Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 73, 77.
25 Cf. Canabrava. Op. cit., p. 186.
26 Cf. Autor Anônimo. Op. cit., p. 34–40.
27 Cf. Gayoso. Op. cit., p. 247, 263–265.
28 Cf. Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 73–76.
29 Ibidem, p. 115–116, 142–143.
30 Spix and Martius. *Através da Bahia*, p. 143–144.
31 Cf. Ellis, Myriam. *A balela no Brasil Colonial*, p. 102–103.
32 Cf. Salles, Vicente. *O negro no Pará sob o regime da escravidão*, p. 170.
33 Cf. Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 77.
34 Cf. Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 60–61.
35 Cf. Spix and Martius. Op. cit., p. 128 and 131.
36 Cf. Gayoso. Op. cit. Maps on p. 219 and 243.
37 Cf. Graham, Maria. Op. cit., p. 367–371.
38 Cf. D'Alincourt, Luiz. Resumo das explorações desde o registro de Camapuã até a cidade de Cuiabá. *RIHGB*, t. XX, p. 344.
39 Data sources: Prado Júnior, Caio. *História econômica do Brasil*. *Anexos*. Table on Foreign Trade; Soares, Sebastião Ferreira. *Notas estatísticas sobre a produção agrícola e carestia dos gêneros alimentícios no Império do Brasil*, p. 134; Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 274. Graph 6.
40 Cf. Weber, Max. *Economia y sociedad*, v. 1, p. 131.
41 Smith, Adam. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 72 (Book One, chap. VIII).
42 Ibidem, v. 1, p. 345 (Book Three, chap. II).
43 Cf. Williams, Eric. Op. cit., p. 4–7.
44 Cf. Gandavo. Op. cit., p. 34-35; Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. Op. cit., p. 245–246; Antonil. Op. cit., p. 159: Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 3, p. 920: Luccock, John. *Notas sobre o Rio de Janeiro e partes meridionais do Brasil (1808–1818)*, p. 148–149; Eschwege, Barão Guilherme de. *Diário de uma viagem do Rio de Janeiro a Vila Rica, na Capitania de Minas Gerais*, p. II; Saint-Hilaire. *Viagem à Província de São Paulo*, p. 79. Idem, *Segunda viagem*, p. 198; Werneck, F. P. Lacerda. Op. cit., p. 5, 22–23.
45 Cf. Boxer, C. R. *Os holandeses no Brasil*, p. 3–6.
46 Ibidem, p. 116–117.
47 Breve discurso sobre o estado das quatro capitanias conquistadas. In: Dussen, Adriaen van der. Op. cit., p. 92.
48 Boxer, C. R. Op. cit., p. 117.
49 Prado Júnior, Caio. *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo*, p. 147, n. 52.
50 Weber, Max. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 1026.

11

LAWS OF THE RIGIDITY OF THE SLAVE WORKFORCE

Rigidity in the Face of Seasonal and Circumstantial Variations

Rigidity of the slave workforce means the following: the number of arms of the workforce remains unaltered despite variations in the amount of work demanded by the various seasonal or circumstantial phases of production. Despite the asymmetric relationship between master and slave, they depended on each other: the enslaved person could not be freed from the master, but the latter could not forego the enslaved person either.

The agrarian nature of the economy obviously contributed to increase the rigidity of the slave workforce. Although it involved work for the whole year, agricultural production went through seasonal phases requiring more or less labor. The same happened with the industries to transform agricultural products, with activity peaking during harvest time and falling to its lowest between harvests. The slave workforce would therefore be fully employed during the harvest, but there was always a certain degree of inevitable idleness between harvests.

A similar phenomenon was observed with circumstantial variations in the market. The workforce required when prices were high remained unaltered when prices were low, when the planter could be forced to reduce commercial production. It is true that in theory the planter could sell part of his workforce, but he would have to do so at a loss, since the price of enslaved people also dropped when the price of exports fell. In addition, planters had to be prepared for when prices picked up, and therefore, it was unwise to get rid of a trained and disciplined workforce. Purchasing new African enslaved people always implied a certain risk due to premature deaths and difficulties adapting and learning. However, planters could still partially use their slave workforce to expand the natural economy, as we will see in the next chapter. That possibility – typical of the slave economy – also meant that it was advisable to maintain the entire workforce even during moments of low demand, at least for a considerable period of time.

Let us examine the opposite case. If prices rose consistently, the slave workforce would eventually become insufficient to meet the increase in production that was in the planter's interest. His only option was to purchase new enslaved people, which forced him to spend the money capital immediately available or to purchase them on credit, with equal results in the long run. Therefore, the rigidity of the slave workforce had an effect, albeit in opposite ways, on moments of both low and high demand. In the former, it forced the planter to sustain a partially idle workforce (in the production of commercial goods, of course). In the latter, it forced the planter to increase the workforce and therefore sterilize part of his money capital.

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The opposite occurs with a capitalist economy. The capitalist entrepreneur maintains a contractual relation with his workers that can be rescinded at any time. If the season or current circumstances require fewer arms, it suffices to fire some of the workers hired. In the opposite case, more workers are hired, without having to advance any money capital to do so. At moments of low demand, capitalist entrepreneurs need only bear the cost of the partial idleness of their fixed capital, which was also the case with the slaveholding planter's fixed fund. At moments of high demand, when capitalist entrepreneurs are interested in increasing their fixed capital, they can usually acquire more technologically advanced production tools that allow them to employ less manpower. Evidently, slaveholding planters had no such possibility, since their workforce imposed a strict limit on technological innovations.

Quantitative Determination of the Slave Workforce

Let us assume that the potential planter has a certain money capital which he must employ to acquire the various factors of production required. Depending on the amount of money capital available, the future planter must determine the number of enslaved people to purchase. Contrary to what some might assume, this determination was not based on irrational criteria.

Some criteria were collateral, so to speak. Regardless of whether the plantation produced sugar or coffee, it included a series of tasks that were not directly part of product processing, but that complemented or supported it. In the first page of his work, Antonil warned:

> In addition to the hoe and sickle slaves who work in the plantations and mills and the Black and mulatto male and female domestic slaves, there are others who work in various trades such as boatmen, paddlers, caulkers, carpenters, coachmen, brick makers, herdsmen, pastors, and fishermen.[1]

One century later, the situation described by Koster remained unchanged.[2] In the mid-nineteenth century, the British naturalist Russel Wallace visited a sugarcane and rice plantation in Pará, with about fifty enslaved people and the same number of free indigenous laborers. There were shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, blacksmiths, canoe builders, masons, and locksmiths. The Pará plantation faithfully reproduced the autonomous model of the Northeast.[3]

Coffee plantations also reproduced the model of sugar plantations, with no advancements toward specialization in order to eliminate what we call support tasks. Significant technical innovations were only introduced in the last twenty-five years of slavery, when the shortage of slave labor became increasingly severe. In 1860, Lacerda Werneck recommended the following to coffee planters:

> You should immediately train a few young slaves as carpenters, blacksmiths, and masons; in a short time they will master the trade and you will have workers at home, thus making good use of the time spent in learning. Do not forget to train a brick maker as well, to make tiles and bricks to use in the hacienda.[4]

Three testimonies by Emílio Zaluar, Correa Júnior, and Everardo Vallim Pereira de Souza regarding the plantations of Ribeirão Frio, Santa Fé, and Resgate, respectively – in the municipalities of Piraí, Cantagalo, and Bananal – allow us to sketch a generic framework or the most complete model of the support facilities in a large coffee plantation. In addition to the coffee fields with their corresponding processing equipment, there was a sawmill, a carpentry workshop, a furniture workshop, a foundry, a blacksmith workshop, a brick factory, a saddlery workshop, a cotton and wool spinning and weaving workshop; a tailor's workshop, a shoemaker's

workshop, laundry facilities, kitchens, garages, an infirmary; pens and pastures for draught animals, fowl, swine, and sheep nursery; apple orchard and vegetable garden; sugarcane, manioc, rice, bean, corn, peanut, indigo, and castor bean (for oil for lighting) fields, with the necessary mills and processing facilities for each of those products. The Ribeirão Frio plantation with "four hundred hoes," the Santa Fé plantation with about 300 enslaved people, and the Resgate plantation with 200 were large establishments.[5] Smaller plantations were not as complete and their facilities were less developed, but what matters here is that they observed the same style.

That style persisted with few changes up to the end of slavery. In the early 1890s, Couty listed the following slave professions in a well-administered coffee plantation in Campinas: masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, coachmen, ox keepers, horse keepers, mechanics, ant killers, gardeners, field cooks, cooks for the master's house, kitchen helpers, swine keepers, fowl keepers, food porters, clothing fixers, soap producers, flour producers, various guards, field enslaved people, coffee washers, and domestic enslaved people (coachmen, housecleaners, washers, and stewards). Of the plantation's 250 enslaved people, only an average of 130 worked in the fields. This ratio was the same for the Fazenda Cachoeira cited above, where only 71 out of 147 enslaved people were field laborers.[6]

Transporting the coffee down the sierra, which was indispensable for any plantation, was done with mule caravans – only much later substituted by rail transport – and consumed one-fifth of the male slave workforce serving as muleteers most of the year. According to Correa Júnior's observations, as late as 1869, transporting the harvest from the Santa Fé plantation required twenty-one 43-league trips to Rio de Janeiro. On each trip, which lasted from twelve to fifteen days in good weather, approximately 120 animals carried 950 *arrobas* of coffee. The harvest therefore took from eight to ten months to be fully distributed. A railroad had been built by then, but it was far away, the hope being that one of its branches would reach within two leagues of the plantation.[7]

Some economically productive support tasks were also performed by domestic enslaved people, whose regular tasks were unproductive. Generalizing, we would agree with Stein's conclusion:

> Although the economy of large plantations directly depends on coffee production, a significant part of the slaves, which some estimate at two thirds and others at one half of the workforce, were not directly involved in cultivating the land.[8]

Another concern of all planters was the common temporary disability of some of the enslaved people. It was necessary to take into account injured or ill enslaved people, fugitives, women in the latter stages of pregnancy, etc. The proportion of temporarily disabled enslaved people varied from 10% to 25% of a coffee plantation's slave workforce.[9]

After considering these collateral criteria, the planter was able to focus on the main issue: *the size of the workforce necessary at the highest point of production*. The level of production depended on the number of enslaved people available during the harvest and product processing. As a result, the size of the cultivated areas and the fixed fund were calculated according to the number of enslaved people available to work during the peak season. While capitalist planters with a certain amount of land determine the size of the coffee or sugarcane fields according to the active capital, slaveholding planters estimated the size of the fields depending on the workforce available during the peak season, when harvesting and processing were performed simultaneously.

The problem of the workforce necessary during the peak of the production process was particularly complex in sugarcane plantations. In addition to the very laborious process of transforming sugarcane into sugar, it was necessary to cut and transport the sugarcane to the mill, which also employed a large number of enslaved people. Antonil's, Vilhena's, and Tollenare's

descriptions give us an idea of the intensity of the work performed in the plantation during harvest. This was aggravated by another peculiar factor: the fact that the harvest partially coincided with the sugarcane sowing season. In the large plantation described by Antonil, milling started in August and continued through February or March. But sowing in high areas started between February and March or was performed from July to September in the plains.[10] This partial coincidence between harvesting and sowing, together with a complex industrialization process, made the peak season particularly complicated in terms of the shortage of arms.

In cotton plantations in Maranhão, for example, up to the second decade of the nineteenth century, the problem of the peak season was aggravated by the fact that cotton was manually ginned. As Gayoso observed, delays in processing could occur due to larger harvests, a poor distribution of services, slave illnesses, and a shortage of arms. The regular slave workforce was sometimes insufficient even to harvest all the cotton, as was often the case in successively cleared virgin lands, as Spix and Martius observed.[11] The planted area depended on the harvesting and processing capacity and not the other way around. Alice Canabrava comments:

> It was the difficulties obtaining laborers during the harvest season, and not necessarily how the plantations were managed, which restricted cotton production, because the same number of slaves could till larger areas if additional arms could be obtained during the harvest.[12]

Stampp made the same observation in regard to the United States:

> Since a slave could grow more cotton than what another slave could harvest, the number of hectares planted was limited by the number of workers available during the harvest.[13]

In 1827, Friedrich von Weech estimated the cost of establishing a plantation with 40,000 coffee trees. Creating the coffee field in a period of four years required twenty-seven enslaved people. But enslaved people were also needed to build the various facilities, to grow foodstuffs, and for transportation. Therefore, fifty enslaved people were required to organize and operate a plantation with 40,000 coffee trees.[14]

It is therefore understandable that slaveholding planters would resist innovations that increased productivity but demanded a larger number of enslaved people. For example, several authors have pointed out the complete absence of animal compost in Brazilian plantations, correctly relating that absence to latifundia, which permitted itinerant farming. However, it is important to consider that manuring the fields required a considerable increase in the slave workforce. The planter had to either rear livestock to obtain the manure or purchase it. In any case, the manure had to be prepared, transported, and adequately distributed on the land, which could only be done by acquiring new enslaved people, which inevitably meant that those enslaved people would be poorly employed during moments of low activity. Cotton planters in the Southern United States were confronted with that problem when their lands lost fertility and the slave-driven agricultural frontier had to be displaced. Although they did make a limited use of manuring, they could not apply it on a large scale because of the rigidity of the slave workforce. In order to be properly performed, manuring requires great care, which involves strict and exhausting vigilance when it is performed by enslaved people. Purchased fertilizers were too expensive, and, according to a Southern geologist, raising animals for manure would absorb half of the available enslaved people.[15]

In the Lesser Antilles, where the arable land was soon exhausted, manuring became indispensable and was performed as early as the late seventeenth century. However, it was observed that, if manuring were not required, up to two-thirds of the slave workforce could be saved.

That was why in the Greater Antilles, like in Jamaica, plantation owners who still had access to uncultivated land did not employ fertilizer and opted instead for itinerant farming.[16]

The rigidity of the slave workforce also resulted in an opposite trend: the resistance to innovations that reduced the number of arms required between peak seasons. It made no sense to reduce the workforce required for agricultural tasks by introducing more advanced techniques if industrial sugarcane processing remained unaltered, thus requiring the same number of arms during the peak season. The rigidity of the slave workforce equally affected the British Antilles and Brazil, in spite of the enormous difference in industrial development between England and Portugal. In his discussion of the imposition of two work shifts on Antillean enslaved people during harvest and processing, Noel Deerr observed:

> These two phases of plantation life were interrelated. If by mechanizing agriculture less field slaves were employed, the workforce would be insufficient to operate the plantation during the harvest, and the evils of the two- or three-shift system would be even worse. The requirement of those excess work hours was the result of the conditions under which the industry developed. Each plantation constituted a closed unit, and access to occasional labor force was quite limited.[17]

As a result, there were too many arms available between peak seasons, which discouraged substituting human work with labor-saving equipment. Koster noted that, in Pernambucan plantations, bricks were transported with each slave carrying three or four bricks or tiles on their head the whole way. Thirty men – observed the author – did the work that two of them could do if they used a wheelbarrow.[18]

Effects of the System on the Enslaved Person's Working Conditions

Since the main criterion to determine the size of the slave workforce was the requirements during production peaks, the planter had an interest in reducing the number of enslaved people as much as possible. The unavoidable result was excessive work for the enslaved people during the peak season, even though this resulted in their early exhaustion. Even between peaks, enslaved people were overworked, although to a lesser extent. The expression *partial idleness*, which I employed above, must be understood in a relative sense. In practice, enslaved people's workdays were always too long, although they were shorter between production peaks. The law of the rigidity of the slave workforce had *specific* effects on how enslaved people were treated, increasing their exploitation.

In the British and French Antilles, sugarcane plantation enslaved people took turns working two or three shifts, with eighteen-hour workdays during the harvest and processing season. After working in the field, the enslaved person was forced to work another shift in the mill at night.[19]

In Cuba, this system was perfected to attain almost *continuous work*. During a harvest of five or six months, enslaved people alternated days with two hours of sleep and days with six to seven hours of sleep. "Sundays" or rest days, which were actually technical pauses to clean the equipment, happened every ten to fifteen days. During the period between harvests, called *dead time*, the workday was reduced to ten to twelve hours during the first weeks in order to allow for an extremely precarious recovery of the enslaved people's strength.[20]

In the Southern United States, the workdays were shorter and the rest days more frequent in the winter. According to Stampp, during the cotton sowing and harvest seasons, enslaved people remained in the field from fifteen to sixteen hours, including intervals to eat and rest.

Genovese estimated an average workday of twelve hours in the fields and three more hours performing various other tasks, which were the equivalent of what was called the *serão* in Brazil. In Louisiana's sugarcane plantations, also according to Stampp, the workdays lasted sixteen to eighteen hours during the harvest.[21]

Things were not very different in Brazil and were worse in large plantations with mills that processed large quantities of sugarcane of their own and from bound laborers. In those plantations, milling could take up to eight or nine months.[22] In the late sixteenth century, Father Cardim observed regarding the intensity of work:

> The work is unbearable, the slaves are always running around and because of that many of them die, which leads to very significant expenses.[23]

The difference between the intermediary phase and the peak season was described by the engineer De Mornay in relation to Pernambuco plantations in the early 1840s:

> In most plantations, the worktime in the fields when the mill is not operating goes from six in the morning to six in the evening, with them [the slaves] working in other parts of the establishment before and after those hours, in tasks called *quingingoo*; that additional work usually goes from four to six in the morning and from six to ten in the evening. During the harvest season, from September to February or March, in addition to the normal worktime, they are divided into two groups in the mill, one working from six to twelve and the other one from twelve to six. They have half an hour to eat in the morning and two hours during the day, except during milling time, when they eat whenever they can […].[24]

De Mornay also observed that plantations with a large workforce operated better and the enslaved people enjoyed better conditions. However, the opposite was usually the case:

> Most plantations have a significant shortage of slaves and there is therefore too much work to be done, which is either poorly performed of the slaves are overworked. Plantation owners tend to emulate each other in their attempt to produce large amounts of sugar with few slaves, but instead of doing it by reducing and properly managing the workloads, they usually force slaves to work to the limit of their capacity and even beyond it.[25]

These observations agree with Ewbank's description:

> In large plantations, the slaves have a few rest days every three or four weeks of work during the sugarcane harvest, but in smaller properties, where the owners are usually hard-pressed to pay their debts, slaves are poorly fed and made to work to their death. They manage to stagger to their huts or simply drop on the ground next to the place where they are working; their aching bones rarely allow the Angel of Sleep to drive off the memories of their sorrows before two devils, in the form of a bell and a whip, awaken them to new torments.[26]

In the Salgado plantation, which had a significant workforce – over one hundred enslaved people for an annual production of 5000 *arrobas* of sugar –, the harvest season was not very long, but that did not mean that the workday was less grueling, as Tollenare described:

> During the four or five months of the sugarcane harvest, the slaves' work is more violent; they take turns remaining eighteen hours on their feet.[27]

The significance of this regime of "eighteen hours on their feet" was described much earlier by Father Jorge Benci in his apostrophe to slaveholders in Brazil:

> For them to work all day is understandable, but for them to work also at night, and all night long, who could withstand it? Why should you be so cruel with your slaves, that you do not allow them even to rest a few hours at night? Why should you interrupt their sleep all the time or (even worse) keep them working all night at the mill or the furnace, without allowing them to rest?[28]

This habit of allowing little and intermittent sleep during the long harvest season gave rise to the saying recorded by Rugendas: "sleepy as a plantation slave." The enslaved people's exhaustion could result in fatal accidents that were peculiar to plantations, as Rugendas also recorded:

> Their exhaustion often leads to disasters. The hand or clothes of the slave in charge of introducing the sugarcane between the cylinders can get caught; their arm, and sometimes their entire body, is crushed, unless they are immediately aided. In some mills a thick iron bar can be seen next to the machinery to stop the cylinders or separate them in case of danger. However, many times the only way to save the unfortunate man's life is to immediately cut off his finger, his hand or his arm stuck in the cylinders with an ax.[29]

Ribeyrolles, who visited many coffee plantations, described the peak of the harvest season as follows:

> During the coffee harvest, which begins in May, when there is the threat of rain, the workdays are very long and strenuous. It is winter, no doubt, but a greenhouse winter, with the sun blazing during ten hours of labor, transforming the land into a furnace. Everyone then risks their life working on the hills, where women's hands are faster than men's […]. When the grains are ripe, it is important to avoid storms, which makes the overseer shorten the women's rest time.[30]

In coffee plantations, the *serão* system was also common, which lengthened the workday until ten or eleven at night. During the harvest, in addition to the usual *serão* tasks – preparing cassava and corn, tending to the animals, etc. – the priority was to "select" the coffee beans on the floor or on special tables.[31] According to Van Delden Laerne, an investigating committee found that enslaved people in coffee plantations often worked for fourteen to sixteen hours and up to eighteen hours whenever deemed necessary.[32]

Gilberto Freyre alludes to testimonies by several chroniclers (albeit citing only one of them) who claimed that during the sugarcane harvest, the enslaved people gained weight and were apparently healthier: "Harvest times were times of fat slaves and fat cattle. Healthy slaves and healthy cattle."[33] It is true that at times enslaved people could in fact be somewhat better fed. Antonil noted enslaved people's appetite for "honey," i.e., the thick sugarcane juice that did not harden in the molds and was shared among them: "it was the best gift and their best medicine."[34] In Engenho do Sergipe do Conde, the Jesuits offered their enslaved people a slice of meat every now and then, "at least when the mill begins operating."[35] Also in the British West Indies, according to a testimony before a parliamentary commission, enslaved people enjoyed better health during the harvest season in spite of being overworked.[36]

However, we should not deceive ourselves. First of all, we must avoid generalizations that differ from the testimonies cited above. In addition, the extra calories provided by molasses or an occasional slice of meat provided by some masters were insufficient to compensate for the

exhaustion from eighteen hours of violent work for months on end. After a certain point, the excess work, especially if too persistently repeated, not only requires a greater expenditure of energy during the same period of time but also affects the person's organism. While the excess expenditure of energy can be restituted by consuming more calories, that is not the case with physiological wear. Enslaved people might gain weight during harvest season in some plantations, but their vitality was more promptly consumed.

While it has been acknowledged that slave labor was particularly brutal in Antillean plantations, field enslaved people in Pernambucan plantations do not seem to have enjoyed better conditions. At least that is what De Mornay observed:

> They cannot resist this forced labor for many years, they become frail and feeble, their skin becomes dry and sickly, with a dull color instead of the shiny black of a healthy Negro.[37]

Occasional Recourses to Respond to the Rigidity of the Slave Workforce

No matter how much planters reduced the slave workforce, overworking them the whole year, with periods of lighter workloads between peak seasons, they were unable to avoid the contradictions implicit in the rigidity of that workforce. The very recourse of reducing its size resulted in the enslaved people's early exhaustion. Planters were therefore obliged to make the use of other recourses appropriate to each situation.

One of them was to hire enslaved people, whether because of unforeseen losses or because of a shortage of arms during the harvest season. The custom of hiring enslaved people to hasten the coffee or sugarcane harvest was mentioned by Debret, who lived in Brazil from 1816 to 1831, at a time when there was a vast supply of African enslaved people. In sugarcane plantations in São Paulo, where specialized labor was scarce, planters hired enslaved people experienced in sugar processing from each other. This practice became widespread after the end of the slave trade, in response to the growing workforce shortage in coffee plantations. Planters hired their neighbor's enslaved people or offered their own to be hired by others. Hiring out enslaved people among family members became common. In the 1880s, when abolition was near, Van Delden Laerne mentioned the presence of many hired enslaved people in several coffee plantations. In the Ibytyra plantation, for example, seventy out of 240 active enslaved people were hired. The practice of hiring enslaved people also became more common in Cuba after the 1840s, as the flow of Africans became insufficient to meet the demand for new enslaved people.[38]

The flexibility provided by slave leasing cannot be equated to the fluidity of the employment of labor power in the capitalist system, as Fogel and Engerman do in the work that became fundamental for the New Economic History school. First, because hiring enslaved people implied sterilizing the capital used to acquire the enslaved person (whether purchasing or raising him or her). In order to hire an enslaved person, there must be a lessor who owns that enslaved person. The rent paid by the lessee necessarily includes a part that corresponds to the amortization of the enslaved person's purchase price, in addition to the interests for the duration of the lease. Second, practical experience led planters to hire enslaved people only as a supplementary recourse. According to Genovese, between 5% and 10% of enslaved people were leased in the Southern United States. Fogel and Engerman estimate that hired enslaved people made up 6% of the workforce in rural areas. In the cities, hiring enslaved people for services and industrial activities was much more common, but urban slavery made up only 10% of the total slave workforce in Southern states. It is therefore evident that, in spite of the continuously rising price of enslaved people in the nineteenth century, planters trusted the slave regime and preferred to invest heavily to purchase or

raise enslaved people, hiring them only as a supplementary or emergency recourse. Without a stable workforce, guaranteed by the right of ownership, it was impossible to ensure the continuity of the production process.[39]

An apparently unique response was practiced by Joaquim José de Souza Breves, an owner of about 6000 enslaved people and many contiguous coffee plantations in Rio de Janeiro; he had a special group of enslaved people that went from one plantation to another to perform the tasks that lacked sufficient workforce at that moment.[40]

In whaling establishments, the hunting season from June to August presented a special problem in addition to the general problem of the shortage of arms during peak seasons. The owners of those establishments avoided exposing their enslaved people to the dangers of seafaring. They therefore employed them as much as possible in industrial processing tasks on land, which were quite grueling but less risky, and hired free men for high sea "fishing." In Desterro (today's Florianópolis), the small property regime provided whaling establishments with a certain number of men from poor peasant families, who employed themselves as temporary laborers.[41] Voluntary workers, however, were not sufficiently available everywhere. For that reason, whaling establishments resorted to prisons, employing prisoners through forced labor, and even summoned militiamen, which the royal monopoly of whaling establishments could do with the authorities' support. Under threats of arrest, they also recruited vagabonds and barflies, which prompted the latter to flee during whaling season. The worst part was that, in addition to being forcefully employed, these workers had no fixed salary and earned bonuses depending on their performance. If the season was a failure, writes Myriam Ellis:

> …they earned nothing and owed the whaling station the food and tools they had consumed and any advance payments in money, which meant that they were under obligation until the next season. A strange case of wage labor with tinges of slavery![42]

Plantations started hiring temporary laborers in the early nineteenth century. Koster himself, who was a tenant farmer in a plantation, hired from thirty to forty free laborers with the hope of recovering the investment with the sugarcane harvest. However, he observed that a plantation owner who constantly hired primarily indigenous free laborers concluded that it was impossible to avoid the disturbances they caused. Koster deplored the failure of that experience, since it strengthened planters' objection to free labor.[43] Obviously, it must have been extremely difficult to "educate" free men to work under conditions akin to slavery.

Finally, slaveholders could employ their own personal labor. Despite the fact that manual labor was considered humiliating, small planters with few enslaved people ignored the prejudice and collaborated with their workers. For example, Anonymous Author wrote regarding the tobacco production process during the peak season:

> The process is so gratifying that all family members large and small, old and young, White and Black, free and slaves, take part in picking the leaves, spreading them out, and turning them to dry, and only twisting and rolling is reserved for slaves, not only because it requires greater strength, but also because the tobacco is tacky with the resin released by the leaves during the curing process […].[44]

Three Special Cases

I will now discuss three different and special cases that shed light on the peculiarities of the rigidity of the slave workforce.

Case 1

This case refers to a meat processing industry also affected by seasonal variations. The beef processing plants (*charqueadas*) in Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, purchased livestock from December to May and processed the animals to extract their main product – *charque* or beef jerky – and a number of byproducts: tallow, lard, leather, bone meal fertilizer, and horns. According to Herbert Smith, who visited Pelotas in 1882, *charqueadas* slaughtered about 400 heads per year with a value of 22 million *réis*.[45]

Since these Rio Grande do Sul processing plants were slaveholding establishments, they faced the competition from similar plants (*saladeros*) in Uruguay and Argentina, which employed wage laborers. This competition took place in the Brazilian market, since beef jerky was consumed in great quantities by enslaved people and poor free men. Referring to the second half of the nineteenth century, Muniz Barreto observes that Brazil acquired about half of Argentinean beef jerky exports, in the amounts listed in **Table 11.1**[46]:

Couty studied the issue at length, examining nine plants in Pelotas, two in Argentina, and five in Uruguay. In spite of certain minor differences, Brazilian *charqueadas* were not at a disadvantage compared to their River Plate competitors in terms of the price and the quality of the livestock or their processing methods. The latter were in fact more complicated in River Plate establishments, whose product was more uniform and had a better appearance.[47]

The disadvantage had mainly to do with the different workforces. Uruguayan and Argentinean *saladeros* flourished, while Rio Grande do Sul *charqueadas* saw their markets and especially their profits shrink. With 100 free laborers, a River Plate *saladero* slaughtered an average of 500 heads, while hundred enslaved people in a Brazilian *charqueada* could only slaughter half that number.[48] While *saladeros* did not have to make any money capital investment to obtain the workforce, *charqueadas* had to reduce their fund in order to invest on enslaved people. In order to process the same number of animals as their River Plate competitors, Brazilian plants needed twice as many arms, which meant sterilizing twice as much money capital to purchase enslaved people. This particular burden of the slave economy became considerably heavier in the second half of the nineteenth century due to the dramatic increase in the price of slave labor. As a result, Brazilian *charqueadas* were much smaller than *saladeros*: 12 Uruguayan establishments slaughtered and processed 500,000 oxen, while 32 Brazilian establishments were required to slaughter and process about 400,000 oxen.[49] Couty summarized the situation as follows:

> Southern *saladeros* do not need to incur any advance expense to guarantee their labor force; they have ensured access to trained workers, at least for now; on the contrary, *charqueadas* must purchase very expensive slaves, and this frozen capital is an important factor in regions where interest rates are high.[50]

Regarding the issue of production peaks, we also observe a different behavior between slaveholding *charqueadas* and *saladeros* based on free labor. For the latter, it was advantageous to perform

TABLE 11.1 Beef jerky exports from Argentina to Brazil

Period	*Annual average (in tons)*
1867–1870	9575
1871–1875	15,743
1876–1880	17,096
1881–1885	9559
1886–1890	13,492

all processing activities during the slaughter season plus a few months. Afterward, they simply discharged the workers they no longer needed. In the case of *charqueadas*, concentrating activities in such a manner would require a much larger workforce, which would mean maintaining them literally idle after the high season. This was so because, unlike plantations, *charqueadas* did not have a natural economy to focus on between the peaks of commerce-oriented labor. It is therefore understandable that *charqueadas* would avoid concentrating all industrial activities during the high season, delaying them as much as possible for the following months.

The division of labor was more complex in River Plate *saladeros* than in *charqueadas* in Pelotas. In the latter, enslaved people performed various different tasks that were entrusted to four or five free workers in Uruguay. This meant that less labor force was needed in the Pelotas establishments, but production time was three or four months longer. While *saladeros* concluded their operations in August, *charqueadas* kept operating until November.[51]

It is evident that this was a rational behavior in the context of the contradictions imposed by the law of the rigidity of the slave workforce: the workforce was reduced as much as possible, thus avoiding its idleness during most of the year. That which was a rational and calculated behavior that reduced waste in the inflexible context of the slave structure in which slaveholders operated might seem, when viewed from the standpoint of a suprahistorical rationality, as the "maintenance of slavery for slavery's sake" and an irrational "regime of waste."[52]

That was F. H. Cardoso's interpretation, the only Brazilian researcher who studied the issue in depth. I believe that this São Paulo sociologist represents an interesting case for the theory of scientific knowledge, because with the evidence he gathered, it would not have been difficult to arrive at the correct conclusion… had he not been so attached to the Weberian functionalist methodology. Brazilian *charqueadas*' rational behavior, understandable in the context of the rigidity of the slave workforce and its effects, was interpreted as the opposite by the author of *Capitalism and Slavery in Southern Brazil*. *Charqueadas* purchased more labor force than production required; their idle capacity was a *constant*. He therefore concluded:

> In fact, in September, October, and November, after the season for slaughtering and preparing the cattle's byproducts, when River Plate producers stopped, Brazilian *charqueadas* continued operating *because it was necessary to keep the slaves busy*, both for extra-economic reasons (to keep them active and disciplined) and to take advantage of their labor force in some sort of production, which did not result in large profits, but provided an "illusion of work."[53]

However, the author writes later:

> Evidently, this does not mean that, during that period, slaves performed tasks other than the main one in the *charqueada* (salting the meat, preparing the leather, the lard, and other cattle byproducts). However, they performed tasks that could be done in the high season *if there were incentives to better organize and control the production process*. However, in the slave system, the immediate interest is *to organize and control the workforce* with a veritable *faux frais* of production, i.e. not to increase productivity, but to maintain *labor active*.[54]

Actually, *charqueadas* adopted the best organization and production process possible from an *economic* standpoint, a fact that becomes evident as long as we do not forget that the colonial slave regime was governed by objective laws. That which Couty correctly denominated a "labor economy," although contrary to specialization because enslaved people performed different successive tasks, F. H. Cardoso classifies as labor without an economic purpose, "with the

single purpose of maintaining slaves occupied." However, he paradoxically acknowledges that if enslaved people were to specialize to perform all tasks during the high season, "they would remain idle most of the time […]."[55]

The functionalist concept of "the illusion of work," once again in quotes, is a result of the illusion of sociology. Once we understand the colonial slave mode of production with its insurmountable contradictions, we also understand that what would have been irrational for *charqueadas* was not to displace as many tasks as possible to the months between peak seasons. Instead of the unavoidable idleness resulting from the rigidity of the slave workforce, transferring all tasks that could be postponed to the months between peak seasons resulted in a better employment of the workforce, whose size was previously determined by the demands of the high season. The plant owner's behavior reflected the common sense derived from the experience of slavery. What we cannot expect is for *charqueadores* to behave like capitalist entrepreneurs. I believe that the above does not require further elaboration.

Case 2

Let us continue with the *charqueadas* and discuss the contingency of low prices.

Here too, River Plate *saladeros* had the advantage. They could reduce production when the market shrunk or when there was too much supply, by simply hiring the number of workers strictly necessary for the desired level of production. For *charqueadores*, reducing the production would inevitably result in the workforce's idleness, sustenance of which would nonetheless need to be maintained. Couty wrote in that respect:

> Having paid in advance for their workforce by purchasing and sustaining their slaves, manufacturers of cured meats in Brazil are forced to operate continuously to keep from wasting all of their general expenses, while their southern competitors slaughter many animals if it is profitable to do so, and few of them if the market is unfavorable.[56]

As a result, *charqueadas* were much less flexible during market slumps. *Saladeros* could reduce the number of animals slaughtered per year by 60%–75% without any loss other than a partial idleness of fixed capital. On the contrary, according to Couty, *charqueadas* in Pelotas only reduced their production from one-third to one-fifth.[57]

This implied yet another disadvantage for *charqueadas* in Pelotas. Their River Plate competitors could adjust their demand for cattle according to their current needs and negotiate better prices, while *charqueadas* purchased an approximately stable number of animals, which forced them to accept the price established by sellers.[58]

If we leave aside the issue of competition, which highlights the disadvantages faced by *charqueadas* in Pelotas, we can observe that their owners intuitively obeyed the laws of the colonial slave regime. During market slumps, *charqueadas* suffered a triple loss: reduced production, low prices, and a partial idleness of the slave workforce. Therefore, the less they reduced production, even if that meant selling at lower prices, the less the idleness of the workforce, cost of which was unalterable. This allowed them do reduce their loss, especially since maintaining enslaved people cost less than the wages paid by their River Plate competitors.

In the following analysis, Celso Furtado observed that Northeastern plantation owners' behavior was identical:

> The slave economy therefore responded almost entirely to the external demand. If the demand decreased, a process of decay began, deteriorating the monetary sector. However, this process in no way presented the catastrophic characteristics of an economic crisis. The

> monetary profits of the export unit were essentially equal to the entrepreneur's profits, who had every interest in continuing to operate no matter how much prices fell momentarily. Since the cost consisted essentially on fixed expenses, any reduction in the employment of the productive capacity implied a loss for the entrepreneur. It was always to their advantage to use their capacity fully.[59]

The analysis is correct, but the conclusion is excessive. Planters did have operating expenses that should not be underestimated: firewood, boxes, wages for overseers and artisans, etc. Falling prices could therefore force them to reduce production, but they would do so gradually and much less dramatically than capitalist entrepreneurs. In addition, unlike the latter, they had the rearguard of the natural economy, which could be expanded to employ some of the workforce.

Cardoso's solution to this problem is also sociological, in the bad sense of the word. What was a rational response by *charqueadores* to avoid greater losses by reducing production as little as possible during market slumps is once again perceived as an economically senseless behavior, as "production for production's sake" or "slavery production" (once again in quotes).[60] *Charqueadores* could be accused of being *historically* irrational for insisting on slavery at a moment when it was near its end. But as slaveholders, it would be absurd to expect them to manage their business differently. Their behavior *as slaveholders* was rational on average, which does not exclude individual errors. The fact that the concepts are repeatedly placed in quotes is indicative of the researcher's own perplexity and dissatisfaction.

Case 3

The case of the Jesuit Engenho do Sergipe do Conde serves as a counterproof of the thesis of the rigidity of the slave workforce.

In Frédéric Mauro's interesting analysis of this *engenho*'s accounting, we can see that the establishment incurred losses in nine out of twelve years, from 1622 to 1635 (excluding 1624–1625, when the Dutch invasion of Bahia prevented the harvest). The losses incurred in that period were significant. The Society of Jesus was exempt from paying the tithe to the Church, which cost lay plantation owners 10% of their production. That being the case, how can we explain such constant losses, considering that prices, with the exception of momentary variations, were consistently favorable to sugar production, of which Brazil practically held the monopoly in the world market?

A number of hypotheses should be considered: poor administration, long-lasting effects of the Dutch invasion, deficient accounting resulting from ignorance, negligence or ill intentions, etc. However, I believe that the most plausible answer can be found in the financial statement elaborated by Father Pereira for his superiors at Colégio de Santo Antão in Lisbon. The statement reveals that the plantation did not grow sugarcane but only milled that produced by bound farmers. Nor did it grow foodstuffs for its own sustenance, which were either purchased or, to a lesser extent, received as symbolic payment for leased land. The priest also recounted that the mill operated nine months per year. Since one *tarefa*[61] was processed per day, with a total of 220 *tarefas* per year, the work was limited to 220 days per year.[62] We are already familiar with Gayoso's data on Maranhão plantations, which operated 300 days per year. With the exception of Sundays, religious holidays were less frequent than what the historians bent on emphasizing the presumed benevolence of Brazilian slavery and the benefits of the Catholic religion for enslaved people would like to believe. According to information by Kidder based on a compilation of Catholic theology, the number of religious holidays in Brazil was established in 1642 by a decree by Pope Urban VIII. The "holy rest days" during which

work was forbidden varied from twenty to twenty-five per year depending on whether some of them fell on Sunday. The "holy exempt days," on which mass was mandatory but work was not forbidden, varied from ten to fifteen.[63] Adding fifty-two Sundays to the twenty-five "holy rest days," we have seventy-seven days without work per year. Or seventy-two, in the case of twenty holy rest days. This means that Maranhão plantations forced their enslaved people to work during a certain number of holy rest days. It is therefore probable that the Jesuits faithfully observed the Church's mandates, and that their work calendar allowed for a maximum of 288–293 days per year (we can assume that at the time of Father Pereira, immediately prior to Pope Urban VIII's mandate, the rule was already observed). This allows us to conclude that, by operating only 220 days per year, Engenho do Sergipe do Conde remained forcibly idle from sixty-eight to seventy-three days every year. The Jesuits might have employed the enslaved people in some way, but the mill did not operate. Although the rent paid by the farmers for the land was considerable, I believe that this period of inactivity explains the plantation's deficient economy and demonstrates that, due to the law of the rigidity of the slave workforce, a plantation that did not produce its own sugarcane was not viable, especially if it did not produce its own foodstuffs either.

It is not by chance that, by Antonil's time, Engenho do Sergipe do Conde had adopted a different economic model, milling its own sugarcane in addition to that of bound farmers and producing foodstuffs for internal consumption. According to Antonil's description, the plantation had about 200 enslaved people – more than double the workforce it had during Father Pereira's time – and milled the same amount of sugarcane as before. The difference was that most of the sugarcane was grown in its own fields and provided all of the sugar.

According to Stuart Schwartz's survey, during the harvest of 1655–1656, Engenho Sergipe do Conde only milled other farmers' sugarcane. But by 1669 it already had its own fields, which provided 38% of the raw matter. From 1690 to 1712 – the period of Antonil's observations – its own fields provided 61%–85% of the sugarcane processed by the Jesuits' mill.[64]

In 1639, Van der Dussen surveyed 166 plantations in Dutch captaincies in Brazil. Of the ninety-three on which he provided detailed information, only thirty-six had their own fields. With rare exceptions, those fields were less extensive than the lands tilled by farmers.[65]

This was an exceptional situation, which can be explained by the fact that the rents obtained from leasing plantation lands were the highest of all times (see Chapter 9). It is also not by chance that such plantations never existed in the Antilles, where the phenomenon of leasing land to farmers never even occurred. Because of the law of the rigidity of the slave workforce, plantations were forced to operate all year round, which implied engaging in both industrial processing and agricultural production. Not doing so would result in losses, as demonstrated by the accounting of the notorious Engenho do Sergipe do Conde.

Conclusion

The two following laws of the colonial slave mode of production result from the rigidity of the slave workforce:

First law – *The necessities of the peak season determine the number of enslaved people in the production unit, which bears the cost of the variations in the use of the workforce in the various seasonal phases of the production process.*

Second law – *As a result of the rigidity of the slave workforce, the production unit bears the cost of the excess workforce during the low seasons and invests unproductively during the high seasons to purchase enslaved people to increase the available labor force.*

The tendential nature of these laws has been sufficiently demonstrated above. The laws act in the midst of many objective factors and decisions by the dominant agents of the slave production, whose conscious intervention contributes to aggravate or to temper the effects of the rigidity of the slave workforce. I believe that reiterating the arguments at this point is unnecessary.

Notes

1 Antonil. Op. cit., p. 139–140.
2 Cf. Koster, H. Op. cit., p. 429.
3 Cf. Wallace, Alfred Russel. *A Narrative of Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro*, p. 81.
4 Werneck, F. P. Lacerda. Op. cit., p. 34–35.
5 Cf. Zaluar, A. Emílio. *Peregrinação pela Província de São Paulo (1860-1861)*, p. 28–31; Correa Júnior, A. P. *Da Corte à Fazenda Santa Fé: impressões de viagem*, p. 85–93, 100. Souza, Everardo Vallim Pereira de. A região agrícola bananalense, sua vida e esplendor de outrora. Apud Taunay. Op. cit., t. VI, v. 8, chaps. IX and X. On the Resgate plantation, see also Motta Sobrinho, Alves. Op. cit., p. 58.
6 Cf. Couty, Louis. *Étude de biologie industrielle sur le café*. Op. cit., p. 97–100. Taunay. Op. cit., t. III, v. 5. p. 204.
7 Cf. Correa Júnior, A. P. Op. cit., p. 94–97; Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 109–110.
8 Ibidem, p. 198.
9 Cf. Costa, Viotti da. *Da senzala à colônia*, p. 256.
10 Cf. Antonil. Op. cit., p. 175 and 179. On the partial coincidence between harvest and sowing in Pernambuco, see Koster. Op. cit., p. 427.
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14 Cf. Lobo, Eulália Maria Lahmeyer. *História do Rio de Janeiro: do capital comercial ao capital industrial e financeiro*, v. 1, p. 102.
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17 Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 355.
18 Koster, H. Op. cit., p. 444.
19 Cf. Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 354–355; Canabrava. Op. cit., p. 179–180.
20 Cf. Fraginals. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 30–37.
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24 De Mornay. Apud Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 358.
25 Apud Deerr, Noel. Ibidem, v. 2, p. 358.
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27 Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 78.
28 Benci, Jorge. Op. cit., p. 181.
29 Rugendas. Op. cit., p. 140–141.
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31 Cf. Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 201; Costa, Viotti da. Op. cit., p. 241 et. seqs.
32 Cf. Taunay. Op. cit., t. V, v. 7, p. 366.
33 Freyre. Gilberto. *Nordeste*, p. 98.
34 Antonil. Op. cit., p. 216.
35 Pereira. Padre Estevam. Op. cit., p. 791.
36 Cf. Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 355.
37 Ibidem, v. 2, p. 358.
38 Cf. Debret. Op. cit. t. I, p. 196; Petrone, Maria Thereza Schorer. *A lavoura canavieira em São Paulo, expansão e declínio (1765-1851)*, p. 120; Taunay. Op. cit., t. V, v. 7, p. 361–362, 368, and 375; Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 89–90; Fraginals. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 291–292.
39 Cf. Fogel, Robert William; Engerman, Stanley L. *Time on the Cross, The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, v. 1, p. 55–58; Genovese. Op. cit., p. 390–391; Stampp. Op. cit., p. 80–85.

40 Cf. Taunay. *Op. cit.*, t.VI, v. 8, p. 269.
41 Cf. Cardoso, Fernando Henrique. *Cor e mobilidade social em Florianópolis*. In collaboration with Octávio Ianni. Part One, p. 25.
42 Ellis, Myriam. Op. cit., p. 105.
43 Koster. Op. cit., p. 294 and 349.
44 Autor Anônimo. Op. cit., p. 98.
45 Cf. Smith, Herbert H. *Do Rio de Janeiro a Cuiabá*. Chap. XIII.
46 Cf. Barreto, Antônio Emílio Muniz. *Evolução histórica do comércio argenitno-brasileiro (1800–1930)*, p. 346 and 352.
47 Cf. Couty, Louis. *Rapport sur le maté et les conserves de viande*, p. 92–111.
48 Idem, Louis. *L'esclavage au Brésil*. Op. cit., p. 52–53.
49 Ibidem, p. 53.
50 Idem, *Rapport sur le maté et les conserves de viande*, p. 137.
51 Ibidem, p. 135–138.
52 Cf. Cardoso, F. H. Op. cit., p. 191.
53 Ibidem, p. 189.
54 Ibidem, p. 190.
55 Ibidem, p. 190, 197–198.
56 Couty, Louis. *L'esclavage au Brésil*, p. 53.
57 Ibidem.
58 Idem, *Rapport sur le maté et les conserves de viande*, p. 128–131.
59 Furtado, Celso. Op. cit., p. 68.
60 Cf. Cardoso, F. H. Op. cit., p. 193–194.
61 *Tarefa*: Brazilian agrarian unit of measurement equivalent to 3,630 m^2 in Ceará, 3,025 m^2 in Alagoas and Sergipe, and 4,356 m^2 in Bahia. (T.N.)
62 Cf. Pereira, Padre Estevam. Op. cit., p. 787.
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64 Cf. Schwartz, Stuart B. Free Labor in a Slave Economy: the Lavradores de Cana of Colonial Bahia. In: Alden, Dauril (Ed.). *Colonial Roots of Modern Brazil*, p. 195.
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12

LAW OF THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE MERCANTILE ECONOMY AND THE NATURAL ECONOMY IN SLAVE PLANTATIONS

The Two Segments of Plantations

As I have said, slave plantations' main objective was mercantile production, which explains their tendency toward single-crop specialization. As they became more dependent on the world market, plantations suffered the effects of the laws of mercantile circulation. But although capital dominated mercantile circulation, it was not enough to dominate the slave production process, forcing it to obey the specific laws of the capitalist mode of production. I shall now examine another peculiar aspect of the mode of production of colonial slave plantations: the twofold structure composed of a mercantile economy and a natural economy and the correlation between these two segments.

It is possible to imagine a theoretical model of a colonial slave economy that exported 100% of its production and imported the totality of the goods it consumed. However, the historic reality in no way followed that model. The slave economy would have been unviable if it had to sustain its workforce only with imported foodstuffs, whose high cost meant they were exclusively consumed by the masters, with the exception of a few items also consumed by the enslaved people (e.g., beef jerky and dried fish). Even the masters consumed basic foodstuffs and various locally produced handmade items. As a result, part of the slave production was intended for domestic consumption. Because of the limited social division of labor and the rigidity of the slave workforce, which created the necessity of employing it fully between peak seasons, a significant part of the production for domestic consumption necessarily took place within the plantation in the form of a natural economy, i.e., as production for self-subsistence of the productive unit. The natural economy was a *structural necessity* of plantations, or at least a *structural possibility* that could materialize at any time. The natural economy therefore organically integrated the slave production unit in its typical normality.

Hence what I call the twofold structure of colonial slave plantations. They produced both export and self-subsistence goods. The dynamics of those two components will be studied in this chapter.

Characteristics of the Natural Economy in Slave Plantations

Evidently, the plantation's natural economy did not include any activity *directly* involved in mercantile production, in the production of goods intended for export. A part of the activity *indirectly* related to mercantile production was also part of the mercantile economy, even though its

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product itself was not intended for sale. This was the case with production goods created within the plantation, like the bricks and tiles used to build production facilities, the mill's parts, canoes and ox carts, hoes and sickles, etc. The work invested in those production goods was transferred to the final product intended for the market by contributing to create it. The natural economy only included the production of goods intended for consumption by the establishment's personnel, from the master and his family to the field and domestic enslaved people.

The most important part of the natural economy was growing foodstuffs. To varying degrees, all plantations produced basic foodstuffs for their own consumption – cereals, tubers, legumes, and fruits. They also produced significant amounts of fish and meat. With the exception of extraordinary situations, such as droughts and moments of high demand, few things were generally purchased to feed the enslaved people: salt, jerky, codfish. Sugar, brown sugar, and spirits were the main products of sugarcane plantations, but these were also produced for internal consumption in many coffee plantations. The master and his family could obviously consume imported goods at will: wine, olive oil, wheat flour, spices, cheeses, etc.

In addition to foodstuffs, many plantations produced textiles for the enslaved people's clothing, bedsheets and blankets, etc. Locally produced textiles were only replaced with purchased textiles in the second half of the nineteenth century, when textile factories were established in the country. But the enslaved people's clothes continued to be cut and sewed locally. Plantations also produced carpentry items in general, furniture, shoes, saddles, harnesses, and almost all building materials required for the facilities, produced by the enslaved people under the occasional guidance of free laborers.

The twofold nature of plantations was not incidental; it was intrinsic to their structure. It was present in them from the beginning to the end of slavery, with variations in the correlation between the two segments that obeyed a law specific to the colonial slave mode of production.

It is understandable that, when the first colonists arrived in Brazil, the first thing they did was to plant foodstuffs, without which it would have been impossible to survive while tilling sugarcane fields. In a letter addressed to his partner in Lisbon in 1545, Pero de Góis described the measures he took to ensure that "when people come, they will have something to eat and sugarcane and everything else that a plantation requires." [1] There were no markets in the colony, which meant that complete self-sufficiency was required. At the end of the sixteenth century, the situation was still approximately the same. Father Cardim marveled at the fact that, traveling through the countryside with forty people, they were welcomed in plantations at any time with an abundance of food.[2]

In the early seventeenth century, when a few urban centers had been consolidated on the coast, an internal market of foodstuffs produced in the colony developed. However, plantations continued to depend as much as possible on their own production. It is true that, during Father Pereira's time, Engenho Sergipe do Conde did not plant foodstuffs and purchased everyday goods produced in the colony: spirits, cassava flour, beef and pork, eggs, etc.[3] But as we have seen, this was one of the reasons that it was economically unsuccessful. As Antonil describes, during his time the plantation already grew cassava and did its own hunting and fishing, as well as raising fowl. The Jesuit observed that a *real plantation* – i.e., a large one with a water wheel – required several types of land

> … because some are employed to grow sugarcane, others for people's sustenance, and others for the plantation's facilities and supplies, in addition to what is brought from Portugal.[4]

Based on experience whose origin I am unaware of, Brazilian farmers got used to intercropping, i.e., planting cassava, corn, and beans together with the sugarcane, cotton, or coffee.[5] In fact,

it was in coffee plantations that intercropping became the traditional and generalized planting method. During the long period of five to six years necessary for the coffee trees to mature, the sustenance for the establishment's personnel was provided by cereals planted between the rows of coffee trees, a practice that continues to this day. Whether or not it was advisable from an agricultural standpoint, intercropping responded to a structural economic necessity.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, coffee plantations began outsourcing the creation of coffee fields. The contractors employed their own enslaved people for a period of four years to tend to the coffee trees, receiving a fixed amount of money for the healthy trees received at the end of the contract. In addition, they were granted the fourth year's harvest and the subsistence foodstuffs grown for self-consumption (sometimes the landowner demanded a part of those foodstuffs). Motta Sobrinho and Warren Dean, referring to Limeira and Rio Claro in western São Paulo, documented the creation of coffee fields by contractors that came from Minas Gerais with their enslaved people. Foreigners often found intercropping perplexing, like the North American immigrants that Burton met in Minas Gerais, who opposed mixing sugarcane with corn and beans, as well as the *capoeira* intercropping system.[6]

Some authors differentiate slave coffee plantations from Northeastern sugar plantations, emphasizing the *commercial* nature of the former, which would characterize them as "rational enterprises." This viewpoint is unsubstantiated by the facts. As we saw in Chapter 11, slave coffee plantations in Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo were structured according to the traditional plantation model. In some ways, there was an even greater contribution to the natural economy. Many establishments went from sugar to coffee production, but they continued producing sugar for internal consumption. Others, which produced coffee from the start, installed small- or regular-sized mills to provide sugar and spirits for the plantation's personnel. Taunay wrote:

> For many years, large plantations had extensive sugarcane fields. The production was intended for local use. Dried, quality white sugar was manufactured after the coffee harvest and kept in tens of sacks for domestic consumption and to make sweets and candied fruits or in syrup.[7]

What happened with sugarcane was even more common with basic foodstuffs. In his primer directed to coffee growers, the Baron of Pati do Alferes strongly recommended plantations to be self-sufficient in terms of food:

> Foodstuffs and other provisions should be grown according to the subsistence needs of the establishment's personnel and animals or for the purpose of profitable trade.[8]

The primer provides detailed technical advice not only about coffee, but also about growing beans, corn, cassava, and rice and growing pigs, "animals very much needed for the immense consumption of a large plantation […]," etc.[9]

In addition to intercropping in coffee fields under development, foodstuffs for self-subsistence occupied large fields. Corrêa Júnior wrote about Fazenda Santa Fé with its 300 enslaved people:

> The normal annual coffee production is 20,000 *arrobas*, reaching 40,000 in some years. In addition to this product, Santa Fé has an approximate annual production of 800 *canos* of corn, which at 40 *alqueires* each is equal to a total of 32,000 *alqueires* [*1 alqueire = 40 liters*]; 1,200 of beans; 800 *arrobas* or rice; quite a bit of sugar and cassava […].[10]

Except for the coffee, everything else was consumed within the plantation to feed the human population and more than 300 pigs and 200 pack animals and horses.

In the 1880s, a few years before Abolition, Couty was surprised by the amount of work that the secondary crops of corn, beans, and rice demanded of enslaved people in coffee plantations. Their books recorded cases where thirty enslaved people were employed in the corn and bean harvest, sixty planting the fields, and others performing minor tasks such as grinding cassava, husking rice, making corn flour, etc. According to most planters' estimates, growing and preparing foodstuffs employed one-fifth of the total available workforce.[11]

At that time, it was no longer easy for planters to supply their personnel with foodstuffs produced *in loco*. Aged and reduced in number, the slave workforce was insufficient even to work on the coffee fields. Van Delden Laerne documented cases of plantations that only grew corn and purchased the rest of their foodstuffs, or stopped planting sugarcane when the coffee harvest was larger.[12] What increased monoculture was therefore not "entrepreneurial rationality," but simply the decline of slavery and its inability to maintain the productive forces it created.

With the exception of commercial planting in certain favorable areas, cotton growing was inscribed in the natural economy everywhere. From Pará to São Paulo, farms and plantations produced their own cotton, which was then spun and woven to be used by the owner's family and enslaved people. This practice declined in the coffee-growing region in the second half of the nineteenth century due to two simultaneous factors: increasing prices of slave labor, which therefore had to be spared, and the possibility of purchasing cheaper, nationally produced textiles.[13] However, the Baron of Pati do Alferes still recommended planting cotton around the fields, arguing that "in addition to many other domestic and constant uses, spun cotton provides the best thread to sew slaves' coarse clothes."[14]

The twofold nature of slave plantations was not exclusive to Brazil, but was also present in the rest of the Americas and the United States.

In the Caribbean islands, it was customary to reserve an area to plant tubers, bananas, and corn. For a long time, the only thing imported to feed the enslaved people was cured meats. Jamaica's Slave Act obliged plantation owners to reserve one acre for each ten enslaved people to grow tubers. In addition, enslaved people were allowed to keep small vegetable gardens and raise animals.[15]

In slaveholding states in the Southern United States, the vast majority of planters tried to avoid strict monoculture. In general, in addition to cotton or another basic commercial product, there were various crops for consumption by the establishment's residents, both enslaved people and free men. It was common to plant corn and legumes, vegetable gardens, and apple orchards, as well as to raise pigs and fowl. Although the proximity of a prosperous farmer agriculture might make it preferable to purchase foodstuffs, the natural economy sector was significant in slave plantations, to different extents depending on current conditions.[16]

There were of course differences from one plantation sector to another, as was observed in Brazil. Cotton production, which was less laborious than sugarcane both to grow and to process, allowed plantations to produce foodstuffs for self-subsistence with greater regularity, thus avoiding the need to buy them in the market. From Gayoso's observations, we can conclude that the personnel in cotton plantations in Maranhão consumed locally produced cassava flour and rice. Spix and Martius noted that, out of the large rice production in Maranhão, only one-third was exported and the rest was used mostly to feed the enslaved people. According to Koster, corn, planted together with the cotton, was the usual meal given to enslaved people in Northeastern cotton fields. In addition, the enslaved people in sugar plantations received on certain days a portion of cured meat or cured fish, a practice that apparently was not common in cotton plantations.[17]

Finally, it must be noted that not even gold mining escaped the twofold nature of the slave economy. Although what was produced there was the quintessential commodity – a good that directly and universally acquired the money form – gold mining was combined with the natural economy.

No matter how much the Portuguese Crown wanted Minas Gerais colonists to focus on gold mining, they had to perform agricultural activities at the fringes of the captaincy. It was to the miners' interest to combine gold extraction, which was also subject to seasonal variations, with the production of foodstuffs for internal consumption, especially considering that they had vast expanses of available lands. As a result, the *mixed haciendas*, as Miguel Costa Filho called them, arose early on, where gold mining was combined with animal husbandry and, in some cases, even sugarcane fields and a mill to produce sugar and spirits.

The aforementioned historian transcribed important document sources. The captaincy project elaborated by Alexandre de Gusmão notes that "the same enslaved people that till the lands also work as miners on certain days and seasons." In 1733, Galvão Lacerda wrote about Comarca de Serro Frio, saying that its residents, "who have haciendas, employ their enslaved people to till the land part of the year and to mine for diamonds the rest of the year." And Diogo de Mendonça said that "the slaves who till the land are the same ones who do the mining, and only work on the fields during the time necessary to cultivate." The historian recorded the oldest mixed hacienda on which he found records, prior to 1714, and cites many other later ones.[18]

As Miguel Costa Filho observes, it was the severe shortage of foodstuffs that forced miners to plant victuals and raise animals near the mines.[19] The agriculture and husbandry sector of mixed haciendas therefore arose as a typical natural economy and, to varying degrees, maintained that character for a long time. As mining declined, the agriculture and husbandry sector of mixed haciendas grew, acquiring an increasingly marked mercantile character. Regarding the situation of gold mining in 1814, Eschwege noted that enslaved people only worked on mining during six months per year and the rest of the time they were employed in agriculture and other tasks. In his voyage through Minas Gerais, Luccock still found remnants of mixed haciendas.[20]

Dynamic Correlation between the Two Segments

Up to now, we have characterized the twofold nature of colonial plantations only at the descriptive level of knowledge. In order to examine it at greater depth, we must inquire into the dynamics between the two segments. If we understand the plantation as an enclosed universe, our analysis must take two variables into account: the mercantile economy sector and the natural economy sector. The issue is therefore to determine whether the relationship between the two variables was symmetrical or whether it was one of subordination and, in that case, which sector depended on the other. To this end, we shall examine the slave plantation's responses to the stimuli of the peculiar conditions of the world market at specific times.

High prices – Let us therefore examine two moments of high sugar prices eight years away from each other. The first one, from 1776 to 1782, corresponded to North American British colonies' War of Independence. The second began in 1790 and continued, with some variations, until approximately 1820, corresponding to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.[21] The great European colonialist powers were involved in both political upheavals, which deeply affected the production and commercialization of sugar and other exports from the American continent. As a result of the French Revolution in particular, the sugar production of Saint-Domingue (future Haiti) – the largest at the time – was no longer fully available on the world market.

Stimulated by the high prices in the world market, the mercantile economy sector grew immediately, increasing the production of sugar, tobacco, and cotton. This had an immediate

effect on plantations' natural economy: the production of staple foods shrank, and planters had to dispute them with urban populations in the colony's limited market. The inevitable consequence was scarcity, atrociously felt by urban populations, while planters, who were profiting greatly, were unconcerned with the higher prices of foodstuffs, which they formerly produced and now had to purchase. Anonymous Author wrote about this situation:

> What does it matter, or how is it more profitable, for sugar production to have reached 15,000 boxes and tobacco production 40,000 rolls, if cassava flour is no longer produced and many foodstuffs are in short supply and many others have disappeared to our great misfortune? What point is there in receiving on one hand the price of sugar, tobacco, and cotton, if with the other we hand over the equivalent of one *arroba* of sugar, two *arrobas* of tobacco, and one *arroba* of cotton for an *alqueire* of flour for our own sustenance and that or our family and the slaves? It would be better to plant everything proportionately—as much sugarcane, tobacco, and cotton as possible, as much flour as is necessary for sustenance—, keeping everything balanced, instead of investing everything in those three crops, which are not basic needs, and entirely abandoning that whose scarcity is one of the causes of hunger.[22]

In spite of this economist's wishful thinking, who even proposed government planning of agricultural production – "without doing violence or torturing" the workers, reestablishing the desired balance would be extremely difficult as long as the world market encouraged an increasingly greater production of export goods. The reduction of the natural economy, which was a source of self-sustenance for plantations, was a reflex reaction to the expansion of the mercantile economy.

In the late eighteenth century, Vilhena complained:

> … the price of sugar has reached such heights […] that everyone wants to grow sugarcane; and this is why farmers, who always produced flour, are no longer doing so, and produce only sugar now, obtaining with an *arroba* four *alqueires* of flour […].[23]

The author of *Notícias Soteropolitanas* recalled the Crown's legislation that obliged plantation owners, farmers, and even slave dealers who sent ships to Africa to plant cassava for self-subsistence. When the business flourished, this legislation obviously went unheeded, resulting in higher prices for cassava flour, which was the staple food of the whole population. In 1781, Silva Lisboa said that an *alqueire* of flour cost 1$000. According to Vilhena, once the peak of sugar prices subsided, the same *alqueire* costs 400 *réis* in 1789 and 440 *réis* in 1790, rising again when sugar prices rose once more, to 1$280 and 1$600 at the end of the century. As we can see, the price of cassava flour in the internal market followed the price of sugar in the world market. Vilhena also wrote about the "atrocious hunger in Pernambuco" around 1791 or 1792, shortly after the beginning of the new peak in sugar prices and therefore attributable to it, together with an exceptional drought. The chronicler claimed that hundreds of people had died in Pernambuco, which had to import flour from Bahia.[24] An identical event took place years earlier in Maranhão, where many people died for lack of food,

> with no other cause for this miserable situation than planters' reckless abandonment of those crops in order to increase the production of those which they trade with the metropolis.[25]

What happened in the Northeast with sugar and cotton happened in the Southeast with the expansion of coffee, in this case with the aggravating circumstance of the proximity to Rio de Janeiro – the largest urban center and seaport in the country, and therefore lacking a significant

supply of foodstuffs. Coffee plantations not only drove out small food producers but also competed for foodstuffs in a deficient market. Hence the extreme scarcity experienced in the 1850s, whose causes Sebastião Ferreira Soares attempted to elucidate.[26]

The dynamics during peak times therefore consisted of expanding export crops in detriment of plantations' natural production and the production of foodstuffs by small agricultural establishments, which supplied urban centers. The ever-latent contradiction in slave societies between the production of export goods and the production of crops for internal consumption was therefore aggravated. Only later, perhaps, would high prices also stimulate an increase in the production of crops for internal consumption, balancing the supply and the demand. Apparently, Bahia was better poised to reach this balance than Pernambuco, since Ferreira da Câmara alludes to a second famine in the latter around 1802 or 1803, which led to an increase in cassava production in Bahia.

In his "Response" to Conde da Ponte's inquiry, Ferreira da Câmara perfectly described sugarcane planters' interest in monoculture when sugar prices rose. Challenging the Royal mandate that obliged planters to grow cassava, the powerful plantation owner of the Recôncavo region declared:

> I maintain more than 250 people—their sustenance costs me from 36$000 to 40$000 per week with today's flour prices—and I don't plant a single cassava tree, to keep from committing the ludicrous folly of trading the best crop in the country for the worst, and to keep from hindering one crop with another and thus complicating efforts of a different nature.[27]

The judge Rodrigues de Brito agreed with Ferreira da Câmara in his adherence to Adam Smith's doctrine. Both managed to undertake this curious ideological exercise that consisted of invoking the application of the principles of capitalist liberalism to a slave economy. If everyone planted what they deemed best, thought Rodrigues de Brito, neither sugarcane nor cassava production would be compromised in the market. Above all, he emphasized that planters should not be forced

> to plant measly cassava, which grows in any type of land, in the rare and precious *massapé* soil, which nature endowed with the ability to produce excellent sugar and other very valuable crops.[28]

We can now make quantitative assessments. In Chapter 11, based on Anonymous Author, we saw that plantations in the Recôncavo region obtained an average money income of 3:100$000 and a natural income estimated at 400$000. The latter was therefore equivalent to 11% of the total net income. It should be noted that Anonymous Author was the only one who made a monetary estimate of the natural income, albeit restricted to the production of foodstuffs. The information provided by Ferreira da Câmara allows us to go beyond the realm of net income to that of gross product. His plantation, with 250 people to feed – which implies a workforce of at least 200 enslaved people – consumed 1:976$000 of cassava flour per year – the bread of the time. Its total sugar and molasses production can be estimated, for the sake of reasoning, at 13:000$000, since fifteen years earlier, Anonymous Author attributed a gross commercial product of 6:500$000 to plantations with 100 enslaved people. Relative prices and the value of the currency had suffered no important changes during that time. Therefore, producing the necessary cassava flour within the plantation, replacing the equivalent value in sugar, made up 15% of the total gross product. Since plantations in Bahia produced several other foodstuffs and locally produced items for internal consumption in addition to cassava flour, it would be reasonable

to estimate the natural production at 25%–30% of the value of the total production, at average prices in the world market. Ferreira da Câmara's plantation must have reduced the natural economy to about 10% of the total production.

In coffee plantations, between half and one-third of the workforce was directly involved in coffee growing. To that, we should add those enslaved people temporarily or permanently involved in processing coffee, transporting it (an estimate of 20% of the workforce), creating production goods, all of them part of the mercantile economy. On the other hand, the characteristics of growing and processing coffee make it more compatible with a greater proportion of the natural economy than sugar. As long as there was an ample supply of enslaved people, i.e., until the 1870s, we can estimate that the natural economy in coffee plantations employed an average of 30%–35% of the workforce. The shortage of enslaved people, together with a greater social division of labor, reduced this margin, which at the end was probably about 20%. This demonstrates that, in general, no matter how large the participation of the natural economy was, it is erroneous to conclude that it was preponderant in the plantation as a whole. In fact, while Brazilian plantations under average conditions commercialized between 65% and 75% of their production, the percentage of the Polish feudal production commercialized in the second half of the eighteenth century was approximately 35%–40%, according to Witold Kula's estimates.[29]

Moments of high prices had two simultaneous effects on the situation of enslaved people: more work and worse food. It is not by chance that narratives like those of Father Benci and Anonymous Author, who consistently emphasized the brutal treatment received by enslaved people in terms of the efforts demanded of them, the poor food received, and the punishments suffered, coincide with moments of high prices.[30] Vilhena summarized vehemently that accusation:

> … justice and charity should respond to the barbaric, cruel, and unheard-of ways in which most plantation owners treat their unfortunate slaves.[31]

While high prices led to unbearable conditions for enslaved people, their effect is exactly the opposite for wage laborers in a capitalist regime. During economic peaks, capital can employ all or almost all of the available labor force, and salaries, driven by an unusually high demand for labor, reach their highest possible level in a capitalist regime. Within the structural limits of capitalism, high prices result in more favorable situations for workers' economic claims and material conditions.

Low prices – I have already discussed this to some extent in Chapter 11. Usually, planters responded to a drop in prices with a gradual reduction of their mercantile production. In such circumstances, the tendency toward monoculture gave way to a greater presence of the natural economy. This was also a reflex action of the natural economy to prior changes in the mercantile economy.

Analyzing the effects of the prolonged drop in sugar prices on Northeastern plantations after the mid-seventeenth century, Celso Furtado noted that planters employed their workforce on tasks unrelated to export activities, which resulted in an increase in their investments without creating a flow of money income.[32] Planters – very different "entrepreneurs" from capitalist ones – made special efforts to increase the production of foodstuffs, thus reducing the monetary expenses necessary to purchase them. Enslaved people enjoyed greater freedom to grow their own food, which resulted in a certain improvement in their conditions, as long as the establishment did not experience a catastrophic downfall. With time, if the slump in the world market continued too long, planters would be unable to maintain the entire slave workforce, while their fixed funds deteriorated. But the plantation's structure remained unaltered, and if it managed to survive the slump, it would have the necessary elements to recover when prices rose again. For

that reason, Celso Furtado correctly noted that the sugar economy in the Brazilian Northeast survived prolonged slumps during three centuries, "always managing to recover when external market conditions allowed it, without undergoing any significant structural change."[33]

As we can see, planters enjoyed an economic space where they could retreat during market slumps: the space of the natural economy. If under average conditions the natural economy represented, say, 30% of the establishment's gross production, and it decreased to 15% or 10% during price peaks, it could perhaps reach 50% during market slumps. As is perfectly obvious, what we have here is an entirely different dynamics than in capitalist enterprise, which does not have the rearguard of the natural economy. For slaveholding planters, I repeat, the natural economy was always present as a necessity, or at least as a structural possibility.

In essence, the same dynamics were present in the slaveholding Southern United States. Genovese alludes to them when he notes:

> Slave owners […] employ some of their slaves to produce foodstuffs when they foresee a drop in cotton prices. It is beyond doubt that the number of men-hours dedicated to growing cotton varies […]. The 1850s are prosperous years, during which slaves that formerly worked on secondary crops have been employed in the cotton fields.[34]

The US historian adds later on:

> It is as profitable to employ all slaves in cotton production when prices are high as it is catastrophic to practice monoculture, which is imposed by the system, during market slumps.[35]

A borderline case of a market slump was provided by Anonymous Author: a case in which, for some years, the external market went down to zero for plantation owners. At the time of the export system through biennial convoys, no sugar was exported from Bahia from 1735 to 1739 due to the absence of the Portuguese fleet. In 1739, the fleet transported 10,000 boxes of sugar, i.e., the equivalent of two harvests instead of four, as it should have after two bienniums. Anonymous Author mentioned several hypotheses to explain the exportable stock of 1739, which should have been twice as much as was available at the time, unless there were factors we are unaware of. The most likely explanation is that, once the fleet's absence was confirmed in 1737, plantation owners refrained from increasing the sugar stock that awaited transportation by reducing the production to the level of the internal market demand while increasing the production of other goods for self-consumption.[36]

Note that at the time when this happened, gold and diamond mining were on the rise in central Brazil, with a growing market that probably absorbed part of the production of sugar and other foodstuffs of Bahian plantations. The event constitutes a borderline case on which, lacking sufficient information, Anonymous Author was only able to provide hypotheses. The most significant aspect of this case was that, once the fleets' operation went back to normal after 1739, sugar exports returned to their previous level of 10,000 boxes per biennium, remaining at that level for a long time, as can be observed in the statistical table included in the economist's work.[37]

Concluding Summary

From the discussion above, we can conclude that, in colonial slave plantations, the mercantile economy was an independent variable, while the natural economy was a dependent variable. The latter's contraction or growth was determined by the prior growth or contraction of the former. This in turn reflected the variations in world market demand, of which it was a dependent variable.

The twofold nature of slave plantations was a structural necessity. The fact that the main, but not exclusive goal of the fundamental production units was mercantile production, was a result of the mode of production. A certain margin, which was subject to variations in its proportion, was reserved to the natural economy, which did not constitute a mere undissolved residue, but was part of the productive organization and served a very important specific function for the mercantile economy. This function can be summarized as follows: (1) to support mercantile production, making it viable by fully employing the characteristically rigid workforce and making better use of the other available factors; (2) to serve as a rearguard for the mercantile economy during market slumps, allowing the plantation unit to resort to increasing the production for self-consumption and therefore survive for a long time without making structural changes.

The twofold structure of plantations was governed by a law that can be formulated as follows: *in colonial slave plantations, variations in the natural economy's margin are inversely proportional to the variations in the mercantile economy, of which it is dependent.*

The Enslaved Person's Economy

One of the elements of the natural economy was the enslaved person's own production. In Chapter 2, where we studied the social category of the enslaved person, we saw that their condition was not incompatible with a limited and conditional ownership of goods. This included the practice of allowing enslaved people to cultivate minute plots of land in the planter's domain. This allowance gave rise to one of the components of the plantation's natural economy.

This practice goes back at least to the sixteenth century among the Portuguese, as Leo Africanus observed in the island of São Tomé:

> The slaves were forced to work all week for their masters, except for Saturday, when they cultivated cereals, yams or sweet potatoes, and many vegetables like lettuce, cabbage, turnips, *porée*, parsley. They made cakes with cereal flour and drank water or palm wine, and sometimes goat milk; their only clothing consisted of a cotton loincloth made by them. *Their masters were thus freed from having to contribute to their slaves' sustenance*.[38]

It is not surprising that the practice, which probably originated in Africa, was incorporated into Brazilian slavery by Portuguese colonists, since it was unquestionably beneficial to the masters. However, some historians have exaggerated its significance, to the point of seeing in it one of the aspects that demonstrates the benevolence of Brazilian slavery. In his list of "very beautiful customs" instituted by slave masters, João Ribeiro included "allowing slaves to work for themselves one or two days (Saturday and Sunday) […] later established as law (1700), which also recognized slaves' private property."[39]

Pandiá Calógeras reiterated the argument:

> In general, [slaves] were not mistreated. Historians of slavery recount that, in the West Indies, captives used to implore that Brazilian rules were adopted. These rules stemmed from Royal orders and mandates from 1688, 1689, 1693, and 1704, which obliged slave owners to give their slaves Sunday off—on that day they worked on their own behalf.[40]

According to Manuel Diégues Júnior, that practice was known as the "Brazilian system" and it was known as such in the Antilles.[41]

Obviously, documents regarding the laws at each era provide elements that help to reconstruct the historic reality, but historians have the obligation of comparing them to concrete facts.

Neither João Ribeiro nor Pandiá Calógeras did so. Manuel Diégues Júnior realized that the "Brazilian system" was not fully observed, but in spite of that he wrote:

> It is therefore not surprising that in Brazil those relations, the relations between masters and slaves, became bearable; more bearable than in other areas where slavery was practiced, where there was no balance and adjustment between two classes located on entirely opposite sides.[42]

From eyewitness sources on Brazilian slavery, we can infer that the allowance of land for the enslaved people's own benefit was frequent in cotton and coffee plantations, but very rare in sugar plantations. It is not difficult to explain this phenomenon. Manuel Correia de Andrade explains that the short cotton cycle required few clearings, and therefore did not employ enslaved people the whole year, unlike sugarcane.[43] In addition, processing cotton with the two-cylinder ginning device and the bailing press demanded much less labor than processing sugarcane. It was therefore easier for cotton planters to allow their enslaved people one day off per week – and no more than that – for them to cultivate foodstuffs and thus provide for their own food. Coffee involved more labor than cotton, but was not prohibitive in that respect. That, however, was not the case with sugarcane, which required intense work all year round. During the peak phases – harvest and milling – and during moments of high market prices, plantation owners suspended their enslaved people's days off and overworked them with the tasks required for sugar production. It was therefore precisely in the sugarcane region, to which Manuel Diégues Júnior refers in particular, that the legal mandate regarding enslaved people's day off was least observed by plantation owners.

Let us examine what actually happened. First, contrary to what some historians suggest or suppose, enslaved people rarely received any days off other than the Sunday rest day prescribed by the Catholic Church. They had only Sundays at most, and they had to sacrifice their weekly rest in order to till their own plots. Second, as we have seen, religious holidays during which work was forbidden were much less frequent than some historians like to believe, and in addition, masters rarely extended the observance of such holidays to their enslaved people. There is evidence that, in the late sixteenth century, plantation owners and farmers in the Recôncavo region of Bahia forced their enslaved people to work on Sundays and religious holidays. The *Regimento de Feitor-mor de Engenho* (Regulations for Plantation Head Overseers), written in 1663 by João Fernandes Vieira – one of the leaders of the struggle against the Dutch occupation of Pernambuco and owner of five plantations – recommends making enslaved people work on their own plots on religious holidays and, *outside of the milling season*, also on Saturdays. It does not appear that most plantation owners observed the norms set forth in these Regulations. So much were these norms disregarded that, in the early eighteenth century, the degree to which the enslaved people's sustenance was neglected provoked Jorge Benci's indignation and the Crown, concerned with the harm inflicted on "the poor slaves' souls," considered it "scandalous." The honest Jesuit asserted that, since the masters did not provide for their sustenance, the day when enslaved people were allowed to work on their own plots should not be on Sundays and religious holidays, accusing those masters who allowed their enslaved people starve to death of committing homicide.[44] Ten years later, Antonil was no less emphatic when he provided elements that are quite indicative of the work regime in Bahia's plantations:

> Some [*sic*] masters give slaves one day per week to plant for themselves, sometimes sending an overseer to guard over them; this keeps them from going hungry and from surrounding the master's house every day to ask for a portion of flour. However, to deny

> them flour and not allow them a day to plant, and to force them to work from dawn till dusk in the fields and at night in the mill with little rest … how could this go unpunished in God's court?[45]

Not all priests shared Benci and Antonil's opinion on the matter. Writing in 1757, the Benedictine priest Loreto Couto exempted plantation owners of any "moral fault" for making enslaved people work on Sundays and religious holidays, invoking theological arguments and practical necessities.[46] Dornas Filho noted that, on June 6, 1852, slave owners obtained from the Holy See the brief *Jam inde ab anno*, which allowed them to refrain from observing several religious holidays considered detrimental to production.[47]

Benci and Antonil made it clear that allowing enslaved people to cultivate a plot of land was entirely fortuitous. In 1781, Silva Lisboa wrote that it was an "almost universal" custom. However, he noted that "a significant part [*of the slaves*] dies from hunger, misery, despair, and atrocious punishment inflicted on them."[48] The "almost universal" custom was not sufficient to ease the sorrows of "a significant part" of the enslaved people.

Not much later than Silva Lisboa, Anonymous Author wrote about it not as a universal, but as an alternative custom: "either they [*the slaves*] are fed with what is planted for that purpose, or they are left to their own devices, for which they receive one rest day per week […]."[49]

The recommendation to comply with the norm of giving enslaved people a day off, among other measures proposed as ways to improve their treatment, indicates that doing so was not a usual and respected practice.[50]

From Vilhena's writings, we can conclude that masters addressed the issue of the enslaved people's food in several ways. Some offered them no food whatsoever, giving them only Sunday or Saturday to work "on a tiny plot of land, which they call *roça*, to sustain themselves the whole week with that day's work, giving them only a drop of the coarsest syrup during the milling season." Other masters did not allow them any day off, but gave them a portion of food: "one fourth of flour [*10 liters*] and three and a half pounds of cured meat for ten days." Finally, "the most humane masters give them that portion of food plus one day off per week."[51]

Note that, in Vilhena's opinion, the most humane masters were the latter. Apparently, Saint-Hilaire also believed that the system of allowing enslaved people to cultivate their own plot of land without providing them any food was the least favorable for enslaved people, as we can conclude from the following statement:

> In plantations where some care is shown to the slaves, they receive food three times a day, consisting of cassava flour and cured meat cooked with black beans. In other plantations, the slaves receive no food whatsoever but, in addition to Sundays, they are granted an extra day per week to work on their own.[52]

Koster's observations are contradictory. According to him, few masters disrespected their enslaved people's right to have Sundays off as well as "many religious holidays." He found the "day off" system beneficial for the enslaved people, since, in addition to supplementing the allotted portion of food, which was insufficient to withstand the amount of work they performed, it allowed them to sell what they did not consume and therefore save money to purchase their freedom. However, before that, he wrote that "masters usually feed their enslaved people instead of giving them a few days off per week for them to feed themselves […]." He further stated that, in the properties of "rich Brazilians […] workers cannot sustain themselves with their own labor."[53] The contradiction is perhaps due to his difficulty in synthetically apprehending changing phenomena observed during a period of about five years.

Arriving at Pernambuco soon after Koster, Tollenare was more categorical in his observations during the short period of the first half of 1817:

> In few properties are slaves allowed to plant on their own. Touring through the woods, I sometimes found small clearings where the slaves planted some cassava in secret.[54]

In 1856, the Report of the Commission on Public Hygiene, signed by Dr. Joaquim de Aquino Fonseca and presented to the Provincial Legislature of Pernambuco, blamed the maltreatment of enslaved people for their high mortality and, among other recommendations, advised against making them work on Sundays and religious holidays.[55]

In the coffee-growing region, after the end of the African slave trade, there is evidence that plantation owners were concerned about allowing their enslaved people to work on their own on Sundays. Article 3 of the Statutes of the Alto Retiro plantation in Capivari, municipality of São Paulo, established that enslaved people should perform no work on Sundays and religious holidays, except for those tasks which were deemed urgent, such as putting fires out, harvesting crops that would otherwise go to waste, etc. Article 4 established that enslaved people would work until lunchtime and that, when it was necessary for them to work beyond that time, they should be paid a certain amount of money.[56] In his *Memória*, the Baron of Pati do Alferes recommended allowing enslaved people to have Sundays and religious holidays off, providing them with clean clothes to wear on those days, and allowing them to till a plot of land as close as possible to the master's house for them to grow foodstuffs. With the money obtained from the sale of their products, the enslaved people could purchase tobacco, "special food," and "fine clothes," even for their wife and children, if they were married. Sharply and with an evidently patriarchal stance, he argued:

> These plots of land and the products they obtain from them make them develop a certain love for the country, distract them from their slavery, and allow them to enjoy their little right to property. Plantation owners are undoubtedly filled with joy when they see their slaves returning from their land carrying bananas, yams, sugarcane, etc.[57]

Couty believed that, if enslaved people cultivated their small plots of land, they could purchase their freedom in three or four years. But in no part of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo where he traveled did he find a single case of a rural slave who had been freed with the product of his work. The plots remained uncultivated or were used to grow sugarcane, rice, and other vegetables that provided "tidbits" for the enslaved people.[58] In spite of the admirable depth with which he studied the economic mechanism of slavery, Couty believed in Black people's racial inferiority and claimed that they were indolent and wasteful, disinterested in their own freedom, and demanded only one right: *the right to do nothing*.[59] Whenever he went from the purely economic to the broadly social, the French scientist yielded to prejudice and became subservient to planters' interests.

The hidden engine of the "Brazilian system" had been unveiled centuries earlier by Leo Africanus. Manuel Correia de Andrade correctly wrote in that regard:

> At first sight, allowing slaves to cultivate a plot of land for themselves on their days off might seem like an act of munificence on the part of their master; but since the master forced them […] to work on "their plots" during religious holidays, depriving them of the rest days that the Church reserved for them, and the product of that work was employed to feed the slaves, we can see that the "Brazilian system" was advantageous to the master and not to the slaves.[60]

In addition, it should be noted that the enslaved person's economy was not indifferent to contextual influences. Almost always, the natural economy, which provided the means for elementary barter at most, could be displaced by monoculture and thus become a mercantile economy, with a miniscule contribution to the world market. We can assume that this did not occur without their master's support. According to Koster, some enslaved people planted cotton regularly for their own profit. In the 1860s, when Northeastern cotton production was exceptionally profitable, enslaved people in Paraíba were able to purchase their freedom with the money they obtained from planting cotton on their own. This, however, did not happen with sugarcane, which was much harder to grow. Maria Graham mentioned that the enslaved people of a plantation in Rio de Janeiro grew coffee and recounted a scene on a Saturday, a day off for enslaved people, in which the latter negotiated the sale of their product. Plantation owners in Vassouras purchased the coffee that their enslaved people grew on the plots of land they provided for them to cultivate on Sundays.[61]

According to Du Tertre, the so-called Brazilian system was introduced in the Antilles by the Dutch after they were expelled from Recife. Bryan Edwards wrote that, in Jamaica, in addition to Sundays and religious holidays, enslaved people were allowed one day every two weeks to cultivate their plots of land and sell their products in the market, except for during the harvest season.[62] There was a phenomenon whereby an economic process was transferred from one area to another, which was possible because the process benefitted Antillean planters and was in accordance to their structural conditions. This transfer therefore took place between economies based on the same mode of production and governed by the same objective laws.

Noel Deerr reproduced a long excerpt by Bryan Edwards, which demonstrates the similarities between Anglo-Antillean slavery and Brazilian slavery, taking geographic differences into account.[63] Particularly noteworthy is the coincidence between Edwards's ideas and those of Lacerda Werneck, the Baron of Pati do Alferes, half a century away from each other – a coincidence of interests between men from the same social class, affected by identical tendencies contrary to mercantilism and patriarchy. We can also see that in the small islands, where land was scarce, there were impediments to the development of the slave economy, contrary to what happened in Jamaica, one of the so-called Greater Antilles. In Antigua, for example, according to William Young, enslaved people raised pigs and fowl with a part of the food that should feed them, since they had no land to cultivate on their own.[64] Brion Davis noted that, in the British West Indies, planters did not respect the legal norms that forbid forcing enslaved people work for the plantation on Sundays and religious holidays, except during the harvest season.[65] As in Brazil, the enslaved people's own economy was always subordinated to the whims and interests of their masters.

In Cuba, prior to the expansion of sugar production, it was customary to grant enslaved people a plot of land, called *conuco*, to raise animals and plant their own food. In 1791, when the sugar production of Saint-Domingue collapsed, Francisco Arango y Parreno anticipated a time of prosperity for Cuban planters, but prudently recommended maintaining the custom. However, the opposite happened: the sugar production fever implied such an extensive exploitation of the slave workforce that *conucos* almost disappeared. In the 1840s, planters once again allowed the existence of *conucos* in order to improve their enslaved people's conditions, in response to the difficulties encountered by the African slave trade and the growing rebelliousness of Cuban enslaved people.[66]

In the United States, enslaved people's basic sustenance was provided by planters, but it was not uncommon to allow them to use a small plot of land on which they could work on Saturday afternoon and Sunday to grow vegetables and raise small animals. From the masters' perspective, this allowance not only provided enslaved people with additional food but also made them more docile and more attached to the plantation.[67]

At first sight, the enslaved people's own economy makes their situation resemble that of feudal serfs. It would appear that the system of slave exploitation was identical or analogous to the *corvée*. A. P. Guimarães made use of this apparent similarity to argue in favor of his thesis on "colonial feudalism." He wrote in this regard:

> Quite often [*sic*], slaveholding forms intertwine with servile forms of production: slaves provided for their own sustenance devoting a part of their time to fishing or planting on small plots of land they were granted. This way, the slave regime mixed with the medieval regime of labor rent and product rent, in addition to other variables of personal servitude.[68]

We would therefore have a laborer that was part slave and part serf.[69]

First of all, note that the labor of enslaved people for their own sustenance has nothing to do with labor rent, since it obviously integrates necessary labor – labor intended to create a product that compensates for the wear and tear of the labor force. Second, A. P. Guimarães describes as "quite often" that which was extremely rare in sugar plantations and was subject to restrictions in plantations devoted to other products. The enslaved person's own economy was always an *allowance* by the master, subject to his *whim* regardless of legal norms. *It differed from the serfs' own economy, which was their established right in practice*. In the slave regime, the enslaved people's own economy was never indispensable – it was always supplementary and conditional. The feudal regime, on the other hand, cannot even be conceived without the serfs' own economy, since it was the basic element of the mode of production. Finally, enslaved people usually only extracted one part of the elements that made up the necessary product from the plot of land granted to them, but by doing so they lost their rest day, which increased the level of exploitation of their labor power.

In sum, the enslaved person's own economy cannot serve as the basis to apply categories that are typical of feudalism, like labor rent and product rent. Nor can it give rise to a *hybrid* category that mixes slavery with serfdom. As Ciro Cardoso observed, it makes no sense to try to make peasant serfs out of enslaved people in the Americas.[70]

Later in his work, however, this historian argued in favor of the thesis of the "peasant gap" in slaveholding regions of the Americas, especially in the British and French Caribbean, based mainly on the enslaved people's own economy. He believed that this made enslaved people acquire a subsidiary peasant nature. I have already challenged the thesis of the "peasant gap," noting that the enslaved people's own economy was an element that was organically integrated in the plantation's structure. I believe that this argument has been sufficiently demonstrated in the preceding pages.[71]

Notes

1 *HCPB*, v. 3, p. 262.
2 Cf. Cardim, Fernão. Op. cit., p. 294, et passim.
3 Cf. Pereira, Padre Estevam. Op. cit., p. 787–971.
4 Antonil. Op. cit., p. 174, as well as p. 153–154, 161, and 167.
5 On intercropping foodstuffs, see Koster. Op. cit., p. 453, 461–462; Saint-Hilaire. *Viagens pelo Distrito dos Diamantes*. Op. cit., p. 262; Idem, *Segunda viagem*, p. 197–198; Spix and Martius. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 280; Graham, Maria. Op. cit., p. 314; Do algodão. In: Werneck, F. P. Lacerda. Op. cit., p. 192.
6 Cf. Motta Sobrinho. Op. cit., p. 83–84; Dean, Warren. *Rio Claro: um sistema brasileiro de grande lavoura: 1820-1920*, p. 49 and 67; Burton, Richard. *Explorations of the Highlands of the Brazil*, v. 2, p. 42.
7 Taunay. Op. cit., t. III, v. 5. p. 168.
8 Werneck, F. P. Lacerda. Op. cit., p. 6–7.

9 Ibidem, p. 66, 73, 95 et passim.
10 Corrêa Júnior, A. P. Op. cit., p. 93.
11 Couty. *Étude de biologie industrielle sur le café*, p. 101–102.
12 Cf. Taunay. Op. cit., t. V, v. 7, p. 134, 360, 362, and 368.
13 Cf. Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 215–216.
14 Werneck, F. P. Lacerda. Op. cit., p. 9–10. In the same work, see the Appendix "Do algodão," p. 189, 196–197.
15 Cf. Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 2, chap. XXI.
16 Cf. Stampp. Op. cit., p. 62–65; Genovese. *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. Op. cit., 315–320; Idem, *Économie politique de l'esclavage*, p. 37, 53, 54, and 61.
17 Cf. Gayoso. Op. cit., p. 224, 264–265; Spix and Marttus. Op. cit., v. 2. p. 316; Koster. Op. cit., p. 462 and 517; Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 116 and 142.
18 Cf. Costa Filho, Miguel. *A cana-de-açúcar em Minas Gerais*, p. 159–165; Idem, *O engenho de Alvarenga Peixoto*.
19 Idem, *A cana-de-açúcar em Minas Gerais*, p. 164. Regarding the conjunction of mining and agriculture, see also Zemella, Mafalda P. *O abastecimento da Capitania de Minas Gerais no século XVIII*, p. 234 and 241.
20 Cf. Eschwege. *Pluto brasiliensis*. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 64–65; Luccock. Op. cit., p. 336 and 344.
21 On the variations in sugar prices, cf. Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 531.
22 Autor Anônimo. Op. cit., p. 89–90.
23 Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 157–158. See also v. 2, p. 481.
24 Ibidem, v. 1, p. 158–159; Lisboa, Silva. Op. cit., p. 503.
25 Roteiro do Maranhão a Goiás pela Capitania do Piauí. *RIHGB,* t. LXII. Part One, 1900, p. 139–140. The unknown autor of this document will be referred to in the text as Author of Roteiro do Maranhão.
26 Soares, Sebastião Ferreira. *Notas estatísticas*. Op. cit., p. 34–37, 288 et passim.
27 Câmara, Manuel Ferreira da. Op. cit., p. 155–156.
28 Brito, Rodrigues de. *A economia brasileira no alvorecer do século XIX*. Op. cit., p. 54.
29 Paim, Gilberto. *Industrialização e economia natural*, p. 25. On the commercialization of production in the Polish feudal economy, see Kula. Op. cit., p. 108–109.
30 Cf. Benci, Jorge. Op. cit., p. 31, 41–43 and 164 et seqs., 178, 181 et seqs.; Autor Anônimo. Op. cit., p. 92–93, 99.
31 Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 185.
32 Cf. Furtado, Celso. Op. cit., p. 64.
33 Ibidem, p. 68–69.
34 Genovese. Op. cit., p. 53–54.
35 Ibidem, p. 61.
36 Cf. Autor Anônimo. Op. cit., p. 54–62.
37 Ibidem, p. 63.
38 Apud Mandel, Ernest. Op. cit., t. I, p. 101 and footnote.
39 Ribeiro, João. *História do Brasil*, p. 208–209.
40 Calógeras, J. Pandiá. *Formação histórica do Brasil*, p. 38.
41 Cf. Diégues Júnior, Manuel. *População e açúcar no Nordeste do Brasil*, p. 69–70.
42 Ibidem, p. 71.
43 Cf. Andrade, Manuel Correia de. *A terra e o homem no Nordeste*, p. 90.
44 Cf. Benci, Jorge. Op. cit., p. 38, 165, 175–176; Pinho, Wanderley. Op. cit., p. 263. n. 9; Mello, J. A. Gonsalves. Op. cit., p. 83.
45 Antonil. Op. cit., p. 162.
46 Couto, Domingos do Loreto. Desagravos do Brasil e glórias de Pernambuco. *ABN*, v. 24, p. 180–186.
47 Cf. Dornas Filho, João. *A escravidão no Brasil*, 1939. p. 242.
48 Lisboa, Silva. Op. cit., p. 501–502.
49 Autor Anônimo. Op. cit., p. 39.
50 Ibidem, p. 92.
51 Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 1. p. 185–186.
52 Saint-Hilaire. *Viagens pelo Distrito dos Diamantes*, p. 404. See also p. 421.
53 Koster. Op. cit., p. 440, 494–495, and 514, 517–518.
54 Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 78.
55 Cf. Diégues Júnior, Manuel. Op. cit., p. 65.
56 Cf. Castro, F. A. Veiga de. Um fazendeiro do século passado. *RAM*, 1944, v. 97, p. 40.
57 Werneck, F. P. Lacerda. Op. cit., p. 24–25.
58 Cf. Couty, Louis. *L'esclavage au Brésil*. Op. cit., p. 70. |
59 Ibidem, p. 70, 77, 80, 89 et seqs.
60 Andrade, Manuel Correia de. Op. cit., p. 80.

61 Cf. Koster. Op. cit., p. 521; Graham, Maria. Op. cit., p. 325; Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 203–204; Galliza, Diana Soares de. *O declínio da escravidão na Paraíba: 1850-1888*, p. 148.
62 Cf. Koster. Op. cit., p. 532, n. 26.
63 Cf. Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 344–345.
64 Ibidem, p. 348–349.
65 Cf. Davis, Brion. Op. cit., p. 263, n. 18.
66 Cf. Le Riverend, Julio. Op. cit., p. 183–184; Fraginals. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 68, 100, 202–203.
67 Cf. Genovese. *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. Op. cit., p. 313, 535–539; Stampp. Op. cit., p. 92, 306–307.
68 Guimarães, A. P. Op. cit., p. 28.
69 Ibidem, p. 87.
70 Cf. Cardoso, Ciro F. El modo de producción esclavista colonial en América. Op. cit., p. 216.
71 Cf. Cardoso, Ciro F. *Agricultura, escravidão e capitalismo*, p. 133–154; Gorender, Jacob. Questionamentos sobre a teoria econômica do escravismo colonial. Op. cit., p. 17–26.

13

SOCIOECONOMIC DYNAMICS AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Incorporation of Areas of the Predominant Natural Economy in the Plantation System

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, sugarcane plantations were established in Pernambuco's and Paraiba's Zona da Mata, in Bahia's Recôncavo, and in the area surrounding the city of Rio de Janeiro. However, Portuguese colonists settled in areas beyond those three centers of the plantation economy. In the south, settlement began in Planalto de Piratininga in the mid-sixteenth century, as plantations declined in the coastal lowlands of São Vicente.[1] In the north, Maranhão and Pará started being colonized in the first half of the seventeenth century, after the French failed in their attempt to settle there.

In the previous chapter, we examined the dynamics of the mercantile and the natural economy at the plantation's limits, i.e., as a contradictory process derived from the production unit's internal structure. Those two areas of external settlement – São Paulo and Maranhão-Pará – allow us to focus on a similar dynamics at the regional or macroeconomic level.

For two centuries, both areas exhibited common characteristics that distinguished them from the flourishing plantation centers. Both in São Paulo, for geographic reasons that were only later overcome, and in Maranhão, due to a lack of fertile lands equivalent to northeastern *massapé*, sugar production was unfavorable. They were therefore unable to attract capital to finance the creation and development of plantations. The first settlers were poor colonists, usually from Portugal's lower classes.[2] Hence, the first characteristic of those areas: the almost exclusive employment of indigenous enslaved people. Purchasing African enslaved people was practically impossible with the resources available to the colonists in those areas. A second characteristic was the predominance of the natural economy. Unlike in plantation areas, the basic function of those other areas was the natural economy, with the mercantile economy serving only as a complement. In the last third of the eighteenth century, São Paulo and Maranhão-Pará incorporated the plantation system, therefore ending the predominance of the natural economy. Let us briefly examine how this transformation took place.

São Paulo – the autonomous nature of rural domains during the first centuries of colonization in Planalto de Piratininga was described by Alcântara Machado in his pioneering study. The work highlights the existence of a relatively prosperous natural economy, constituting one of the rare areas where multicropping was truly practiced in the colony. São Paulo colonists were poor

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or extremely poor in terms of their access to imported goods but had a vast local production to satisfy their basic needs.[3] The reason for this was the good quality of the land and the abundance of indigenous labor.

Only a small part of what was produced in those rural sixteenth-century domains entered the market. Apparently, the most commercial item was marmalade. Fernandes Brandão mentioned the export of marmalade to all of Brazil. It is possible that, in a few cases, marmalade production resembled the plantation form. Fernão Cardim, for example, alluded to "a man who picked twelve thousand quinces." One estate included 300 boxes of marmalade, valued at about 1 million *réis*.[4] Nonetheless, it was a secondary item, incapable of leading to the expansion of the plantation form.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that, in the two first centuries of colonization, São Paulo settlers were somehow akin to the peasant type or that they were "men who preferred free labor."[5] From the start, São Paulo colonists tended toward slavery and land grabbing. The natural economy was far from being founded on free labor, depending instead on indigenous enslaved people. "There is not one colonist, no matter how poor, who does not exploit an indigenous person," said Alcântara Machado.[6] In the early seventeenth century, wealthier colonists owned around fifty enslaved people. After the incursions to capture Indians in the Jesuit missions of Guairá (1628–1632), estates with more than 100 or 200 Indian enslaved people became common, sometimes under different denominations to circumvent the law. Antônio Pais de Barros's will listed close to 500 pieces.[7] The domains with 100, 200, or 500 enslaved people, as early as the first half of the seventeenth century, could only have been latifundia – as Alcântara Machado unequivocally characterizes them.

Precisely because they had nothing to do with the peasant type, São Paulo settlers became *bandeirantes*, i.e., professional Indian hunters. They needed the Indians to till their lands, for occasional gold mining, to be sold as merchandise (at a given moment, they were their main commercial item), and to make up the troops for the Indian hunting expeditions themselves.

After a brief period of prosperity resulting from gold mining in Minas Gerais, São Paulo entered a period of severe decline in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, as demonstrated by the censuses carried out by the government of Botelho Mourão, Morgado de Mateus, splendidly researched by Alice Canabrava. With a free population of 60,000 inhabitants, there were 12,373 families in the captaincy of São Paulo. Out of 9897 families examined, 54% "possess nothing." In some areas of the Paraíba Valley, the indigent population reached 70%. Cultivating the so-called wandering farms, these families devoted themselves to a highly unproductive natural economy. In some rare places like São Paulo (capital city), Santos, and Itu, there were indications of a high concentration of wealth, especially in the hands of merchants. The source of mercantile capital was the import and commerce of cattle, salt, manufactured goods, and enslaved people. As usual, enslaved people were the most important commodity. In the words of Morgado de Mateus: "everyone who has anything in this captaincy builds their wealth with a certain number of slaves."[8]

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a number of factors started to pull São Paulo away from its marginal economic position. With the decline of gold mining, Pombal's administration launched a number of initiatives to stimulate Brazil's economy through agricultural production. Inspired by these initiatives, which continued after Pombal's fall, the governors of São Paulo promoted sugarcane production, for which favorable conditions were created in the highlands. The captaincy was no longer as eccentric from an economic standpoint, for it was close to the city of Rio de Janeiro, which was the colony's capital at the time and an important business center. It was through the Rio de Janeiro port that most of São Paulo's sugar production was exported overseas. However, the access to the Santos port with donkey caravans once the

road from the city of São Paulo down the Serra do Mar was remodeled significantly boosted production. If we add to this the high sugar prices in the world market after 1790, we have the conditions required to begin incorporating the fertile highlands in the slave plantation system. In the mid-nineteenth century, São Paulo sugar reached 7% of the country's total exports. In response to the system's demands, African enslaved people were introduced at such a rate that their number increased faster than that of the free population. From 1813 to 1836, the free population increased 44.7%, while the slave population grew 80.1%, jumping from 48,245 to 86,933 in that period.[9] From 1798 to 1828, the number of owners with 40 enslaved people or more went from 47 to 227, while the total number of enslaved people in the hands of those owners jumped from 2835 to 13,501.[10] When sugar was replaced with coffee, slave plantations grew even further.

Maranhão-Pará – in spite of its disadvantages compared to the Northeast, the Crown tried to begin colonizing Maranhão by intervening directly in the creation of sugar plantations. Twenty years later, in 1641, when the Dutch occupied the captaincy, they found five established plantations, to which they added six or seven.[11] The war to reconquer the territory and the difficulties that ensued put an end to the sugar production, and for over a century, the Maranhão population lived off the natural economy.

Significantly less productive than that of the São Paulo highlands in the sixteenth century, the natural economy in Maranhão only permitted the population to survive in the direst poverty. They remained haggardly in their lands, often without decent clothes even to go to church. Sold in northeastern markets, indigenous enslaved people were the main export and provided a measure of colonists' wealth, as Father Vieira wrote in 1662 and governor José da Serra in 1735.[12]

Maranhão's economic life during the period that preceded the cotton boom was described by Gayoso as follows:

> Production in the captaincy was quite insignificant at first, and there was little or no commerce. Production was limited to small amounts of red rice, cassava flour, some coffee, almost all of which was locally consumed; there was also a small cotton production that Indians spun, which wound into balls or twisted into rolls of fabric was used as currency, going for ten thousand *réis*, so that even today [1814], ordinary people, in their small barter transactions, speak of rolls of fabric to refer multiples of ten thousand *réis*.[13]

Internal trade was limited to the sale of those rolls in the captaincy's urban centers as well as in Minas Gerais and Goiás, where they were traded for gold dust or gold bars. The only ship that arrived at the Island of São Luis once a year was enough to transport all tropical crops exported to Portugal.[14]

The about-turn was driven by the General Company of Great Pará and Maranhão, created by Pombal in 1755 with capital from the wealthiest Portuguese merchants. The Company, with monopolistic prerogatives, acted according to a plan executed with undeniable efficiency. First, it provided financing to the colonists on favorable terms, which allowed them to acquire African enslaved people sold by the Company itself. It not only lowered the original interest rate of 5%–3% but went as far as eliminating interests altogether. From 1757 to 1777, a total of 25,365 Africans were introduced into Maranhão and Pará. But the Company did not stop at that. It motivated colonists to produce cotton and rice, intentionally leading them away from sugarcane. Cotton was encouraged due to the increasing demand caused by the Industrial Revolution that started in England. Rice also found favorable markets in Europe, and in order to foster production, Pombal adopted measures in the best "interventionist" style. As a result, the governor of Maranhão, Joaquim de Mello e Povoas, forbade cultivating local red rice under severe penalties,

including flogging, depending on the person's status. Only white rice from Carolina, which was welcomed in the foreign market, was allowed, and seeds were distributed among the farmers. With government support, the first rice plantation started to operate in 1766, immediately followed by others.[15]

Slave plantations prospered in Maranhão much faster than in São Paulo. Thanks to cotton and rice, but especially to the former, the captaincy became one of the most important centers in the colony. In 1783, the exported goods left from the Port of São Luís onboard – two ships. In 1818, the number of ships had risen to 155, and the value of the exports from Maranhão reached £1000,000, which surpassed Pernambuco and was comparable to Bahia, which was the largest economic center of Brazil at the time. The census undertaken by the judge Veloso de Oliveira attributed 133,332 enslaved people to Maranhão, representing two-thirds of the total population, giving that province the largest proportion of enslaved people in the country.[16]

With conditions that were less favorable to cotton production, the colonists of Pará focused on exporting rice and cocoa (the latter almost entirely extracted from wild trees). Pombal's Company changed the residents' lifestyle, as the author of Roteiro do Maranhão recounts:

> The residents, indebted by the acquisition of slaves, which they obtained on credit, put aside their previous idleness, and there is hardly one today who, in those circumstances, has not become an unremitting farmer. This is without a doubt another effect of the Company's foresighted work.[17]

Those residents who did not benefit from the Company's credit – added the writer – have no fixed dwelling and live in other families' homes to which they become a burden, or in straw huts.[18]

The influx of African slavery was much smaller in Pará than in Maranhão, as was the prevalence of the plantation form. Nonetheless, the presence of African enslaved people was far from insignificant in Pará, as the excellent survey by Vicente Salles attests.

Slavery, Natural Economy, and Patriarchy

We saw earlier that modern slavery was different from ancient patriarchal slavery because of its predominantly mercantile nature. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that the patriarchal aspect lost its significance entirely in modern slavery. In fact, mercantilism and patriarchy were concomitant and conflicting tendencies in the slave social formation in the Americas. Both had their material base in the mode of production, in the twofold structure of plantations. And both found a contradictory expression in the dominant colonial class.

Much has been said regarding the tendency toward mercantilism. Here I will examine the opposite tendency.

The patriarchal tendency was triply conditioned: by the slaveholding relations themselves, by the natural economy, and by the uncultivated lands latifundia.

Regarding the first condition, it has already been noted that plantations are not identical to capitalist enterprises, among other substantial reasons because in plantations the productive enterprise was not separate from the domestic economy, but clearly linked to it. Slave plantations were therefore a mercantile-domestic social form. This was particularly so in the Brazilian case, since up to the nineteenth century, planters lived almost permanently in their plantations, traveling to cities and towns only on special occasions. As the nineteenth century advanced, especially after Independence, some capital cities became centers of political and social life that attracted the most powerful owners. This led them to reproduce the hacienda house style in

urban mansions as much as possible.[19] However, most planters continued to live in their rural homes, as Stanley Stein's excellent study demonstrates in regard to coffee plantation owners.

Obviously, in his plantation or hacienda, the planter was the authoritarian chief of a large social nucleus. The extended family acquired certain peculiarities of the ancient Greco-Roman family, including a large number of servants, as Ribeyrolles observed.[20] Personal relations were established between masters and domestic enslaved people, and sometimes affectional ties developed, which reinforced the patriarchal tendency.

Regarding the field enslaved people, the plantation and mill workers, personal relations were tenuous or practically nonexistent. In this case, a strict mercantile interest prevailed. Only with time and generations, as masters and enslaved people were born and raised in the same domain, could personal relations develop. But even in the case of field enslaved people, the master-slave relation tended to elicit some degree of patriarchy. While capitalist entrepreneurs have nothing to do with the private life of their workers, the slave's existence depended on the master and suffered interference in its most intimate aspects. There was therefore room for the development of a patriarchal type of interaction, of protector and protected. Especially since, as was mentioned, such an interaction served to stabilize the web of antagonistic relations in the slave social organization.

The patriarchal tendency also found a propitious terrain in the natural economy. A direct relation was established there between production and personal needs, even from the slave's standpoint. Farsighted masters stimulated this whenever possible, granting their enslaved people a plot of land to cultivate for their own benefit.

The traditional and regular mechanism to satisfy their needs with the resources derived from the natural economy was limited by the mercantile economy. If the latter did not exert too much pressure, as it did during times of high market prices, the natural economy could sometimes produce more than traditional consumption required. Since its products had no exchange value, the notion of the cost of production was less apparent to the planter. Excess did not necessarily imply waste, even if the products that were not consumed rotted. Nor did prodigality, giving away the excess products, distributing them merely for ostentation, imply waste either. Since what was not consumed was not sold, that excess permitted patriarchal behaviors. One of them was clientelism. From distributing presents as a reward for loyalty to maintaining gangs of gunmen (*capangas*); from cronyism to *capangagem*, a clientele faithful to the great rural landowner was created around the master's house.

Another peculiar behavior was hospitality. Travelers were rarely denied what was left over from the production that was not intended for sale. Welcoming and feeding travelers was mandatory etiquette in a system of reciprocities. Capistrano perceived this relationship between the "autonomous economy" of plantations and the custom of hospitality. Antonil described it as a "courteous action and a Christian virtue, and in Brazil it is widely exercised and most commendable." In 1862, one of the articles of the Statues of Fazenda do Alto Retiro signed by the owner, the future Baron of Almeida Lima, recommended: "No one should be denied a place to rest and the poor […] shall be given some food and refreshments."[21]

Finally, the large territorial domain itself constituted an element of patrimonialism, in Weber's terms. In Brazil, planters usually possessed large uncultivated extensions of land that offered no possibilities of immediate economic profits. They could therefore be utilized to house, in the periphery of the estate or in its less fertile areas, a few destitute free people, who already abounded in the early nineteenth century. It was thus that the category of *apegados* ("attached") arose, which I shall discuss in the next chapter. These miserable families that received a small plot of land had no significance for the plantation's economy, but they were part of the landowner's clientele. Latifundia created destitute people only to absorb them as subordinates of the landowner. Tenant farmers of "bound sugarcane" also depended on the landowner, albeit to a different extent.

Field and domestic enslaved people, free laborers, tenant farmers, *agregados*, gunmen, weak neighbors, and members of the landowner's family were all entwined in different ways in a web of hierarchical dependences, symmetric and asymmetric relations, reciprocities revolving around the central figure of the plantation owner. They constituted what Oliveira Vianna denominated the "plantation clan," and Caio Prado Júnior the "patriarchal clan."[22]

Since the patriarchal tendency arose from the very nature of the slaveholding social formation, it is understandable that it would be under permanent contradiction with the mercantile tendency, which was the dominant characteristic of colonial slavery. It would be erroneous to assume that there was a stable combination of both tendencies. On the contrary, there was a constant, latent or manifest antagonism, aggravated or attenuated by a number of factors. We have already examined, for example, the influence of momentary circumstances on the relationship between the mercantile and the natural economy. Another influence was undoubtedly the degree of landowner absenteeism. In places like the Antilles, where plantation owners were mostly absent, the patriarchal tendency was more or less quelled. The enslaved people were generally doubly exploited when left in charge of an administrator who represented an absent landowner.[23] In Brazil and the Southern United States, where plantation owners were rarely absent, patriarchy was a constant. Finally, recent planters were more eager to make a profit and less given to patriarchal behaviors than older planters with a tradition passed on from generation to generation. Koster observed such a difference between the diligence of foreign owners and the carefree routine of Brazilian owners who had inherited their domains.[24]

What makes no sense is to classify slavery in certain regions as mercantile or "capitalist" and in others as patriarchal. *Everywhere, colonial slavery had an identical mercantile character mixed with varying patriarchal traits*. In addition, while there is a clear difference between patriarchal and mercantile forms of management, the former must not necessarily be understood as benign or soft. Both forms constitute authoritarian types of management, and, although patriarchal management is indeed characterized by personal contact, it is also characterized by despotism, sometimes expressed in glaringly atrocious ways.

If we examine the phenomenon from a regional standpoint, we can observe that, in the Brazilian Northeast, the oldest slaveholding region in the country, patriarchal indolence abated whenever sugar prices stimulated plantation owners' greed. At various times throughout the centuries, the testimonies available leave no doubt regarding the cruelty of which Bahian and Pernambucan plantation owners were capable when they needed to transform every drop of sweat and blood of field enslaved people into sugar.

On the other hand, there is no shortage of descriptions of patriarchal behavior in regions where slave plantations were more recent. In 1748, the Bishop Caetano Brandão said that many plantation owners in Pará treated their enslaved people like dogs, going as far as to apply punishments that permanently injured the victims' hands and feet. Plantation owners there were so infamous that the greatest threat that could be made to an enslaved person was to sell them in Pará.[25] And yet, in the mid-nineteenth century, Russel Wallace found a characteristically patriarchal relation between the enslaved people and the owner of a large Pará plantation that produced spirits and rice. The owner was skillful at combining a patriarchal relation with an efficient management of his business. The basic physical needs of the enslaved people were satisfied, they received small favors, and could organize stable families (they were not forcefully separated from their consort or children). At the same time, the owner was strict regarding the work to be done, flogging those who failed to perform as expected. Russel Wallace's description provides a perfect example of a combination of mercantilism and patriarchy, which was possible to various degrees in colonial slavery.[26]

In his research of Pará plantations, Vicente Salles arrived at the general conclusion that they were "evidently governed by a patriarchal regime."[27] But the author does not offer an idealized and pleasant image of that regime. Nor is that image present in Stanly Stein's study, where he identified "patriarchal ties" in coffee plantations in the aristocratic municipality of Vassouras, in the province of Rio de Janeiro.[28]

Historiographical Approaches

Identifying the two functions of slave plantations – mercantile and domestic – is nothing new. What was missing is an understanding of plantations as the *union* of contradictory tendencies, and therefore of the real dynamics among interrelated tendencies. In general, historiographical approaches have been unilateral, focusing on one of the tendencies, which is then utilized as the exclusive lens through which to derive a sociohistorical explanation. With this in mind, I return now to the topic with which I began the introductory methodological reflections, after a long systematic examination.

Oliveira Vianna was perhaps the first author to offer a global theory of patriarchy in a slave society. In his work, the essential arguments of this line of interpretation are already present. Vianna had two positions regarding the inclusion of Brazilian patriarchy in a feudal typology. When examining the dynamics of the social structure, his historical knowledge – in spite of his obsessive racism – allowed him to perceive very significant differences. He realized that, in contrast with the peasant population's strong attachment to the land in European feudalism, in the context of a consolidated hierarchical system, the free population of colonial Brazil was not attached to the land nor was it economically important. He attributed this fact to the extraordinary abundance of uncultivated land and the structural characteristics of slavery. As a result, he concluded that the feudal hierarchy, transplanted to Brazil by colonization, crumbled and disintegrated here, giving way to an entirely new structure in which, in the context of its instability, only the patriarchal rural dominion was solid and autonomous. Later, when examining certain cultural expressions of large landowners through the lens of the Weberian category of status, he concluded the opposite, i.e., the *perfect* transplantation of feudalism to Brazil and its continuance during the centuries of slave labor.[29]

Oliveira Vianna's Aryanist racism made his work obsolete for new generations, but his patriarchal interpretation found in Gilberto Freyre, a more recent representative, who applied instruments of modern cultural anthropology to an enormous diversity of facts. However, without referring here to his impressionistic approach of the facts themselves, the author of *The Masters and the Slaves* found it consistently difficult to reach coherent conclusions. Having discovered "a sense of sociological unicity in terms of form and process" presumably present in the patriarchal society, he attributed an abundance of epithets to the "complex": "*patriarchal*, *monocultural, latifundista, slaveholding,* and sociologically *feudal*, although already mixed up, semi-feudal, semi-capitalist in its economy." Such a varied qualification invalidates itself and, in actual fact, only the first term remains, which the author vindicates with this statement:

> Today it seems evident—after extensive studies of the Brazilian formation—that Brazil had in its complex or patriarchal system, or tutelary, family, economic, and social organization system, in the patriarchal way of living […] its main sociological element of unity […] We therefore believe that it is that complex which, among all interpretation keys with which a sociologist can approach the Brazilian past or the Brazilian character, is able to open the most doors and articulate the most regional pasts into a comprehensively national past: characteristically Luso-Afro-Amerindian in its main—but not exclusive—traits of cultural composition and social expression.[30]

The distortion implicit in that conception was not the result of basing the argument on a fictitious element, since patriarchy was a real historical element. It was the result of exaggerating the importance of that element and turning it into the key to interpret the global reality. This exaggeration acquires a graphic, spatial aspect, so to speak, when we realize that Gilberto Freyre's work is circumscribed to the space of the master's house and uses the slave quarters merely as a vague background.

A similar conception was developed by Donald Pierson, who saw Brazilian slavery as "a soft form of servitude." An emphasis on the personal relations between master and slave, interpreted in a very slanted manner, led him to that conclusion:

> An important point is that, under conditions of intimate personal contact, the institution of slavery, with its relatively rare cases of brutal treatment, gradually lost its characteristics as an *economic* institution and assumed those of a *patriarchal and familiar* institution.[31]

Kátia de Queirós Mattoso's recent work also belongs to this line of interpretation of patriarchal slavery. Domestic and field enslaved people are sheltered and conditioned in their personality by the same basic institution of the system – the master's family. For that reason, the author places greater emphasis on the mechanisms whereby enslaved people adapted and adjusted than on the tendencies for contradiction and conflict. It also explains the insistence with which she emphasizes Brazilian enslaved people's creativity to adapt, while their expressions of antagonism to the system that oppressed and explored them are relegated to a secondary position.[32]

Nestor Duarte's essay stands out for its theoretical coherence – a rarity in Brazil – as well as its admirable elegance of expression. The notion of feudalism in Brazil was articulated around a logically developed principle: the weakness of the state's central power compared to the strength of the private, family, patriarchal order, which took on the functions of public authority. However, the theoretical coherence is established exclusively on the level of social *forms*, without properly analyzing the content of those forms. It is from the standpoint of the form that the economic organization has an "undisputable feudal character."[33] Sociological formalism does prevent the author, however, from making some astute observations that are genuinely relevant to the elaboration of a theory of the superstructure of the colonial slave society. Had he sufficiently analyzed the economic content, Nestor Duarte would have noted that the localist force of the private patriarchal order did not derive from a presumably feudal character, even if atypical, but from slavery itself.

As we can see, there is a line that connects the thesis of patriarchy to the thesis of feudalism in Brazil, and A. P. Guimarães is located along that line. Unlike Nestor Duarte, the author of *Quatro séculos de latifúndio* situates his analysis on the level of the relations of production. With large landed estates as a point of departure and after asserting the "feudal essence of the Brazilian latifundium system," A. P. Guimarães adopts procedures of mechanic juxtaposition or "collage," to use an everyday term: he relates slavery's economic relations to a feudal essence. What is the result of such a "collage"? Puzzled and hesitant, the historian says, "the plantation was a *hybrid* organization especially because it represented the conjunction of economic systems that were historically apart"; "this *ensemble* full of antagonisms composed an *amalgam* […]"; "a *strange* production unit, where free men regressed to the condition of serfs, and serfs to the condition of slaves […]."[34] There is nothing there that resembles the notion of a mode of production as an organic totality, as a structure that is internally articulated by a unifying objective element.

Alberto Passos Guimarães found himself in the same dead end that Leôncio Basbaum did before him. The latter also took large landed estates as the basic explanatory principle: "large properties generated slave labor and afterwards a mixture of slave labor and feudal servitude

[…].” Portuguese colonists presumably organized in the New World “a new type of feudalism based on the exploitation of slave labor […].”[35] As we can see, this thesis is identical to that of A. P. Guimarães. But Leôncio Basbaum confused even further the elements to be mechanically added. Since plantations represented a capital investment and produced commodities, they should somehow be capitalist. In conclusion: three or four types of relations of production were inorganically joined, their arithmetic addition resulting in a mode of production that one wonders how it could operate with such a disparity of driving forces.

Let us now discuss the opposite viewpoint. Without denying the presence of patriarchy in colonial life, Caio Prado Júnior did not associate it with presumed feudalism, whose existence in Brazil he was one of the first to dispute. What is peculiar about his approach is that patriarchy, even though he does state that it arose from the economic regime, is only understood as a superstructural phenomenon or a cultural epiphenomenon. Regarding the structure itself, what prevails is the *entrepreneurial* nature of the economy:

> As a whole and viewed from an international level, the colonization of the tropics appears as a vast commercial enterprise, more complex than ancient trading posts but with the same character, intended to exploit the natural resources of a virgin territory on behalf of European commerce. That is the true *sense* of tropical colonization, of which Brazil is one example; and it explains the fundamental economic and social elements of the historic formation and evolution of the tropics in the Americas.[36]

This understanding of colonization as a commercial enterprise led the historian to a peculiar form of economism that denies that a social formation in the full sense of the concept developed from slavery, since it asserts the “primary” character of the resulting social relations and the “almost complete absence of a superstructure.”[37]

It seems to me that it was after *The Colonial Background of Modern Brazil* that the notion of plantations as an enterprise arises without relevant restricting qualifications, as well as the notion of planters not as patriarchs, but as entrepreneurs. Through an implicit process of association or explicitly stated, *enterprise* and *entrepreneur* are understood as they are in a capitalist regime. One notable example can be found in Alice Canabrava:

> Commercial capital based on private enterprise or managed by the state, which characterized Portuguese activities in Asian and African trading posts, was replaced by an agrarian capitalism where, like in the African Atlantic islands colonized by the Portuguese, investments were made in plantations, equipment, and slaves […] European colonists who settled in Brazil and had the resources to acquire the necessary means to exploit the land […] can be likened to entrepreneurs, to businessmen.[38]

Transforming the patriarch into a businessman does not liberate us from methodological unilateralism. The same happens with the variant paradoxically inaugurated by Gilberto Freyre. Responding to criticism, the author of *The Masters and the Slaves*, in one of the prefaces of that work, asserted that his thesis on the patriarchal family was not only applicable to the Northeast, but to all of Brazil. The coffee economy of the Southeast, as patriarchal as the sugar economy, was not an exception. It appears that the sociologist changed his mind somewhere along the way or maintained contradictory viewpoints from a formal standpoint, since in other works, he excluded slavery in Minas Gerais, Maranhão, and São Paulo from the realm of patriarchy. Instead of the “tutelary family” or the “patriarchal cooperative,” mercantile greed prevailed in those areas, reducing enslaved people to the impersonal condition of animals or simple machines that rapidly deteriorated.[39]

Gilberto Freyre actually did little more than develop an idea that had been proposed much earlier by Joaquim Nabuco, according to whom the old form of slavery in the Northeast turned masters and enslaved people into a "patriarchal tribe," which "would be impossible in the new and wealthy plantations in the South, where enslaved people, without a personal relationship with the master, were only an instrument for the harvest."[40]

This distinction between two *types* of slavery in Brazil had a long history, which I will discuss elsewhere and was adopted in essence by Eugène Genovese, under the influence of the bibliography he consulted without subjecting it to an adequate critique. On the theoretical level, Genovese demonstrates a clear awareness of the fact that the contradiction between the mercantile and patriarchal tendencies in modern slave societies is universal. However, instead of assuming that contradiction as a permanent fact, he preferred to follow the lead of poorly interpreted extrinsic superstructural elements. Hence his doubtful and incoherent statements like his assertion that slavery never fully developed into a different mode of production in the modern world but only came near it, and that for all major effects the northeastern mode of production can be considered slaveholding together with seigniorial traits – a compromise between slavery and manorialism (note that, for Genovese, manorialism is equivalent to feudalism). Regarding coffee plantations in the nineteenth century, the historian has no doubt that the analogous patriarchal slavery of the Northeast did not develop there. Plantation owners in the Paraíba Valley had no time to shed their commercial mentality, and those of Western São Paulo were already agrarian capitalists, a new type of class in Brazil, without strong ties to slavery.[41] In Genovese's own words: "Like the Northeast, the Brazilian South employed slave labor, but unlike the Northeast, it did not create a slaveholding or manorial mode of production."[42]

In the last analysis, the decisive factor was ideology, transformed into a driving force of the economy.

It is not surprising that, after retracting from his Marxist positions in *The Political Economy of Slavery*, Genovese should take the decisive step toward historical idealism with the methodological turnaround of *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. In that work, as Stanley Elkins observed, what remained of Marxism was reduced to an abuse of Gramsci's theory of the hegemony of the ideology of the dominant class accepted by the consensus of the dominated class. According to Genovese, in US slavery, paternalism (as Americans prefer to call patriarchy) was the main trait, which the enslaved people assimilated and took advantage of to improve their material conditions and create spaces for cultural creativity. There was therefore a degree of consensus between masters and enslaved people that allowed the latter to create their own world.

Thus, the road traveled by Genovese led him from Marx to Gilberto Freyre. Because quite evidently *The Masters and the Slaves* was the source that inspired *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, especially regarding the central role of the patriarchal family. Yet, it was not merely a subservient imitation, since unlike Freyre's, Genovese's work is founded on extensive research of slave labor, precisely because his intention was to demonstrate that, in a paternalist regime, enslaved people were good workers in their own way, i.e., in a pre-industrial way. Enslaved people worked diligently, intensely, and enthusiastically, but their traditional African ethics led them to avoid the *mechanic regularity* imposed by the industrial rhythm of plantations.

It would be a mistake to invalidate Genovese's monumental work with the argument that paternalism did not exist. Stampp – to whom Genovese owes more than he admits – observed that the main character of US plantations was mercantile, but that did not prevent him from acknowledging the role of paternalist interactions between masters and slaves – interactions that attenuated superficial contrasts and stabilized the relationship between masters and enslaved people through a web of mutual concessions. Before Genovese, Stampp and Blassingame observed the formation of a *limit of tolerance* of labor demands that enslaved people obstinately refused to

overstep and that judicious masters opted to respect. But in addition to the consensual control exerted through paternalist means, there was the control exerted on enslaved people through coercion, through ruthless and incessant violence, from the state apparatus to the foreman's whip. Stampp and Blassingame's emphasis is on enslaved people's *resistance* to forced labor as a way to preserve their integrity as human beings and to create their own culture.[43]

Mercantilism and patriarchy were coexisting traits in all slaveholding regions in the Americas. The relationship between the two traits varied depending on factors such as the rhythm of changes in market conditions, the availability of land, the evolution of production techniques, the degree to which the master was present or absent, the demographic relationship between enslaved people and free laborers, changes in the country's political situation and international influences, etc. What was permanent and generalized was the coexistence of and contradiction between the mercantile and the patriarchal tendencies, the former being the dominant one, and both of them emanating from the colonial slave mode of production, wherever it existed.

Notes

1 On the colonization of Planalto de Piratininga, see Fernandes, Florestan. Aspectos do povoamento de São Paulo no século XVI. *Mudanças sociais no Brasil*, p. 202 et seqs.
2 On the social origin of the first settlers in São Paulo, see Machado, Alcântara. Op. cit., p. 33–34; in Maranhão, see Abreu, Capistrano de. Op. cit., p. 203–204.
3 Cf. Machado, Alcântara. Op. cit., p. 57–63.
4 Ibidem, p. 61–62; Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. Op. cit., p. 60; Cardim, Fernão. Op. cit., p. 356.
5 Cf. Guimarães, A. P. Op. cit., p. 70.
6 Machado, Alcântara. Op. cit., p. 36 and 179.
7 Ibidem, p. 179–180.
8 Cf. Canabrava, Alice P. Uma economia de decadência: os níveis de riqueza na Capitania de São Paulo, 1765/67. *Revista Brasileira de Economia*, v. 26, n. 4, p. 95 et seqs.
9 Cf. Pétrone, Schorer. Op. cit., chap. I, p. 110, 162, 186 et seqs.
10 Cf. Marcílio, Maria Luiza. Tendências e estruturas dos domicílios na Capitania de São Paulo (1765-1828), segundo as listas nominativas de habitantes. *Estudos Econômicos*, v. 2, n. 6, p. 136–137.
11 Cf. Abreu, Capistrano de. Op. cit., p. 194; Gayoso. Op. cit., p. 168.
12 Cf. Varnhagen. Op. cit., t. III, p. 207–208; Azevedo, J. Lúcio de. Op. cit., p. 103; Simonsen. Op. cit., t. II, p. 112–114.
13 Gayoso. Op. cit., p. 168–169.
14 Ibidem, p. 169.
15 Ibidem, p. 182 e 195; Varnhagen. Op. cit., t. IV, p. 309; Boxer. *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, p. 192–193; Simonsen. Op. cit., t. II, p. 207.
16 Cf. Gayoso. Op. cit., Mapa 1, p. 219; Simonsen. Op. cit., t. II, p. 168; Taunay. *Subsídios para a história do tráfico africano*, p. 675.
17 Autor do Roteiro do Maranhão. Op. cit., p. 155.
18 Ibidem.
19 Cf. Freyre, Gilberto. *Sobrados e mocambos*, t. I, p. 188–190, 219 et passim.
20 Ribeyrolles, Charles. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 36.
21 Cf. Abreu, Capistrano de. Introdução. In: Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. Op. cit., p. 15; Antonil. Op. cit., p. 167; Castro, Veiga de. Op. cit., p. 41
22 Cf. Vianna F. J. Oliveira. *Populações meridionais do Brasil*, p. 168–169; Prado Júnior, Caio. *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo*, p. 284–288.
23 Cf. Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 2, chap. XXI, especially p. 355–357.
24 Cf. Koster. Op. cit., p. 479.
25 Cf. Southey. Op. cit., v. 6, p. 260–261.
26 Cf. Wallace, Russel. Op. cit., p. 80–84.
27 Salles, Vicente. Op. cit., p. 119–123.
28 Cf. Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 177 et seqs.
29 Cf. Vianna, Oliveira. Op. cit., chap. VII; Idem, *Introdução à História social da economia pré-capitalista no Brasil*, p. 187–188.
30 Freyre, Gilberto. Op. cit., t. I, p. XXXVIII-XXXIX, LVI-LVII.

31 Pierson, Donald. *Brancos e pretos na Bahia*, p. 125 and 151.
32 Mattoso, Kátia de Queirós. *Ser escravo no Brasil*.
33 Duarte, Nestor. Op. cit., p. 65.
34 Guimarães, A. P. Op. cit., p. 29–31, 59–61. (Italics are mine.)
35 Cf. Bashaum, Leôncio. *História sincera da República*, p. 65, 109, 132–133.
36 Prado Júnior, Caio. Op. cit., p. 25 and 285.
37 Ibidem, p. 341.
38 Canabrava. A grande propriedade rural. Op. cit., p. 199.
39 Cf. Freyre, Gilberto. *Casa-grande & senzala*, t. I, p. 83; Idem, *Sobrados e mocambos*, t. I, p. 178, 282 and 284, t. II, p. 523–526. See also *Nordeste*, p. 104.
40 Nabuco, Joaquim. *Minha formação*, p. 188–189.
41 Cf. Genovese. *The World the Slaveholders Made*, p. 76, 81–85 and 90.
42 Ibidem, p. 94–95.
43 Cf. Genovese. *Roll, Jordan, Roll*; Elkins, Stanley M. *Slavery – A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, p. 288–293; Stampp. Op. cit., p. 120–123, 344–352; Blassingame. *The Slave Community*, p. 180–182, 191–193.

14

CATEGORIES EXTRANEOUS TO THE CONCEPT OF COLONIAL SLAVERY

Up to now, I have studied the colonial slave mode of production in its conceptual purity, removed from categories that are extraneous to the concept itself. This does not in any way imply that this mode of production is merely an abstraction, that it represents nothing more than an intellectual construction, but rather that it must be separated from everything that does not correspond to the concept if one is to understand its structure and specific laws. This process of separation, of distinction, is only possible through a process of abstraction. While we practice it, our attention is entirely focused on masters and enslaved people.

In empirical reality, other categories emerge that do not correspond to the conceptual purity of the mode of production. In this chapter, I shall examine those extraneous categories insofar as they express relations of production, therefore leaving aside those categories whose significance can only be explained at the level of the superstructure (state bureaucracy in particular).

Free Wage Laborers in the Plantation

As many descriptive texts demonstrate, the plantation's workforce included free laborers whose relationship with the planter was founded on *wages*. It was a very old form of economic relationship, present as early as in ancient patriarchal slavery. We know that the wage relationship is a typical category of the capitalist mode of production, but, like other categories constitutive of the capitalist economy, such as money and capital, wage relationships long precede capitalism's historical existence.

Colonial slavery was determined by slave labor, but to a certain extent, it also required wage labor of a pre-capitalist type, inscribed into the colonial slave mode of production as a subsidiary relation of production. The same, unique process of production can be performed through more than one relation of production. A subsidiary relation of production is that which does not constitute the mode of production but complements another relation of production that is essential to the mode of production that encompasses it. Thus, the wage relation, which is present in colonial slavery, did not define it categorically nor did it constitute a different mode of production. Let us examine the phenomenon's objective cause.

Due to the technical nature of the productive process, plantations required the intervention of a small number of qualified workers. These could not be Indians or Africans, which were devoted to manual labor requiring only very basic training. Qualified workers – required to manufacture sugar and other specialized tasks – had to be free men brought from Europe and paid with wages.

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When Pero de Góis was establishing two plantations in Rio de Janeiro in 1545, he informed that he already possessed enslaved people and a sugar master, hired for a period of three years at an annual wage of 60$000. From this testimony, we can conclude that it was not easy to find sugar masters in the colony at the time. But Pero de Góis also reported that he needed two mill operators "who are good workers"! And he finally asked his partner for sixty "Negroes from Guinea" which "[…] should be accompanied by twenty other salaried men […]."[1]

Not much later, in a letter to the king dated 1549, the Pernambucan *donatário* Duarte Coelho reported on the types of residents in the captaincy. Among them were mill masters, sugar masters, carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, and sugar mold and other officers. They came from Portugal, Galicia, and the Canary Islands, with travel expenses paid by the *donatário* or the plantation owners.[2]

In the second decade of the seventeenth century, among the "conditions of people" native of Brazil, Fernandes Brandão mentioned mechanic officers, which abounded in the country.[3] Regarding Dutch Brazil, Van der Dussen reported:

> Workers such as blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, furnace operators, tailors, shoemakers, furniture makers, saddle makers, and other professionals become wealthy when they arrive with their instruments, since many of those specialists are paid good wages […] those who can handle the mill's equipment earn the best wages.[4]

In the accounts of Engenho do Sergipe do Conde, Father Estevam Pereira included sixteen free professional workers under the item *Ordenados*, which cost a total of 906$000 or 24% of one year's current operational expenditures. Among the workers listed, ten belonged directly to the productive workforce: the sugar master, the drainer, the night sugar master, two furnace operators, the mill's packer, the *vadeiro*, two boatmen, and one carpenter.[5]

As the slave regime developed, it tended to reduce the number of wage laborers in the plantation as much as possible, as enslaved people were trained to perform qualified labor. Since wage relations were accessory and not intrinsic to the mode of production, they gave way to slave relations whenever there was an enslaved person who could substitute the wage laborer. During Antonil's time, only four free wage laborers are reported among the workforce directly involved in the production process of a large plantation: sugar master, night sugar master, drainer, and packer. For special, nonroutine tasks such as building the mill or boats, external salaried carpenters and caulkers were hired.[6]

Vilhena wrote that the sugar master profession, which was the most qualified and best paid in the plantation, was usually performed by a freed former enslaved person, while the night sugar master was an enslaved person. However, in spite of Vilhena's information, sugar masters were enslaved people in many plantations, as can be inferred from Anonymous Author and, according to Manuel Diégues Júnior, from newspaper ads for runaway enslaved people in the nineteenth century. In the Salgado plantation, Tollenare only reported four wage laborers, among them the sugar master and the drainer.[7]

According to Couty – let us remember – overseeing enslaved people required at least four times as many people as overseeing free laborers. Correa Júnior gives us an approximate idea with his report on Fazenda Santa Fé, where he found slightly over thirty Portuguese workers for three hundred enslaved people.[8] It is quite likely that most of those workers were enslaved person overseers.

The task of overseeing itself was gradually transferred to the enslaved people, at least for the most part. According to Vilhena, in Bahian plantations, the overseers of the sugarcane harvest and milling were enslaved people. In Pernambuco, Koster observed that overseers were sometimes White men, but more often free mulattoes. But in some plantations, there were enslaved person

overseers born in Brazil and sometimes even Africans. Van Delden Laerne and Couty observed in coffee plantations that groups of twenty to twenty-five or twenty-five to thirty enslaved people were supervised by a slave overseer, with another overseer to look over the harvested coffee and another to supervise the processing facility, who were usually also enslaved people.[9]

Finally, something should be said of the head overseer, as the general administrator was called. In smaller plantations, those tasks could be performed by the owner, but not so in large establishments. In those, the owner merely combined idleness with a routine presence in the work areas, directly performing tasks such as purchasing enslaved people, acquiring more land and making decisions regarding its use, interacting with commercial agents and authorities, etc. The concrete, everyday administrative tasks were performed by the head overseer, who had a large number of responsibilities, described by Fernandes Vieira and Antonil as well as the Baron of Pati do Alferes.[10]

From their practical experience, Brazilian planters developed the "master's science" of which Aristotle spoke:

> The science of the master teaches the use of slaves, for the master as such is concerned not with the acquisition, but with the use of them. Yet this science is not anything great or wonderful; for the master need only know how to order that which the slave must know how to execute. Hence those who are in a position which places them above toil leave the honors to an administrator, while they occupy themselves with politics or philosophy.[11]

It appears that there were no philosophical inclinations among Brazilian slaveholders. They preferred politics, whether at the petty municipal level or at the level of large imperial politics. Because of that, they delegated the "honors" and the heavy burden of administration to the head overseer. Usually a free wage worker, the head overseer could sometimes be an enslaved person, which undoubtedly indicated a greater level of development of the social system. Koster found one of them, who, as we mentioned before, struggled in vain to purchase his manumission. Saint-Hilaire mentioned others in Paraná, and Van Delden Laerne saw a slave head overseer who had administered the Recato coffee plantation for many years.[12]

Free *Agregados*

As part of the Brazilian slave formation, there was as social category of free men that the sources sometimes referred to as *agregados* (attached) and sometimes as *moradores* (residents). In the Northeast, they were almost always called *moradores*, while in the South, the term *agregados* was more common, as attested by official censuses.

Those censuses classified certain types of free people as *agregados*, whose common trait was that their place of residence was in someone else's land, without an employee/employer relationship with the landowner. From a study of an eighteenth-century São Paulo census, Maria Luiza Marcílio drew a general outline of *agregados* and included in that category various forms of dependence to the landowner, including slave owners, freed former enslaved people still bound to their old master, and relatives without their own means of subsistence.[13]

From Ianni's study of slavery in Paraná, we can conclude that poorer families had more *agregados*. Without the means to purchase enslaved people, those families employed *agregados* instead. Hence, the sociologist's reflection:

> The peculiar legal condition of *agregados* places them in the position of labor force providers in exchange for payment in kind for domestic consumption. However, that does not keep them from being a substitute or the equivalent of a slave, economically speaking.[14]

Here, I will consider *agregados* or *moradores* in their most characteristic and widespread condition, as can be inferred from plentiful testimonial and documentary sources. That condition was described by Saint-Hilaire as follows: "Those individuals who own nothing and establish their residence on someone else's land are called *agregados*."[15]

Due to the legal status of *sesmarias*, social layers of free men who tilled someone else's land emerged early on. By the late-sixteenth century, Gabriel Soares de Sousa often mentioned *moradores*, i.e., tenant farmers who tilled vegetable plots and sugarcane fields.[16] Reading the chronicler, we can conclude that during his time the notion of *morador* included two different categories: the *agregados* themselves and tenant farmers who grew sugarcane. In the texts in the following centuries, this distinction between different socioeconomic categories was reflected in the common language: *morador* designated the *agregado*, while slave-owning sugarcane tenant farmers were called *lavrador*.

According to Oliveira Vianna, *agregados* appeared as early as the beginning of colonization in São Paulo. He correctly attributed the category's formation to two interrelated causes: the *sesmaria* and slavery. Because of that, he wrote, "If one of those conditions – slavery or latifundia – had been absent, those *agregados* would have emerged with different social traits."[17]

I will now examine what I believe were the main characteristic traits of the category of *agregados*, adopting this denomination as one endowed with a generic scientific status, and that of *moradores* as its synonym in common language.

a. A plot of land was granted to the *agregado* in exchange for noneconomic services, sometimes together with a very small rent for the land.

Agregados were very poor people who, together with their family, received a minute plot of land gratuitously or, more commonly, for a miniscule rental payment to the owner. This characteristic of land granted gratuitously or for an economically insignificant price was present from the cattle ranches in the Northeastern *sertão* to the Zona da Mata in Pernambuco, to Bahia, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo.[18] As a reserve army of labor, *agregados* were only occasionally employed in tasks that were not part of the production routine in cattle ranches or coffee plantations, in which case they were paid a wage.[19] In short, *agregados* were not a constitutive element of the slave economy. Their economic significance was marginal or entirely nonexistent for large rural property owners. I obviously do not include here the final phase of slavery, when the labor force of *agregados* became increasingly required in plantations and ranches.

In exchange for a plot of land and the protection provided by the landowner, *agregados* provided *noneconomic* services. They constituted a body of political clients – "harnessed voters" – and served as the property's guardians. This was in fact their main service: to guard and defend the property of the master who sheltered them.[20] It is therefore understandable that *agregados* became instruments of the violence exerted by rural landowners and the latter in turn protected them, guaranteeing impunity for their actions even when conflicts resulted in murder. Maria Sylvia studied this peculiar situation of *agregados* in the São Paulo region and demonstrated that the inclusion of the exercise of violence in the system of routine mutual favors paved the way for the formation of professional gunmen.[21]

b. As small farmers without enslaved people, located at the periphery of the estates, *agregados* lived off the extremely poor natural economy, which rarely provided marketable surplus. Tollenare observed:

> If the cassava harvest is good, they can sell some of it and buy clothes; this item constitutes their entire expense, for their furniture consists only of some straw mats and clay pots; not even a manioc scraper can be found in all homes.[22]

"They vegetate like trees, like wild weeds," said Saint-Hilaire of São Paulo *agregados*.[23]

c. Instability was another characteristic of *agregados* that was repeatedly observed. Luccock understood it as the expression of a primitive nature, but Saint-Hilaire identified its true cause, implicit in the type of relationship established between *agregados* and landowners:

> The only alternative for the poor is to ask large property owners to allow them to till a small plot of land. This is rarely denied them, but since it can be taken from them at any time at the landowner's whim or interest, those who till other people's lands and are called *agregados* only plant grains they can harvest in a few months, such as corn and beans, but do not grow anything that only yields after a long time, such as coffee.[24]

No formal, written, and legalized contract was established between owners and *agregados*, only a verbal agreement that the owner could break at any time, evicting the miserable dwellers. There were undoubtedly cases when long-lasting ties were created, but the *agregados*' situation was always uncertain. As soon as the owner needed the land to increase the plantation's sugar or coffee production, he did not hesitate to violate his moral commitments and evicted the *agregado* and his family. Mercantile interest was the priority, as Maria Sylvia underscored.[25]

The most common expression of the contradiction between landowners and *agregados* was individual, sometimes leading to aggressions and murder, with the landowner sometimes playing the role of the victim. In the so-called Praieira Revolt, *agregados* acted collectively, with a certain awareness of their social category. Stanley Stein and Emília Viotti da Costa recorded an episode of a collective uprising by *agregados* in the municipality of Paraíba do Sul, motivated by their interpretation of the land law, which they believed granted them legitimate ownership of lands cultivated during ten years with the owner's consent. Their interpretation was wrong, and police repression reasserted the planters' threatened rights.[26] The episode demonstrates their desire to remain on the land, a desire that was stronger than their nomadic proclivity, created and reinforced by social conditions.

As the second half of the nineteenth century approached, there were so many *agregados* in Pernambuco that, according to Antônio Pedro de Figueiredo, some properties had 100, 200, and sometimes 400 free mulatto or Black families.[27] In São Paulo, the number of *agregados* also tended to grow as sugarcane and coffee plantations appropriated land in the backcountry. **Table 14.1** illustrates this[28]:

The newspaper literature at the time of the Praieira Revolt pointed to *feudalism* as the cause of the dependence and misery of *moradores*.[29] What might be tolerated in the rhetoric of political writing is unacceptable in works of historical-sociological analysis.

No analogy can be drawn between *agregados* or *moradores* in slaveholding Brazil and medieval peasants. Unlike the latter, *agregados* are characterized by not being economically essential to the landowner. That in itself is a fundamental difference. Second, while medieval peasants were safe from losing their right to the land, either as serfs or through the institution of emphyteusis, *agregados* had no guarantee to the land they tilled. The coercion they experienced did not derive from their mandatory attachment to the land but, on the contrary, from the owner's arbitrary power to evict them. Koster shrewdly observed:

> Those people's [*moradores*'] position in the lands they occupy is uncertain, and that uncertainty is one of the main elements of the landowner's power over his *moradores*.[30]

TABLE 14.1 *Agregados* in the structure of the free population in the São Paulo Captaincy*

Years	*Total free population*	*Agregados***	*B/A*
	(A)	*(B)*	*(%)*
1765	45,440	2720	5.9
1818	132,911	16,841	12.6
1828	148,820	18,156	12.2

* Does not include the municipality of the capital city and includes the geographic area of the present-day state of Paraná, which at the time belonged to the captaincy and later became the Province of São Paulo.

** Includes *agregados* with family ties to the landowners: in 1765 – 816; 1818 – 2,722; and 1828 – 2630.

Oliveira Vianna's understanding of *agregados* as *clients*[31] is historically justified, although with certain reserves.

Clients were a social category of Greco-Roman slavery, apparently originating in the patriarchal family and disappearing during a certain phase of maturity of the slave social formation.[32] At first incorporated as labor force in the family economy and later transformed into small tenant farmers, their economic function must have been secondary in the slave society, although the opposite might have been the case in the earlier phase of the patriarchal family. According to Max Weber, the clients of Classical Antiquity were personal and political, but not economic, resources of the lord's power.[33] The *patron-client* relation, as Weber describes it, has certain similarities with the relation between slaveholding masters in Brazil and their *agregados*.

There is also a certain similarity between Brazilian *agregados* and medieval *retainers*. As clients of the feudal lord, retainers were part of the manor, took part in the consumption of its profits, and were sometimes allowed to till small plots of land, in exchange for unconditional loyalty and personal services.

The analogies are relevant as long as we take into account important historical differences. Yet, it is unjustified to identify Brazilian *agregados* with social categories from ancient slavery or feudalism. In order to avoid such identifications, which are unnecessary from a theoretical standpoint, I believe it is preferable to confer an unequivocal scientific status to the term *agregado*, as an integral social category of the slave social formation in *Brazil*. In addition to having been created by life itself, the term is particularly expressive of the sociological content it denotes.

Small, Independent, Nonslaveholding Farmers

In Brazil, the type of colonization and the vast availability of uncultivated lands allowed for the development of a marginal mode of production, predominantly for self-subsistence: small, nonslaveholding farmers. *Agregados* were one of the components of this marginal mode of production, the component that was included within the slaveholding plantation itself. The other component, which was external to the plantation, included *sitiantes* (small landowners) and *posseiros* (those who occupied land but did not own it).

Unlike plantation owners – wealthy men who cultivated the land with their enslaved people's labor –, Saint-Hilaire saw small farmers as *real peasants*: "they own no enslaved people and they till the land by themselves, usually living under miserable conditions."[34] He even compared them to French peasants, though at a much lower level of activity and living conditions.

While *agregados* were small farmers who depended on the plantation, *posseiros* and *sitiantes* were located outside the limits of the plantation, and only because of that can we say that they were independent. *From a social standpoint, they had the same origin as* agregados *and made up a similar category.*

These small independent farmers, whose number increased in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, occupied miniscule plots of land in areas that were either unfit for the plantation or that preceded its expansion, only to be later driven out by it. They practiced a natural economy at the level of satisfaction of the most basic needs, commercializing their surplus in quantities that depended on their proximity to urban centers or well-connected transport routes. In the vicinity of large cities like Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, these small farmers enjoyed a greater demand and incentives to more regularly produce greater amounts of marketable surplus goods. In some cases, their relative prosperity permitted a certain accumulation that allowed them to acquire enslaved people. However, voyagers traveling in the interior of Brazil described small farmers as appallingly miserable at the limits of hunger. For example, Spix and Martius described them as follows in Bahia's hinterland:

> A small, filthy shack surrounded by an ill-tended banana field, a bean and cassava garden, some cattle and scrawny horses that must find their own sustenance – that is the greatest aspiration of those simple people.[35]

Saint-Hilaire found them identically miserable in the north of Rio de Janeiro, the Paraíba Valley, and São Paulo's interior toward Campos Gerais in Paraná. Everywhere the same portrait: a rudimentary production for self-consumption, filthy huts almost devoid of furniture and domestic tools, and tattered and physically degraded human beings, suffering hunger in its most literal sense during drought years.[36]

A common characteristic of this small natural economy was nomadism. The cycle began by burning the virgin vegetation – the slash-and-burn method that Indians called *coivara* – and in a few years, the soil's superficial fertility was exhausted by farming. Together with his family, the *posseiro* moved to a different place and a new cycle began. As Alice Canabrava noted, this phenomenon of *itinerant farmlands*, whose production was limited to the family's sustenance, differed from subsistence farming, which supplied the market of urban centers.[37]

If we examine the free population from the standpoint of slave ownership, we can observe that only one-fourth of São Paulo's families owned enslaved people, as demonstrated by **Table 14.2**[38]:

From the standpoint of the concentration of land ownership, we have **Table 14.3**[39]:

Table 14.3 is most revealing. Almost 60% of owners can be considered small landowners according to the standards at the time. With an average area of about 25 hectares, it was

TABLE 14.2 Classification of São Paulo residences according to the presence of enslaved people*

Years	*Total residences*	*Residences without enslaved people*	*B/A*
	(A)	*(B)*	*(%)*
1798	22,751	17,160	73
1828	41,139	30,760	75

* *Does not include the municipality of the capital city and includes the geographic area of the present-day state of Paraná.*

TABLE 14.3 Distribution of land property in São Paulo in 1818* (according to types of areas measured in São Paulo *Alqueires***)

	Area from 0 to 30 alqueires	*Area of 630 alqueires or more*
Owners (% of the total)	57.29	4.12
Surface (% of the total)	3.13	67.66
Average area (in *alqueires*)	10.15	3,052.88

* *Does not include the geographical area of the present-day state of Paraná.*

** *A São Paulo alqueire is equivalent to 2.42 hectares.*

impossible to go beyond a self-subsistence economy at the limits of simple reproduction. At the other extreme, we have 4% of latifundia with an average of 7388 hectares.

The evolutionary tendency of São Paulo was identical to that of the rest of the country during slavery: an extreme concentration of enslaved person and land ownership and a constant growth of the destitute free population. The latter, composed of *agregados* and *posseiros*, together with small landowners, constituted the peasant class of the time, the peasant class that was *possible* in a slave social formation.

In her study of last century's São Paulo *caipira* communities (*caipiras* are the *agregados* and *posseiros* that I have been discussing), Maria Sylvia concluded that they can be understood as an autonomous reality. And she added:

> However, while it is possible to perceive a specific lifestyle, an integrity of culture and social organization in *caipira* communities, it is also true that those communities were concretely inscribed in a broader social system. In the area studied here, at least since the eighteenth century, in addition to these small communities, there were social sectors organized for mercantile production. Since it was the latter which truly founded the dominant productive activities and forms of social life, the *caipira* groups were relegated to an inescapable marginality.[40]

If we translate the author's sociological language into categorical terms of historical materialism, we can say that the economy of *agregados* and *posseiros* constituted a specific *mode of production* that was marginal, a secondary component of the *social formation* dominated by colonial slavery. The latter determined the basic nature of the social formation, but with time, alongside it, another mode of production was created, to which large masses of the population were incorporated, half of it probably beyond the mid-nineteenth century. While it is true that the mode of production of small, nonslaveholding farmers was subordinated and typically marginal, as were their communities and cultural expressions, it is also true that it had well-defined characteristics and must be understood in its *categorical identity* as entirely different from, and opposed to, the colonial slave mode of production. Yet, it was integrated, with its economy and culture, into the slave social formation, which Maria Sylvia describes as "a broader social system."

Notes

1 *HCPB*, v. 3, p. 262.
2 Idem. p. 320.
3 Cf. Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. Op. cit., p. 33.
4 Dussen, Adriaen van der. Op. cit., p. 84. See also Wätjen, Herman. Op. cit., p. 384–385.
5 Pereira, Padre Estevam. Op. cit., p. 786–787.

6 Cf. Antonil. Op. cit., p. 140, 154–158, 193.
7 Cf. Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 184; Autor Anônimo. Op. cit., p. 38; Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 56 and 75; Diégues Júnior, Manuel. Op. cit., p. 72.
8 Cf. Correa Júnior, A. P. Op. cit., p. 100.
9 Cf. Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 184; Koster. Op. cit., p. 516; Laerne, C. F. van Delden. *Brazil and Java. Report on Coffee Culture in America*. Apud Taunay. *História do café no Brasil,* t. V, v. 7, p. 393, 405–406; Couty, Louis. *Étude de biologie industrielle sur le café,* p. 96.
10 Cf. Mello, J. A. Gonsalves. Op. cit., p. 82–87; Antonil. Op. cit., p. 151–153; Werneck, F. P. Lacerda. Op. cit., p. 18–21.
11 Aristóteles. *Politique*. Op. cit., p. 23–24. Book One, chap. II, § 23.
12 Saint-Hilaire, Auguste de. *Viagem à Comarca de Curitiba*, p. 42, 54, 56; Taunay. Op. cit., t. V, v. 7, p. 361.
13 Cf. Marcílio, Maria Luiza. Op. cit., p. 139–140.
14 Ianni, Octávio. Op. cit., p. 91.
15 Saint-Hilaire. *Viagem à Província de São Paulo*, p. 95, n. 182. See also p. 273, as well as Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 68.
16 Cf. Sousa, Gabriel Soares de. Op. cit., p. 144, 148, 151, 153.
17 Vianna, Oliveira. *Populações meridionais do Brasil*. Op. cit., p. 60–61, 69.
18 Cf. Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 3, p. 927; Koster. Op. cit., p. 441; Tollenare. Op. cit. p. 95; Saint-Hilaire. *Viagem pelas províncias do Rio de Janeiro e Minas Gerais*, p. 43; Araújo, Nabuco de; Figueiredo, Antônio Pedro de. Apud Quintas, Amaro. *O sentido social da Revolução Praieira*, p. 15, 20; Fragoso, João da Rocha. Apud Freyre, Gilberto. *Ordem e progresso*, t. II, p. 466–467, n. 60; Goulart, J. Alípio. *Brasil do boi e do couro*, v. 1, p. 123.
19 Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 39, 68; Franco, Maria Sylvia de Carvalho. *Homens livres na orden escravocrata*. Op. cit., p. 96–99; Goulart, J. Alípio. Op. cit., p. 123.
20 Cf. Koster. Op. cit., p. 441; Luccock. Op. cit., p. 194; Ribeyrolles. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 144.
21 Cf. Koster. Op. cit., p. 295–296; Franco, Maria Sylvia. Op. cit., p. 149–153.
22 Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 96.
23 Saint-Hilaire. *Viagem à Província de São Paulo*, p. 95.
24 Idem, *Segunda Viagem*. Op. cit., p. 39–40. See also *Viagem pelas províncias do Rio de Janeiro e Minas Gerais*. Op. cit., p. 43.
25 Koster. Op. cit., p. 441; Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 95; Franco, Maria Sylvia. Op. cit., p. 102–103.
26 Cf. Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 69; Costa, Viotti da. Op. cit., p. 29–30.
27 Cf. Quintas, Amaro. Op. cit., p. 15.
28 Data extracted from Marcílio, Maria Luiza. Op. cit., p. 135, 140, 143. Tables 3, 5, and 10.
29 Cf. Quintas, Amaro. Op. cit., p. 5, 6, 16, 96–99, 112.
30 Koster. Op. cit., p. 441.
31 Cf. Vianna, Oliveira. Op. cit., p. 61, 155 et passim.
32 Cf. Coulanges, Fustel de. *A cidade antiga*, v. 1, p. 157–161. Book Two, v. 2, p. 1–16, 44–59.
33 Cf. Weber, Max. *Economia y sociedad*, v. 2, p. 1036.
34 Saint-Hilaire. *Viagem à Província de São Paulo*, p. 249.
35 Spix e Martius. *Através da Bahia*, p. 60.
36 Cf. Saint-Hilaire. Op. cit., p. 249–251, 261–264, 270, 278; Idem, *Viagens pelo Distrito dos Diamantes,* p. 275, 278, 280; Idem, *Segunda viagem*, p. 38–40, 138, 150–151.
37 Cf. Canabrava. Uma economia de decadência, p. 103–104.
38 Data extracted from Marcílio, Maria Luiza. Op. cit., p. 134, 141. Tables 1, 6, and 9.
39 Data extracted from Canabrava, Alice P. A repartição da terra na Capitania de São Paulo, 1818. *Estudos Econômicos*, v. 2, n. 6.
40 Franco, Maria Sylvia de Carvalho. Op. cit., p. 31–32.

15

DUALISM, INTEGRATIONISM, AND OTHER INTERPRETATIONS OF HISTORY

I return once more to the initial topic discussed in the introductory methodological reflections. Even when it strays from the reality of its object, historiography continues to provide elements for knowledge, at least insofar as they reveal possible refractions of the object in historians' conceptual activity.

The oldest historiography emphasized patriarchy and, in the realm of material life, placed the natural economy in the foreground. In his *Chapters of Brazil's Colonial History* – a work whose sociological concerns position it beyond chronological factualism – Capistrano consistently emphasized the "naturist economy" and extracted the main motifs of his reflection from it.[1] At the level of a broader theorization, Oliveira Vianna stressed even further the notion of a slave economy with autonomous characteristics. With glorifying eloquence he wrote:

> In his latifundium, whose enormity absorbs him, the landowner enjoys absolute economic independence. If all of society were to disappear around him, he would extract enough from his own domain to meet his basic needs, and he would continue to live his industrious and fruitful life as if nothing had happened.[2]

Such a shocking overstatement was not shocking at a time when Brazil was proclaimed as an "essentially agrarian country." The changes currently underway have made that notion of the past problematic. The advancement of an urban industrial economy obliged a representation of its contrast with the surviving rural economy. For that reason, dualist interpretations of the current economic development arose, which, as often happens, led dualism to also become a retrospective principle with which to understand history.

Dualist Mechanism

Although Mariátegui did it earlier in regards to Peru,[3] it was probably Normano who first spoke of dualism in regards to Brazil. And he did so in the mechanistic sense that was so remarkably consecrated: *the contraposition of a modern sector to an archaic or colonial sector.*[4]

The dualism between the "modern" and "archaic" sectors, in reference especially to the present day, was formulated in its most simple and finished form in Jacques Lambert's renowned work on "the two Brazils."[5]

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However, it was in Ignacio Rangel's work that dualism as an interpretation of the past was truly theorized. The development process appeared to the author as the gradual absorption of the natural economy present in rural areas by capitalist mercantilism, followed by a growing specialization of the productive functions and an increasingly complex social division of labor.[6] By assuming that as late as the 1950s activities unrelated to the market occupied most of the national worktime, Rangel logically adopted Oliveira Vianna's view of the dominion of the natural economy in previous centuries. However, since the country was no longer "essentially agrarian," the dualist understanding of the present was retroactively projected to the past. Since in the present there was both a natural economy and capitalism, the same must have been the case in the past. The Brazilian economy was therefore presumably subjected throughout time to a constant "basic duality," the coexistence of two spheres governed by different laws. Rangel synthesized it with the following statement:

> What we mean is that the slave plantation was subjected to two types of laws: those of slavery and those of capitalism, and we can therefore make an observation of the utmost importance, since it was common to all phases of the Brazilian economy. That is, that these two types of laws respectively governed the economy's internal and external relations. It is therefore not enough to say that latifundia were a mixed, feudal-capitalist economy; we must understand that they were *internally* feudal and *externally* capitalist.[7]

From the dualism between the "modern" and the "archaic," we move on to a dualism of different types of laws that governed two types of relations of production – internal and external – of the same economic organization, or, in other words, of the same mode of production. Slave plantations were therefore oriented to the natural economy internally, while its products, once they reached the world market, behaved like commodities. Rangel perceived a crucial matter when he asserted that the fact that the Brazilian economy was a complement did not imply that it had to be similar to the economies it complemented. But in his mechanistic conception of the duality of internal and external relations of production, he was unable to explain what the Brazilian colonial economy was.[8]

N. W. Sodré presents a different form of dualism: according to him, Portuguese colonization simultaneously established not one, but two modes of production in Brazil, each in a different geographical area. In a narrow coastal strip of land, dominated by sugar plantations, colonial slavery was established, while in the vast expanse of the rest of the country, feudalism developed from the beginning. In Pernambuco's Zona da Mata and in Bahia's Recôncavo, slavery prevailed, but in São Paulo, the Amazon, and all of the immense cattle-breeding regions, a feudal regime was established. Slavery in Minas Gerais was so peculiar that, after the decline of gold mining, it immediately evolved toward feudalism, which also happened in all other slaveholding areas at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[9] The real history of Brazil does not conform to this notion of a dualist colonization. In later chapters devoted to cattle raising, mining, and the forms of indigenous slavery, we will return to this issue.

Theories of Incomplete Capitalism

Regarding the line of interpretation that focused on the export nature of the colonial economy, its evolution led to the notion of colonial slavery as a sort of inferior stage of capitalism or incomplete capitalism. Weber contributed significantly to this, by including in his typology of capitalist orientations a *capitalist slavery* or *slaveholding capitalism* present in Classical Antiquity and in plantations of the Southern United States.[10]

Of course, I must say that the notion of incomplete capitalism could be acceptable only in the sense that Marx conceived the *formal subsumption of labor under capital*. That is, in the sense of an emerging capitalism that, based on an unaltered production technology, transforms peasants and artisans into wage laborers and extracts from them an *absolute* surplus value. Capitalism there is already capitalism, since it implies exploitation of free workers by capital and the latter's dominion in the process of production, but it is an incomplete form of capitalism because it is unable to produce *relative* surplus value. However, the formal subsumption of labor under capital has nothing to do with a labor process undertaken by enslaved people.

The contradictions implicit in the thesis of colonial slavery understood as incomplete capitalism became explicit in F. H. Cardoso's analysis. After asserting that, regarding the beef jerky economy in Rio Grande do Sul, the process of formation of capitalism was "very incomplete," the author later perceived the "anti-capitalist consequences of slave labor."[11] This, however, did inspire him to question the nature of the regime from which such consequences arose. Instead, he dove into a sea of incoherences, which are evident in the following conclusive excerpt (with my comments in brackets and italics):

> …slave labor in a capitalist economy (modern slavery) appears as a contradiction when the capitalist system of which it is a part tends toward growth [*the capitalist system always tends toward growth, greater reproduction, accumulation with no other limits than those of capital itself, and it is therefore illogical to presume that such tendency appeared only at certain moments*]. The tensions created by this type of organization of labor do not lead to the suppression of the capitalist system; they merely posit the issue of the end of slavery as a requirement for the full formation of the capitalist mercantile-industrial system [*the capitalist system would be incomplete with slavery, and full or complete without it*]. The development of productive forces under those conditions posits the possibility of the pure and simple suppression of the slave system, which becomes an obstacle to the development of capitalism. [*What we see here is a "slave system" that only at a certain moment "becomes" an obstacle to capitalist development.*][12]

In an essay written many years later, we can see that F. H. Cardoso did not overcome the theoretical contradictions of his position but, on the contrary, delved further into them. For that reason, he transformed capitalism into a category that can encompass a wide variety of types of economy, among them "the colonial mode of capitalist production" or "the capitalist mode of colonial production." A capitalism with enslaved people, not with wage laborers. A capitalism without a bourgeoisie but with slave masters (or masters of Indians in the *encomiendas*), which, for lack of a better characterization, he defined as "double-headed demons." All of this hanging on a single argument: that the "colonial mode of production" was constructed or invented as peripheral to "commercial capitalism," which was the center of a world economic system. In defense of his thesis on incomplete capitalism, F. H. Cardoso therefore resorted to the logic of integrationism, which I discuss below.[13]

Octávio Ianni's formulations fall prey to similar incoherences. We have a slaveholding order that establishes or develops precapitalist institutions. However, slaveholding colonial economies are part of the capitalist system and coexist with it. For that reason,

> …the way the slave laborer was inscribed in the capitalist production process (including relations external to the country) endowed the Brazilian civilization with a unique character, in its creations and contradictions.[14]

Unfortunately, Ianni did not even consider the theoretical problem of that *insertion* of slave labor in the capitalist *production* process. However, unlike F. H. Cardoso, he demonstrated in a later text an incipient attempt to overcome that formulation.

Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco, who circumscribed her research to the nineteenth-century coffee economy, undertook a much greater effort toward theoretical coherence. Since her attempt consisted on applying Weber's typological method, the result was a construction that was as complete as it was removed from objective reality.

First, I must say that Maria Sylvia elaborated a remarkably profound notion of the slave coffee plantation as a contradictory conjunction of a mercantile and a natural economy, a combination of enterprise and home, an organization that was both patriarchal and driven by profit.[15] This notion goes beyond the dualist mechanism, since it proposes an organic unity of the terms and asserts that the dynamics are determined by the dominant term – the mercantile economy. From there, the historian could have moved on to a reflection on the specificity of that slave organization. Such a reflection was hindered by the theoretical prejudice that a structural explanation could only be found in reference to capitalism, as we can observe in the following excerpt at the beginning of her work:

> Considering the differences between ancient and modern slavery, and the entirely opposite paths taken by the historical processes of the societies in which each developed, the difficulty of conceiving a *mode of production* based on the slave's presence becomes evident. With this in mind, in this work I will not use as a point of the departure a representation that considers that, in modern colonies, slavery constituted the *unifying principle* of the social system, the fundamental determination of the way it was integrated and its direction, preferring instead to understand it as an institution that was subjected to other determinations that oriented it […] This assumption leads to the conclusion that, since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when slavery sustained a style of production linked to the capitalist system, the slave emerged redefined as a purely economic category and was integrated into colonial societies as such.[16]

It would be difficult to be more explicit. Slavery was not the basis of a mode of production, it was merely an element that did not determine the social system. It did not define it but was rather defined by it.

Once this position was adopted, the specificity of colonial slavery slipped through her fingers. The conclusion necessarily followed the established premise:

> What has been said here is sufficient to demonstrate that the basic components with which the old coffee civilization was organized, the form they acquired, the links established between them, were unified by the principle that oriented the whole: its coherence with capitalist production.[17]

Once the constitutive elements of the slave coffee plantation were integrated into an organization unified by the capitalist principle, Maria Sylvia could devote herself to the task of constructing a univocal type of plantation owner. The result was a puritan planter in Weber's style, with the same ethics, albeit without Protestantism. Although Catholic, Maria Sylvia's plantation owner is parsimonious, frugal, uninclined to superfluous consumption, accustomed to hard work as a constant element of everyday life, guided by rational calculations, saving money at all costs, and driven by profits.[18] A type with carefully drawn traits like a profile cut out with scissors. A tool employed earlier by Oliveira Vianna to cut out the profile of the dominant colonial class, very different from the one created by Maria Sylvia, but no less artificial – the profile of the medieval aristocrat in its chivalric idealization.[19]

In the end, Maria Sylvia did not conclude that the coffee planters' society was purely capitalist, because the process of development of a *class society* (the Weberian equivalent of the capitalist society) was incomplete. A process that was hindered by latifundia and slavery.[20] One can only wonder whether, instead of assuming an incomplete capitalism, it would be coherent with scientific methodology to orient the research toward understanding the specificity of colonial slavery, within the framework of the categories of mode of production and social formation.

Manuel Moreno Fraginals, author of one of the most important studies of slave plantations, encountered the same theoretical difficulty. As a result of not giving colonial slavery the status of a specific mode of production, Fraginals saw in the thirst for profit of Cuban planters a *bourgeois* consciousness that was unable to fully develop because of the lack of a wage labor market capable of meeting the existing demand. The fact that employing enslaved people was inevitable led to an incomplete capitalism and an emasculated bourgeoisie. Its full development required a bourgeois-slaveholding political economy that never existed. Nor could it have, since the actions of Cuban slaveholders were determined by laws that differed from those of the capitalist mode of production, and its ideology, instead of being bourgeois, was pre-bourgeois mercantile.[21]

It is worth saying a few words about Florestan Fernandes, who stands out precisely because he resisted the temptation of forcefully discovering capitalism in Brazil's colonial society. Employing functionalist and Weberian categories (but without accepting the concept of capitalist slavery), Florestan characterized the slave society as a "cast society," a "slaveholding-seigneurial order," or a "regime of casts and strata."[22] It is unquestionably laudable that the renowned sociologist was able to attain the furthest explanatory possibilities with the use of that methodology. Historicity was apprehended by differentiating a "society of casts and strata" from a "class society," with the clear idea of a transition between different social orders. But Florestan was aware of the fact that some theoretical problems could not be explained within the framework of functionalist-Weberian sociology and, therefore, grafted it with Marxist categories. The latter, however, were employed at a superficial methodological level as appendixes to a foreign conceptual structure. The result could only be a disjointed eclecticism. See, for example, what happens with the category of mode of production, precisely the one that, more than any other, should pave the way for a study of the specificity of colonial slavery. However, in Florestan's work, not only are those possibilities not even considered, but the perspective of the colonial system is maintained. Understanding that the components of the colonial economy could not configure either a capitalist or a feudal production system, the author proposed the following positive formulation:

> The flip side of commercial capitalism in Latin America was a *colonial system of production*, structurally and dynamically adapted to the colonies' nature and functions of exploitation. The precursory nature of that system of production is evident in the combination of slavery, serfdom, and merely complementary modalities of wage labor, with the creation of wealth destined to colonial appropriation, legally organized and practiced through political and economic means.[23]

In the first place, the approach continues to be functionalist. It is to the colonies' nature and *functions* of exploitation that the "colonial system of production" adapts itself, as if the deliberate goals of the colonizers could establish the structural and dynamic model of a mode of production. The function is determinative, and the system (or mode) of production derives from it. Second, the category of *colonial* system of production erases structural internal differences, mixes slave relations of production with those of a different type in the same concept, and finally focuses only on the external, colonial aspect of the economies constituted in Latin America after the European discoveries. The analysis therefore maintains a teleological approach to Latin American history, which explains it entirely by the finality or "orientation" of external domination.

Integrationism and Pure Capitalism

The thesis of an "incomplete capitalism" gave way to that of a "pure capitalism" by applying a discursive operation that I denominate *the logics of integrationism*. The operation is accomplished through the axiom that relations of domination are *always* relations of *identifying* integration: the subordinated term is integrated into the dominant term and, immediately, has the same substantive identity. It does not matter that the two terms correspond to *internally* different structures and that they are only *externally* related: the fact that there is a domination/subordination relationship between them fuses them into a *single* category, always defined by the structure of the dominant term.

Sergio Bagú's reasoning followed this logic, which resulted in the thesis of "colonial capitalism" integrated into "commercial capitalism":

> What emerges in Spanish and Portuguese America is not feudalism, but colonial capitalism. Far from reviving the feudal cycle, the Americas entered the cycle of commercial capitalism, previously inaugurated in Europe, with surprising speed, thus enabling the emergence of the period of industrial capitalism centuries later.[24]

After establishing the premise that underlies his entire analysis, Bagú juxtaposed discrete elements in order to obtain a capitalist configuration of colonial America: capital accumulation, financial capital, production for the market, commerce, the complementary nature of production, and slavery. The latter was defined as a *capitalist* institution, but that definition is founded only on the *mercantile* nature of slave production. However, when he states that the slave "produces within an indisputably capitalist mechanism […]," Bagú fails to analyze the structure of that mechanism and focuses instead on a description of the slave trade.[25] He fails to perceive the essential fact that the mechanism of the slave trade – a process in the realm of precapitalist mercantile *circulation* – is entirely different from the mechanism of slave *production*.

Gunder Frank later developed the assumptions of the integrationist logic. Entirely disregarding the differences between the production structures, he elaborated a theory of the worldwide development of capitalism as a single system that encompassed all regional economies. This single system, whose rubbery structure is always essentially commercial, encompasses, from the early sixteenth century on, developed metropolises and underdeveloped satellites at the international, national, provincial, local, and sectorial levels. In all of those levels, the metropolis/satellite dichotomy is reproduced, insofar as there are always relations of domination and exploitation, which are defined as such without any regard for the immense variety of concrete contents. Thus, the entire flow of transformations was forcefully introduced into a convenient suprahistoric and invariable scheme. Brazil, for example, never underwent historically significant transformations, since it was instituted as an underdeveloped capitalist country and remains so:

> The structure of capitalist underdevelopment that was established in Northeastern Brazil with the first sugar plantation in 1530 remains essentially unchanged to our days.[26]

In his critique of a dualist understanding, Rodolfo Stavenhagen adopted the same approach as Gunder Frank. After integrating the terms dichotomized by dualism as two ends of a single historical process and a single global society, the latter was in turn transformed into a component of the *world mercantilist system*. All *internal* movements of the colonial economy are therefore explained exclusively as a function of the system's dynamic center.[27] No particular shrewdness is necessary to perceive that the same ideas inspired Fernando Novais when developing the

framework for his theory on the ancient colonial system, with slavery integrated only as a piece of the system's inclusive mechanism.

Taking this approach to the extreme and disagreeing with the thesis of an incomplete capitalism, Paula Beiguelman asserted that modern slavery is characterized by being capitalism *tout court*, with no adjectives required. This is evident in the following excerpt:

> We therefore see that the capitalist system, although analytically constructed in reference to free labor, empirically or historically includes colonial slavery as a constitutive element. This means that the idea of a progressive purification of the system is inapplicable, since slavery was not an acapitalist component (like feudal relations, for example, which were eliminated with the advancement of capitalism), but was rather constituted as a *capitalist creation*. Nor can we speak in this case of the system's expansion to the periphery of the capitalist world, since slavery was the form that capitalism assumed in the colonial economy.[28]

The author herself undermined her own discourse. Right from the start, she established a contradiction between the *theory* of capitalism, which is constructed only in reference to free labor, and the *empirical and historical reality* of the same capitalism, which includes colonial slavery as a constitutive element. Theory is therefore positioned in blatant opposition to the essential categories of the objective reality it aims at explaining. It was obviously easier to take the shortcut of the integrationist logic than to follow the long and laborious path of a theoretical elaboration of the specific nature of colonial slavery.

My critique above does not in any way imply a denial of the existence of international economic systems. What I deny is that integrating those systems necessarily implies a categorical identification with the pattern of the dominant term. The logical shortcoming of integrationism is precisely that it reduces the concept of *integration* to that of *identity*. And this discursive operation becomes increasingly at odds with the facts the more we go back in time when studying the world history of capitalism, because we cannot fail to observe that the degrees and modalities of integration of the various regional or national economies were *qualitatively* different, and increasingly so, in the mercantile colonial system, in the neocolonial system of the era of free trade capitalism, and in the imperialist system of monopolist financial capital.

Identifying colonial slavery with pure capitalism saw its most scientistic incarnation in the US New Economic History's proposal of cliometrics. It undertook an unrestrained application of the theoretical instrument of marginality and advanced quantitative techniques made possible by the use of computers, which would presumably liberate historiography from ideological influences. In spite of the enormous rebuttal of *Time on the Cross*, there are still many productive adepts of cliometrics in the United States. In Brazil, its thesis is also widely accepted.

Fogel and Engerman's work was impressive at first sight because it attacked a weak point of historiography inspired in the abolitionist tradition: the issue of the profitability of the slave economy. Understandably, abolitionists argued everywhere that slavery was not profitable and should therefore come to an end. In Brazil, the abolitionist thesis was academically formulated in the second half of the twentieth century by historians and sociologists who accepted Weber's assertion regarding the irrationality of economic systems prior to capitalism in its modern form as an enterprise entirely subjected to the calculation of profits. Through elaborate procedures, Fogel and Engerman reached the opposite conclusion, i.e., that slave plantations in the Southern United States were profitable and even highly profitable. That led them to the next step: it was profitable because it was rational; and it was rational because it was capitalist. Not much was needed to transform the slaveholding planter into a capitalist who reacted to such diverse applications of capital and such flexible marginal variations as industrial entrepreneurs in Manchester

or New England. Obviously, there was not a single word on monopoly prices, which were always essential to the viability of colonial slavery.

While the adepts of cliometrics are right on insisting on the profitability of slavery, they fall prey to a regrettable confusion when they equate the proceeds from slavery to capitalist profit. *Accumulating enslaved people*, as I attempted to demonstrate, *is not the same as accumulating capital*. In spite of its claims to the contrary, the ideological slant of cliometrics became evident in the claim that the profitability of slavery was founded on enslaved people being good workers, endowed with the masters' Protestant ethics, and motivated by a system of rewards for productivity and possibilities of promotion. But satisfactory returns on slave agriculture were impossible – Fogel and Engerman recognized – without the use of force. And this force was efficient because planters knew how to optimize it. In other words, enslaved people's performance also depended on an *optimized whip*.

Although Kenneth Stampp did not arrive at a coherent theoretical framework for the slave economy, he had the exceptional merit of perceiving that *slavery could be profitable even if enslaved people were poor workers*. The Protestant ethics and the masters' paternalism were insufficient to turn them into good workers, as was the very limited remuneration system that was possible under slavery. Hence the preeminence of coercion, which planters learned to use to the degree that most favored their own interests. Or, as neoclassical thinkers prefer, at the ideal dosage.[29]

Some Critical Reflections Regarding Dualism and Integrationism

The critique is already present in everything I have discussed up to now and will be confirmed in the following pages. However, it is worth explaining a few more aspects of the matter.

In my opinion, the so-called dualist theories are not wrong because they conceive the coexistence of heterogeneous social realities in a same national or international system, but because they mechanically compartmentalize the categories. The well-known dichotomies of modern/archaic, developed/underdeveloped, center/periphery, and dominant/dependent are abstractions that fail to explain the structures and internal dynamic processes of each economic content on its own.

Dualism can go even further, as is the case with Ignacio Rangel, and dichotomize one single mode of production, one single economic organization, discovering two types of distinct and separate laws in it. This is simply due to an also abstract understanding of the categories of mercantile and natural economy as they apply to colonial slavery. Contrary to what Rangel supposed, the commercial products of slave plantations were already commodities *within them*, in the process of production itself, *before* they reached the world market. It was not barter, but mercantile circulation with the mediation of money and commercial capital. It would be impossible to produce hundreds of thousands of *arrobas* of sugar, cotton, and coffee otherwise. More importantly, the mercantile economy segment and the natural economy segment of plantations were *both* slave-driven, both of them subordinated to the *same* economic laws and not to different types of laws. One of those laws, which has been recently studied, is precisely the dynamic correlation between the two segments of the colonial slave production unit.

Integrationism is as mechanistic as dualism, but in the opposite sense. To what extent exactly? Let us examine that question. Integrationism substitutes distinctly separate compartments with a dual unity – which reproduces the terms of the old dualism – or with an absolute identity. In addition to being a faulty logic, integrationism is founded on two erroneous historical assumptions.

The first consists of the idea that the emergence of the world market in the sixteenth century signaled the configuration of a mode of production that was also international and evidently capitalist. Market and mode of production are confused. It is assumed that a mercantile relation implies an identity between the related terms, an identity that is then formulated according to the capitalist

term. Instead of insisting on an inconsistent category such as commercial *capitalism*, the explanation of the process of formation of the world market after the Spanish and Portuguese discoveries is found in the expansion of commercial *capital*, which was at the time still a precapitalist form of capital. Essentially different modes of production came in contact through the incipient world market, and in it the capitalist mode of production, under the formation in Western Europe, found an appropriate terrain for rapid consolidation. Marx wrote in the *Grundrisse*:

> When an industrial people producing on the foundation of capital, such as the English, for example, exchange with the Chinese, and absorb value in the form of money and commodity from out of their production process, or rather absorb value by drawing the latter within the sphere of the circulation of their capital, then one sees right away that the Chinese do not therefore need to produce as capitalists.[30]

Later, Marx added that capital imposes the expansion of its mode of production to foreign markets through international competition.[31] He was referring there to industrial capital and not to commercial capital. In addition, the international expansion of the capitalist mode of production occupies an entire historical era and was never fully achieved. In *Capital*, the author emphasized the very gradual nature (*sehr allmählich*) of the dissolution of pre-capitalists modes of production in India and China under the effect of English competition.[32]

Integrationism's second historical assumption is the idea that commercial capital gives rise to capitalism. In the chapter on Portugal, we saw the falsehood of this assumption from the standpoint of the constitution of the capitalist mode of production in Europe. It is equally false from the standpoint of the colonization of the Americas. As one of the main factors of that colonization, European commercial capital contributed to the creation of a new mode of production – new among other reasons because it was not, nor could it have been, capitalist. Postmedieval commercial capital gave rise to the process whereby this new mode of production was created, but it *did not determine its slaveholding nature*.

Regarding Gunder Frank, it is also worth saying that, in order to perform crudest imaginable conceptual leveling of historical differences and transformations, his suprahistorical approach makes use of the category of *economic surplus* elaborated by Paul Baran.[33] This category is justifiable in the context of the problems that Baran aimed at understanding, but is unable to explain the specific structure and internal laws of any given mode of production. In his theory of the world capitalist system, Frank entirely disregarded the Marxist category of *surplus value* and substituted it for the Baranian category of economic surplus. From the resulting confusion anything can be said, except that it has something to do with Marxist political economy.

A slave social formation does not necessarily contain a single mode of production based on slave work. In addition to the slave mode of production, and in opposition to it, there arose in Brazil a secondary mode of production, that of small family farmers, based on the natural economy and with varying degrees of commercialization. In the British and French West Indies, this mode of production found it extremely hard to survive due to the shortage of land, yet it did not disappear entirely.[34] In the United States something particular happened: the emergence not only of two modes of production, but also of two social forms – or two societies, in Genovese's understanding[35] – within a single state. In this case colonization did, indeed, create two different modes of production established in different geographical areas. And not only that: each of these modes of production gave rise to different social formations, with their own superstructure and dominant class. Both social formations and their dominant classes shared the same *central* political power, and the development of capitalism in the North and the need for territorial expansion for slavery in the South did not incite the latent

antagonism to the point of conflict. When it did, it was resolved by the Civil War and the elimination of one of its social formations.

Notes

1 Cf. Abreu, Capistrano de. *Capítulos de história colonial*, p. 137–138, 205, 213 et seqs., 231, 307, 321–322, 327.
2 Vianna, Oliveira. *Populações meridionais do Brasil*, p. 134.
3 Cf. Mariátegui. Op. cit., p. 23.
4 Cf. Normano, J. F. *Evolução econômica do Brasil*, p. 12, 18, 20–21.
5 Cf. Lambert, Jacques. *Os dois Brasis*, chap.V
6 Cf. Rangel, Ignacio. *Introdução ao estudo do desenvolvimento econômico brasileiro*.
7 Idem, *Dualidade básica da economia brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro, Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros, 1957. p. 30. See also p. 42.
8 Ibidem, p. 10, 46, 67.
9 Sodré, N. W. *História da burguesia brasileira*, p. 40–51, 104, 108–112.
10 Cf. Weber, Max. *Economia y sociedad*, v. 1, p. 554, 568–569. Idem, *Historia económica general*, p. 254–255.
11 Cardoso, F. H. *Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil meridional*, p. 173–174, 201.
12 Ibidem, p. 202–203.
13 Idem, Classes sociais e história, p. 104–117.
14 Ianni, Octávio. Do escravo ao cidadão. In: *Raças e classes sociais no Brasil*, p. 89. See also *As metamorfoses do escravo*, p. 94.
15 Cf. Franco, Maria Sylvia de Carvalho. *Homens livres na ordem escravocrata*, p. 8–9, 42, 191 et passim.
16 Ibidem, p. 11.
17 Ibidem, p. 224. See also p. 192.
18 Ibidem, p. 197–223, 226.
19 Cf. Vianna, Oliveira. Op. cit., chap. III.
20 Cf. Franco, Maria Sylvia de Carvalho. Op. cit., p. 231.
21 Cf. Fraginals. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 132, 269–270 et passim.
22 Cf. Fernandes, Florestan. Cor e estrutura social em mudança. In: *Brancos e negros em São Paulo,* in collaboration with Roger Bastide, p. 86–87, 109, 125, 130, 137, et passim. Idem, *Sociedade de clases e subdesenvolvimento*, p. 22; Idem, *Capitalismo dependente*, p. 13.
23 Idem, *Capitalismo dependente*, p. 48.
24 Bagú, Sergio. *Estructura social de la colonia (ensayo de historia comparada de América Latina)*, p. 43.
25 Idem, *Economía de la sociedad colonial (ensayo de historia comparada América Latina)*, p. 131, 137–142.
26 Frank, Andre Gunder. *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*. p. 44, 175–179, 193.
27 Cf. Stavenhagen, Rodolfo. Sete teses equivocadas sobre a América Latina. In: Perroux, François; et al. *Sociologia do desenvolvimento*, p. 122–126.
28 Beiguelman, Paula. A destruição do escravismo moderno, como questão teórica. *Pequenos estudos de Ciência Política*, v. 1, p. 9–10.
29 Cf. Fogel e Engerman. *Time on lhe Cross*, v. 1. Especially p. 67–78, 223–257. A study of slavery in Brazil through the lens of the theses of New Economic History can be found in Mello, Pedro Carvalho de and Slenes, Robert W. Análise econômica da escravidão no Brasil. In: Neuhaus, Paulo (Coord.). *Economia brasileira: uma visão histórica*. For a critique of the assumptions made in *Time on the Cross*, see Bell, Rudolf. A escravidão como um investimento: dólares e seres humanos. In: Pinheiro, Paulo Sérgio (Coord.). *Trabalho escravo, economia e sociedade*.
30 Marx, K. *Elementos fundamentales*, v. 2, p. 257.
31 Ibidem, p. 258.
32 Idem. *Das Kapital*. Book Three, p. 346.
33 Cf. Baran, Paul A. *La economia política del crescimiento*, chap. II.
34 Cf. Canabrava. *O açúcar nas Antilhas*, p. 85–92.
35 Cf. Genovese. *Economie politique de l'esclavage*, p. 19.

16

LAW OF THE ENSLAVED POPULATION

Modern demography brought to light significant regularities in the movements of human populations. Instead of being unconnected and arbitrary, those movements respond to causal and statistical correlations, the tendential laws. Demography demonstrated the wide variety of factors that influence demographic movements, from those purely demographic, such as age and sex, to economic, political, religious, moral, and cultural factors in general, health, diet, etc. Some Marxists attempt to substitute that complexity of interacting factors with a monolinear correlation between population movements and the type of social formation. Given its obvious mechanism, the attempt has produced nothing but simplistic relations, often in blatant contraction with the facts.

An entirely different approach is to study the relationship between a certain population or sector of the population and the dynamics of a mode of production. It is not a matter here of explaining the *whole set* of demographic movements – a scientific task that belongs to demography – but only of discovering possible, well-defined causal connections of interest to political economy. It was from this standpoint that Marx studied the movements of the working class in relation to the movements of capital. And from this standpoint, he stated that each mode of production has a different law of population historically in effect: "An abstract law of population exists only for plants and animals, as long as man does not intervene historically."[1]

Correlation between Enslaved People and Free Men

For the purpose of establishing a framework, let us examine some data on the volume of the enslaved population and its proportion of the total population of Brazil. The numbers for 1798 and 1817 in **Table 16.1** are based on data reproduced in Perdigão Malheiro's work, which are acceptable due to their similarity to other historical data.[2] The data on the number of enslaved people at the national level for 1850 come from a reasonable extrapolation by Senator Cândido Baptista de Oliveira. For the country's total population of that same year, I used G. Mortara's estimate.[3]

If we examine isolated plantation areas, we find greater percentages of enslaved people. The most extreme case seems to have been Ribeira do Itapicuru, which encompassed the Maranhão districts of Caixas and Frigidella, which were the largest cotton producers in the captaincy. In that region, in 1805, there were 11,775 enslaved people for a total population of 13,672, i.e., an

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TABLE 16.1 Population of Brazil

Years	*Enslaved people*	*Total population*	*A/B*
	(A)	*(B)*	*(%)*
1798	1,582,000	3,250,000	48.6
1817/1818	1,930,000	3,818,000	50.5
1850	2,500,000	7,230,000	34.5

enslaved population of 86%.[4] Regarding sugar-producing areas, we have the Rio de Janeiro district of Campos dos Goitacases: in 1816, it had 17,357 enslaved people out of a total population of 31,917, or 54%.[5]

There were also large concentrations of enslaved people in coffee-growing areas. In 1872, Vassouras had 20,168 enslaved people, which made up 52% of the total population of 39,253. Data collected by Emília Viotti da Costa demonstrates that in the mid-nineteenth century the enslaved population was larger than the free population in the Rio de Janeiro municipalities of Cantagalo, São João Príncipe, Valença, and Piraí, the last two representing, respectively, almost two-thirds and almost three-fourths of the total population. In the São Paulo municipalities of Bananal, Areias, and Campinas, the enslaved population represented, respectively, 64%, 53%, and 57% of the total population.[6]

Tendential Movement of the Enslaved Population

In the original process of the constitution of Europe, the capitalist mode of production absorbed impoverished peasants and artisans from a precapitalist mode of production. Once it perfected is operation, the capitalist mode of production determined the movement of the working class population according to its own law, which Marx discovered and formulated as follows: "The laboring population therefore produces, along with the accumulation of capital produced by it, the means by which it itself is turned into a relative surplus population."[7]

It is through its intrinsic operating process that the capitalist mode of production creates the industrial reserve army or the *relative* overpopulation. In accordance with the laws that are immanent to it, capitalism attracts workers to factories and constantly expels a part of them, in response to technical innovations within the companies and changes in the economic cycle, thus sentencing them to fluctuating unemployment. From a strictly abstract theoretical standpoint, the capitalist economy could operate and grow indefinitely with an unaltered worker population. In practice, we know that the worker population increases over time, through natural growth or an eventual reinforcement from an external national or international source. Still, it remains true that, if the law of the formation of a relative overpopulation ceased to operate, the process of a broader reproduction of capital would be compromised to the point of becoming unfeasible.

With regard to the colonial slave mode of production, if we take a enslaved population of certain dimensions, we can observe that, instead of creating a relative overpopulation, the economic mechanism acts in the direction of the absolute decrease of the enslaved population and its resulting shortage. At the same time, excluding the influence of natural factors and sporadic technical innovations, any increase in production is the result of an increase in the number of laborers, once the limit of a workday's duration and intensity has been reached.

Since enslaved people were valuable property, their owners had an interest in maintaining their productive usefulness for as long as possible. As we have seen, the purchase price of enslaved people was a variable that influenced the duration of their useful life. But that interest

interacted with another one in the opposite direction: obtaining the most production possible in the shortest useful life of the enslaved person.

Let us consider a situation defined by the following data regarding individual adult enslaved people in good physical condition: purchase price – 100$000; annual cost of sustenance – 15$000; gross annual production – 50$000; duration of useful life – ten years. Subtracting the annual cost of sustenance – and not including the depreciation of the fixed fund and other current expenses – each enslaved person would produce an annual net product of 35$000. In ten years, 350$000. The purchase price was equivalent to the net product of almost three years.

Let us now suppose that the planter overworked the enslaved person, forcing him to produce 70$000 per year. Since the production of foodstuffs in the plantation would also diminish, the planter would be forced to purchase them, therefore increasing the annual cost of the enslaved person's sustenance from 15$000 to 20$000. In addition, the excess work would reduce the enslaved person's useful life to eight years. Therefore, the annual net product per enslaved person would be 50$000 and would be equal to 400$000 in eight years. The enslaved person's purchase price was now equivalent to the net product of two years. Since a disabled enslaved person could be immediately replaced by another one in identical productive conditions, the planter would obtain a net product of 500$000 per active enslaved person every ten years, instead of 350$000. In other words, the annual profit per enslaved person would increase by 43% relative to the situation initially described.

However, let us imagine two models – A and B – with variations in the enslaved person's price and profitability. We continue excluding depreciation of the fixed fund and other current expenses. On the other hand, the amortization of the enslaved person's purchase price is deducted from the net product, and the amortization itself is divided annually, as was done in regular accounting.

Model A: enslaved person's price – 100; annual amortization – 10 (10 years of useful life); annual cost of sustenance – 10; annual gross production – 70; annual net product – 50; net product in 10 years – 500.

Variant of Model A: enslaved person's price – 100; annual amortization – 5 (20 years of useful life); annual cost of sustenance – 5; annual gross production – 50; annual net product – 40; net product in 10 years – 400.

Model B: enslaved person's price – 400; annual amortization – 40 (10 years of useful life); annual cost of sustenance – 10; annual gross production – 70; annual net product – 20; net product in 10 years – 200.

Variant of Model B: enslaved person's price – 400; annual amortization – 20 (20 years of useful life); annual cost of sustenance – 5; annual gross production – 50; annual net product – 25; net product in 10 years – 250.

In Model A, there was no advantage for the planter in reducing the enslaved person's workload and extending his useful life. The result of adopting the variant of Model A would be to reduce the net product. What was advantageous was to wear down the enslaved person completely in ten years and immediately substitute him for a new one, purchased with the full amortization of the investment made to purchase the previous enslaved person.

The opposite happens with Model B. Considering that the slave cost four times as much, it would be advantageous to prolong his useful life and reduce the annual amortization of the initial investment, even at the expense of reducing the gross production, since, as we can see in the variant of Model B, the net product would increase.

These two models took place sequentially in history, although altered, of course, in empirical reality by factors such as the weight of taxation, the cost of transportation, the cost of the imported elements of the fixed and circulating funds, the price of exported products in the world market, etc. *Grosso modo*, we can say that Model A corresponded to the three centuries during which African enslaved people were imported, which favored replacing the rapidly deteriorated enslaved people. Model B corresponded to the third of the century in which slavery continued after the end of the African slave trade. In this period, planters instituted effective measures to extend the useful life of their enslaved people. They did not do so by reducing the workload and the amount of commercial production, as one would suppose in the variant of Model B, but mainly by improving their treatment, which implied a higher monetary cost to sustain the enslaved people (and not a lower one, as is assumed in the variants of both models).

Another structural factor must also be taken into account. In a capitalist regime, the laborer's salary includes a part that corresponds to the cost of sustaining his or her children. It is the laborers themselves who tend for their children and ensure the continuity of the labor supply through generations. In a slave regime, raising children implied a cost for the master. It is the latter who provided the means – food, clothing, housing, etc. – for enslaved people's children to develop to adulthood. Each enslaved child therefore represented an increase in expenses with random results. Of course, if all went well, after sixteen years the planter would have a new enslaved person, fully ready for work. But experience demonstrated that slaveholders preferred to purchase adult and teenager enslaved people rather than risk raising their enslaved people's offspring or purchasing children. This is evident in the statistics of the African slave trade, which included a small percentage of children. Observations made by some travelers in the early nineteenth century allow us to infer that buyers preferred to purchase African teenagers, since, according to Ebel's notes, they adapted with greater ease than adult ones to their new habitat. Luccock, who lived ten years in Brazil, concluded that most of the approximately 10,000 Africans brought to Rio de Janeiro per year were somewhere between the ages of seven to thirty, "on average never older than twelve to fifteen years." This conclusion agrees with Ebel's observations regarding a slave ship's cargo and with Maria Graham's notes after her visit to the renowned market of Valongo. In the early 1840s, when the slave trade was already illegal, Gardner observed a group of twenty recently acquired African enslaved people apparently between the ages of ten to fifteen, in a coffee plantation in the Paraíba Valley.[8]

An inventory of the São Bernardo plantation in Vila de Jaguaripe, Bahia, belonging to Antônio de Castro Mascarenhas, shows the immense predominance of adult enslaved people of productive age. In 1804, out of eighty-one enslaved people, fifty-three were aged from ten to forty years, i.e., 65.4% of the total. The fourteen children under the age of ten made up 17.3% of the slave force. This is identical to the inventory made by Stanley Stein in the municipality of Vassouras, where, from 1830 to 1849 – a period when large numbers of Africans were imported –, the enslaved people aged from fifteen to forty years made up 62% of the total. In an inventory of the Cachoeira plantation in 1851 – the year when the slave trade effectively ended in Brazil –, the age distribution of its 162 enslaved people reflected that trend: there were only fifteen children aged up to twelve years, making up 9% of the total.[9]

Two consequences derived from the economic mechanism of colonial slavery: (1) the tendency toward the complete contraction of the available workforce; (2) the need for an external source of labor force to maintain, and even more to increase, the volume of productive activity.

Up to 1851, the need for an *external* supply of labor force was met by importing African enslaved people. After the end of the African slave trade, a situation arose whereby that need had to be met by readjusting the slave system itself, in accordance with its specific law of the working population.

Enough has been said to allow us to formulate the specific law of population in the colonial slave mode of production as follows: *the volume of the external supply of labor force is inversely proportional to the variations in the enslaved person's purchase price and directly proportional to the variations in his profitability.*

Law of the Enslaved Population after the End of the African Slave Trade

In the previous section, we generally reasoned assuming a constant operation of the African slave trade. But we must also consider the peculiar situation created by its end and examine how the law of the enslaved population stated above acted in that situation. To this end, we shall examine two opposite cases – Brazil and the United States.

Brazil after the African Slave Trade

The balance of the three centuries of the African slave trade can be summarized with the following numbers: there was a total of 3,647,000 Africans taken to Brazil, and the largest enslaved population at any given time was 2,500,000.[10] In other words, the peak of the enslaved population was about 1,150,000 individuals less than the total introduced by the slave trade.

If we consider that, according to the 1872 census, there were 5,792,000 free and enslaved people of African descent in Brazil (58% Blacks and mulattoes in the total population), we can observe that in almost 300 years, the reproduction of African enslaved people only led to a 63% increase. In Cuba and Saint-Domingue, the rate was even lower if we consider only the period lasting slightly over one century in which the African slave trade was significant. Having imported a total of 702,000 Africans, the enslaved population reached its peak of 436,000 in 1841. In 1877, its enslaved person and free population of African origin or descent was no more than 471,000. Saint-Domingue – present-day Haiti – received 864,000 Africans. In 1789, its enslaved population was 434,000, which, added to 28,000 freed former enslaved people, results in a total of 462,000 inhabitants of African origin or descent.[11]

Only historians who accept the arguments of Minister Eusébio de Queiroz in his speech on July 16, 1852, can attribute the definitive end of the African slave trade to an initiative by Brazilian slaveholders themselves and in accordance to their interests. Without an *external* pressure from the British government, the African slave trade, which was illegal according to Brazilian law, would have continued for a long time, with the collaboration of the state apparatus and all strata of the free population. On the other hand, it is true that slave dealers established in the country continued to enjoy the support of influential economic and political sectors in England itself, which provided ships, credit, and a large volume of manufactured products used as barter on the African coast by slave merchants. English abolitionism was undermined by the English bourgeoisie itself, which was more concerned with the immediate profits provided by the slave trade, as Eltis, Conrad, and Dias Tavares demonstrated in their research. In the end, abolitionism prevailed, strengthened by the general and long-term interest of the British industrial bourgeoisie in changing the pattern of colonial relations with Africa. After the approval of the Aberdeen Act in 1845, the aggressive persecution of slave ships in 1849 and 1850 threatened Brazilian sovereignty, with British warships even invading the port of Rio de Janeiro and threatening a blockade. The slaveholding dominant class realized that maintaining the illegal slave trade would result in unbearable political troubles and effectively repressed it with the law of September 4, 1850.[12]

Forced to count exclusively on the enslaved people already present in the national territory, slaveholders of the various regions had to compete for the available labor force. The inevitable consequence was a flow of enslaved people from the declining or less prosperous regions to the most prosperous one, i.e., the coffee-growing region. The law of the enslaved population imposed an

internal readjustment of the Brazilian slaveholding system, so that the regions with declining economies started to supply enslaved people to the region with the most flourishing economy. The latter induced the others to behave as *external* sources of labor force, as a replacement for Africa. In concrete terms, this meant above all the gradual transfer of enslaved people from sugar- and cotton-producing regions in the North and Northeast to the coffee-growing region in the Paraíba Valley and Western São Paulo. A smaller number of enslaved people were also transferred to the far South.

The slave trade between provinces already took place before the effective prohibition of the African slave trade. In addition to the traditional redistribution posts in Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, and Recife, in times of drought, some provinces in the Northeast, especially Ceará, occasionally sold enslaved people to the South. But after 1850, the interprovincial slave trade became a regular and substantial means to supply labor force. We can estimate that, in thirty-five years, the coffee-growing municipalities absorbed about 300,000 enslaved people provided by inter- and intra-provincial trade – the latter meaning transfers from non-coffee-growing to coffee-growing municipalities in Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo. The same scenes of the African slave trade were reproduced: convoys of enslaved people transported on roads or ships in conditions that were not as horrifying as those of the caravans in Africa and the trans-Atlantic voyage to Brazil but were in many ways reminiscent of them. Robert Conrad's excellent studies informatively and analytically elucidate this and other aspects of the inter- and intra-provincial slave trade.[13]

Herbert S. Klein questioned the importance of the interprovincial slave trade, except for the period from 1875 to 1881, when 90,000 enslaved people were transferred to coffee-growing provinces. Before that, they were presumably supplied by the natural growth of the plantations themselves and the local redistribution of enslaved people. Klein's thesis has already been disproved by Conrad.[14] I will go over the matter only briefly here in order to present its main aspects.

Foreseeing the end of the slave trade, slaveholders in Brazil introduced into the country no less than 220,000 Africans only in the period from 1846 to 1849. They repeated the practice of increasing the activity of slave ships from 1827 to 1830 before the approval of the law that made the African slave trade entirely illegal, in 1831.[15]

The impact of the end of the African slave trade was therefore attenuated by two factors; a short-term one – the temporary abundance of available enslaved people – and a long-term one – the increase in enslaved people's useful life, probably from ten to fifteen or twenty years. The increase in their useful life was attained by improving their material conditions, a measure imposed by the sudden rise in slave prices, as well as the end of the process of adapting to the new environment (seasoning, in Anglo-American terms), which exterminated almost one-third of recently arrived Africans within a period of three years.[16] If we take into account the increase in their useful life, the estimated 300,000 enslaved people from inter- and intra-provincial trade are equivalent to at least 450,000 enslaved people according to their average useful life at the time of the African slave trade.

The interprovincial slave trade can be divided into three phases: intense in the 1850s, moderate in the 1860s, and very intense in the 1870s.

The 1850s were very prosperous in Europe, which led to an extraordinary demand for export products from the remaining slaveholding countries (Brazil, Cuba, and the United States). In Brazil, according to the statistics systematized by Ferreira Soares, all export products increased significantly in volume and price. We can assume that sugarcane, cotton, and tobacco planters in the Northeast resisted the attraction of coffee-growing regions. The intense transfer of Northeastern enslaved people to the coffee-growing Southeast must have occurred, as can be inferred from Klein's research, at the expense of those sectors where enslaved people were less profitable than export-driven plantations or less necessary: domestic enslaved people, artisans and other urban enslaved people, enslaved people employed in cattle raising.[17]

The magnitude of this transfer can be estimated from various sources. According to Tavares Bastos, from January 1850 to April 1862, 37,408 enslaved people arrived from the provinces to the city of Rio de Janeiro (a redistributing depot for coffee-growing regions). According to information collected by Ferreira Soares, from 1852 to 1859, only the North (or, rather, the Northeast) sent 26,622 to Rio de Janeiro through legal means, to which we could add another 50% sent through illegal ones. Minister Christie, British representative in Brazil, provided the following numbers of enslaved people imported through Rio de Janeiro from 1852 to 1862: from the North, 31,264; from the South, 3,404; total, 34,688. According to Perdigão Malheiro, from 1850 to 1865, the Northern provinces – Bahia and above – sent 43,000 enslaved people. From 1854 to 1863, only Bahia sent 9326 enslaved people to Rio de Janeiro. From Ceará, 3652 enslaved people were sent from 1854 to 1865. The tiny province of Sergipe, according to a study by Ariosvaldo de Figueiredo, exported a total of 1113 enslaved people from 1858 to 1861. As can be inferred from Soares de Galliza's research, slavery in Paraíba apparently demonstrated a greater resistance, since only 292 enslaved people were legally exported by that province from 1856 to 1864. It is worth emphasizing that these numbers only reflect the legal trade, omitting the notoriously plentiful illegal trade.[18]

Two inverse movements converged in the 1860s. The American Civil War (1861–1865) opened the British market to Brazilian cotton, which benefitted Northeastern planters. During that decade, cotton production more than doubled in volume and its export value increased five times. At the same time, coffee production in the Southeast reduced its growth rate, affected by the 1864 banking crisis and several years of low prices. At the national level, during the decades from 1851 to 1860 and 1861 to 1870, the value of exported coffee dropped from 49% to 46%, while the value of exported cotton rose from 6% to 18%.[19] Northeastern planters found themselves in a better condition to compete for the slave labor force of its regions, and the intensity of the slave trade toward the Southeast decreased.

In the 1870s, the cotton boom faded and coffee production regained its upward movement. The September 1871 Rio Branco Law or Law of Free Birth tempered the abolitionist movement and renewed the political stability of the slave regime. These factors led to the highest slave prices in the nineteenth century in the coffee-growing Southeast, reaching more than 2:000$000 in the late 1870s for a male slave at the height of his strength, between the ages of twenty and twenty-five.

From September 30, 1873, to June 30, 1885, legal imports and exports in the Province of Rio de Janeiro left a positive balance of 32,080 enslaved people. According to official data, from 1874 to 1884, the coffee-growing provinces together showed a net gain of 89,425 enslaved people from interprovincial trade. In the same period, Paraíba lost 3412 enslaved people relative to the 1850s. Affected by a terrible drought, only in 1877 Ceará exported 1,725 enslaved people through the port of Fortaleza.[20]

What happened in such an important slaveholding province as Pernambuco, according to Eisenberg's detailed study, is quite revealing. For thirty years, from 1850 to 1880, plantation owners in Pernambuco, forced to sell a small number of enslaved people per year in order to cover their losses, and already being able to substitute their labor force with that of their *agregados*, legally sent to the South an annual average of 760 enslaved people, adding up to a total of 23,000 enslaved people in that period. Considering that plantation owners also traded illegally in order to avoid paying the interprovincial trade fee, the author estimates that the real number of enslaved people exported was probably between 1000 and 1500 per year, adding up to an estimated total of 38,000 in thirty years.[21]

A comparison between the movements of the enslaved population of the provinces of Pernambuco and São Paulo demonstrates how the Brazilian slave system adjusted by replacing the African slave trade with the interprovincial trade[22]:

TABLE 16.2 Enslaved populations of Pernambuco and São Paulo

Years	*Pernambuco*	*São Paulo*⋆
1836	–	78,955
1839	146,500	–
1854	–	117,731
1855	145,000	–
1873	93,496	169,964

⋆ *Excludes the geographical area of the present-day state of Paraná, belonging to the Province of São Paulo up to 1853.*

It was not only the Northeast that lost enslaved people through the interprovincial slave trade. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a coffee-growing region was created in Itapemirim, Espírito Santo. From 1856 to 1876, this region tripled its enslaved population, which reached almost 12,000 enslaved people. The coffee fields grew there mainly thanks to the transfer of enslaved people from Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro. Questioning faults in the 1872 Census by researching local sources, Vilma de Almada demonstrated that Minas Gerais contributed significantly, not only through the interprovincial slave trade, but also through the migration of plantation owners who brought their enslaved people with them. According to W. Dean, agents from a slave-trading company headquartered in Minas Gerais operated in Rio Claro, a coffee-growing municipality and slave depot in Western São Paulo.[23]

In addition to these consequences, another one stands out for its significance: the continued decrease in the number of enslaved people in the national territory. While the national enslaved population was estimated at 2,500,000 in 1850, the slave records for 1873 – which were the most exact – only registered 1,546,581 enslaved people. The enslaved population of coffee-growing provinces – Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo – continued to grow up to the first years of the 1870s, but started to decrease after that. However, without counting enslaved people's children, who were born free after 1871, the inter- and intra-provincial slave trade continued to ensure an increase in the number of enslaved people in coffee-growing municipalities, as demonstrated by Robert Conrad's statistical compilation. From 1874 to 1883, the enslaved population of the eight coffee-growing municipalities of Southeastern Minas Gerais increased from 76,664 to 86,635 individuals, while the enslaved population of twenty-seven non-coffee-growing municipalities decreased from 150,638 to 99,991 individuals. In the Province of Rio de Janeiro, from 1873 to 1882, the enslaved population of eleven coffee-growing municipalities increased from 148,795 to 156,009; in the same period, the enslaved population of 23 non-coffee-growing municipalities dropped from 152,557 to 112,822. Finally, in São Paulo, from 1874 to 1882, the enslaved population of thirty-five municipalities increased from 91,688 to 107,441 enslaved people.[24]

A study by Roberto B. Martins provided a more detailed view of the effect of the intra-provincial slave trade in Minas Gerais. In the Zona da Mata, where coffee-growing municipalities were located, from 1873 to 1884, the enslaved population grew from 100,776 to 106,939 individuals, even though the number no longer included enslaved people's children born on or after 1871, considered free. The Zona da Mata's share of the enslaved population in Minas Gerais rose from 26.3% to 35.8%. In the same period, the area around Metalúrgica-Mantiqueira saw a dramatic drop from 95,401 to 51,820 enslaved people, with its share of the total enslaved population of Minas Gerais decreasing from 24.9% to 17.3%. It is evident that, in order to restore the losses of its labor force and even increase it, the Zona da Mata depended entirely on external sources, and the main one was in the outskirts of the province itself. It suffices to note that, from

1873 to 1880, the balances of the net transfers were −17,499 for Metalúrgica-Mantiqueira and +17,888 for the Zona da Mata.[25]

The United States after the African Slave Trade

Curtin's estimate of the number of African enslaved people taken to the United States has been generally accepted: 427,000, including 54,000 smuggled in. In 1860, the United States had 3,954,000 enslaved people and 481,000 free Black men. Of the latter, half lived outside the fifteen Southern slaveholding states. Therefore, the African population multiplied by eleven in 200 years. More importantly, the enslaved population of the Southern United States was the only one that was able to grow through natural reproduction. Only the enslaved population of Barbados came near it, toward the end of the slave regime. Given its truly exceptional significance, let us remain with the case of slavery in the United States.[26]

Up to almost the end of the eighteenth century, slavery's main export in the North American English colonies was tobacco – a secondary product compared to sugar. The lower profitability of tobacco must have inhibited the purchase of large numbers of Africans, who were increasingly more expensive. At the same time, the interest in internal procreation increased and a near balance in the sexual composition of the enslaved population ensued. The interest in internal procreation stimulated the formation of reasonably stable slave families, which contributed to keep at bay two other factors that were usually opposed to the natural reproduction of slave populations: low fertility and an extremely high rate of infant mortality.

The process of internal reproduction was already underway when the African slave trade was forbidden by the federal law of 1808, which did not, however, have an impact on the labor force supply. After recovering from the depression in the late eighteenth century, slavery in the Southern United States enjoyed a period of fifty years of almost uninterrupted prosperity thanks to cotton, sugar, and rice. According to the 1850 Census, cotton employed 1,815,000 enslaved people, i.e., 72.6% of the 2,500,000 enslaved people directly employed in agricultural labor. In the nineteenth century, cotton produced an exported value several times greater than Brazilian coffee at the same time. Considering only 1860, a peak moment for both of them, cotton exports from the Southern United States equaled £39.4 million sterling pounds, while Brazilian coffee exports equaled £7.4 million.[27]

But cotton could only be grown in the fertile lands of the Lower South by absorbing new masses of enslaved people, which had to be furnished to a certain extent by the Upper South. As a result, the same process of division of functions between regions that exported enslaved people and regions that imported them emerged in the United States, like it did in Brazil after the end of the African slave trade. If we admit the estimate of one million enslaved people moving from export to import states from 1790 to 1860, we have an average interstate trade of 14,300 enslaved people per year for seventy years. This is six times more than the average annual number of 2400 enslaved people during 150 years of legal African slave trade. Only Virginia exported almost 300,000 enslaved people from 1830 to 1860 – almost all of the natural growth of its enslaved population.[28] It is worth reiterating here the question posed in 1842 by Matthew Forster, congressman of the British Parliament and partner of a company that provided manufactured goods to slave dealers: "What is the moral difference between exporting slaves from Africa to Cuba and Brazil and exporting slaves from Virginia to Mississippi?"[29]

The question leads to the issue of the existence of breeding states. The practice of deliberately raising enslaved people for sale was defended by Tannenbaum and, with less emphasis or with reservations, by Stampp and Degler.[30] As I see it, if the sale of native enslaved people was not only occasional, but a regular and mass phenomenon for more than one and a half centuries, this was

only possible if there was a deliberate procreation of enslaved people for sale. I admit that raising enslaved people as a *specialized* mercantile activity must have been rare and can even be discarded for the sake of argument. But the selling price of raised enslaved people was necessarily a part of the calculations of probable profitability by landowners in the states that exported slave labor force, even if not all of them engaged in that trade. It is obvious that the sale of enslaved people was an element of the annual reproduction of funds and a source of income for many landowners in the Upper South. Note that, in the 1850s, the peak of the cotton boom, there was a supply shortage in the slave market and a certain pressure to legally reinstate the African slave trade.[31]

Raising enslaved people for sale – which never happened in Africa, as we have seen – made slave markets indispensable and fostered the unlimited expansion of the territories where slavery was legal. That was the explanation Marx gave for Southern expansionism, in a comment on the Civil War.[32]

In his work on the political economy of slavery, Genovese approached the issue from a different angle, but arrived at the same conclusion. The sale of enslaved people by the states in the Upper South provided resources to purchase fertilizers, cattle, and tools, which permitted a certain technical renewal of its decaying agriculture. But this renewal depended on the continuity of the internal slave trade, and therefore on the continuity of backward agricultural methods in the Lower South, which required large numbers of enslaved people. This in turn created a constant demand for virgin lands to substitute those exhausted by intense activity.

> The agricultural reform is therefore very limited in scope, at least as long as the slave system remains in place […]. The only solution compatible with slavery is territorial expansion. The inter-regional slave trade, indispensable to maintain the regime, cannot be maintained without a constant acquisition of new lands.[33]

In the work that was a valuable contribution to the political economy of slavery, the US historian made a brilliant analysis of the causes of territorial expansionism of the Southern slaveholding states. In this analysis, he based the thesis of the inevitable nature of that expansionism on multilateral arguments, and not merely economic ones, in opposition to the historiographic trend that places the responsibility for the Civil War on the North.

In short, the fact that the movement of the enslaved population in the United States was contrary to that of Brazil and other slaveholding countries can only be understood in accordance to the law of the enslaved population, which as we have seen must have led to the emergence of slave exporting and importing regions. The law of population therefore did not cease to operate, but rather took the form of one of its tendential variants.

Notes

1 Marx, K. *Das Kapital*. Livro Primeiro, p. 660.
2 Cf. Malheiro, Perdigão. Op. cit., Parte Terceira, p. 13, 14.
3 Nota. *RIIIBG*, t. XV, p. 113–115. On Mortara's estimate, cf. Merrick, Thomas, and Graham, Douglas. População e desenvolvimento no Brasil: uma perspectiva histórica. *Economia brasileira: uma visão histórica*, p. 47.
4 Cf. Gayoso. Op. cit., p. 164.
5 Cf. Saint-Hilaire. *Viagens pelo Distrito dos Diamantes*, p. 405.
6 Cf. Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 142; Costa, Viotti da. *Da senzala à colônia*, p. 58, 62–64.
7 Marx, K. Op. cit. Book One, p. 660.
8 Cf. Luccock. Op. cit., p. 391; Graham, Maria. Op. cit., p. 254; Ebel, Ernst. *O Rio de Janeiro e seus arredores em 1824*, p. 42–43; Gardner, George. *Viagem ao interior do Brasil*, p. 240.
9 Cf. Inventário reproduzido por Brandão, Júlio de Freitas. O escravo e: o direito. *Anais do VI Simpósio Nacional dos Professores Universitários de História: Trabalho Livre e Trabalho Escravo*, v. 1, p. 271–277; Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 93–94; Taunay. Op. cit., t. III, v. 5, p. 202–203.

10 Curtin. Op. cit., p. 47–49, 89, 115–116, 210–217, 266–269.
11 Cf. Curtin. Op. cit., p. 88; Midlo Hall. Op. cit., p. 135, 144.
12 On the participation of British sectors in the illegal slave trade, cf. Eltis, D. The British Contribution to the Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Slave Trade. *The Economic History Review*, v. 32, n. 2, p. 211–227; Conrad, Robert. Op. cit., p. 139–147; Tavares, Luís Henrique Dias. Capitais e manufaturados no comércio de escravos. *Ciência e Cultura*, v. 36, n. 2. Regarding the relations between Brazil and England during the process of the end of the African slave trade, see Bethell, Leslie. *A abolição do tráfico de escravos no Brasil:* 1807–1869. The contribution of US Americans in the illegal slave trade in Brazil is examined in Conrad. Op. cit., p. 147–170; Rodrigues, José Honório. *Brasil e África:* outro horizonte, v. 1, p. 182–185; Bandeira, Moniz. *Presença dos Estados Unidos no Brasil*, cap. 12. Portugal's participation in the legal and illegal African slave trade was examined in Capela, José. *Escravatura:* a empresa de saque; Idem, *As burguesías portuguesas e a abolição do tráfico da escravatura:* 1810–1842.
13 Conrad, Robert E. *Os últimos anos da escravatura no Brasil. 1850–1888*. Chap. 4, as well as Appendix I. Tables 7–9; Idem. *Tumbeiros*. Op. cit., p. 186–207.
14 Klein, Herbert S. Op. cit., chap. 5; Conrad. Ibidem.
15 Cf. Bethell. Op. cit., p. 70–80; Conrad. *Tumbeiros*. Op. cit., p. 76–79.
16 On the fatal loss of Africans during the seasoning period, see Ferreira Soares. Op. cit., p. 134–135; Engerman, Stanley L. Some Economic and Demographic Comparisons in the United States and the British West Indies. *The Economic History Review,* v. 29, n. 2, p. 272; Conrad. Op. cit., p. 48.
17 Cf. Klein, Herbert S. Op. cit., p. 106–114.
18 Cf. Bastos, A. C. Tavares. *Cartas do solitário*. Apêndice IV, p. 267–268; Ferreira Soares. Op. cit., p. 135; Malheiro, Perdigão. Op. cit. Parte Terceira, p. 118, 128, n. 419. Taunay. Op. cit., t. II, v. 4, cap. 52; Ibidem, t. III, v. 5, p. 165–167; Figueiredo, Ariosvaldo. *O negro e a violência do branco* (*o negro em Sergipe*), p. 33; Galliza, Diana Soares de. *O declínio da escravidão na Paraíba*, p. 114–115.
19 Cf. *Anuário Estatístico do Brasil (1955)*, p. 278; Lobo, Eulalia. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 157–158.
20 Cf. Taunay. Op. cit., t. IV, v. 6, chap. 5, p. 330; Conrad. *Os últimos anos da escravatura do Brasil*. Op. cit., Appendix I, Table 9; Idem, *Tumbeiros*, p. 200; Galliza. Op. cit., p. 114.
21 Cf. Eisenberg. *Modernização sem mudança*, p. 174–177.
22 Data extracted from Muller, Daniel Pedro. *Ensaio dum Quadro Estatístico da Província de São Paulo*. Appendix to Table 5, p. 154–169; Costa, Viotti da. Op. cit., p. 205; Eisenberg. Op. cit., p. 170. Table 22; Slenes, Robert W. O que Rui Barbosa não queimou: novas fontes para o estudo da escravidão no século XIX. *Estudos Econômicos*, v. 13, n. I, p. 126, Table 1. For 1873, we adopted the data of registered slaves from 1872 to 1873 according to Slenes's estimates.
23 Cf. Almada, Vilma Paraíso Ferreira. *Escravismo e transição: o Espírito Santo (1850–1888)*, p. 71–74, 91–93, 117–120; Dean, Warren. *Rio Claro: um sistema brasileiro de grande lavoura*, p. 67.
24 Cf. Costa, Viotti da. Op. cit., p. 206, graph; Conrad, Robert. Op. cit., p. 77, fig. 2 and 3. Appendix I. Tables 10–14.
25 Martins, Roberto Borges. *A economia escravista de Minas Gerais no século XIX*, p. 31–32. Tables 13–14.
26 Curtin. Op. cit., p. 72–75, 78, 88; Patterson, Orlando H. The General Causes of Jamaican Slave Revolts. *Slavery in the New World*, p. 213.
27 Cf. Stampp. Op. cit., p. 61; Graham, Richard. Escravidão e desenvolvimento econômico: Brasil e Sul dos Estados Unidos no século XIX. *Estudos Econômicos*, v. 13, n. 1, p. 241. Table 5.
28 Cf. Bell, Rudolf. Op. cit., p. 19; Stampp. Op. cit., p. 259.
29 Cf. Dias Tavares. Op. cit., p. 225.
30 Tannenbaum, Frank. *El negro en las Américas: esclavo y ciudadano. (Slave and citizen)*, p. 79–81; Stampp. Op. cit., p. 266–272; Degler. Op. cit., p. 74–77.
31 Cf. Stampp. Op. cit., p. 293–300.
32 Marx, K. In: Marx, K.; Engels, F. *La guerra civil en los Estados Unidos*, p. 92–93.
33 Genovese. *Économie politique de l'esclavage*, p. 210–211. See also p. 37, 126–135.

17

FACTORS OPPOSED TO THE GROWTH OF THE ENSLAVED POPULATION

In the realm of the specific law examined in the previous chapter, we can identify some factors that hindered the growth of the enslaved population and that had a significant influence in determining its tendential movement.

Predominance of the Male Sex among the Slave Workforce

Planters' preference for enslaved males is hard to explain from an economic standpoint. Enslaved females performed most domestic services and were also employed in agricultural and processing tasks. Antonil mentioned the enslaved females employed in cutting and milling sugarcane. Ribeyrolles observed that women were more skillful picking coffee cherries.[1] In general, however, the plantation's hard labor was better performed by enslaved males. African males therefore predominated in African imports and in the plantations' workforce, although to various extents depending on the product. The significant difference between the sexes evidently tended to disappear in the first generation of enslaved people born in the country, but constantly drifted toward the male sex as new African enslaved people were introduced. The more African enslaved people were introduced in the shorter periods of time, the more enslaved males prevailed. Obviously, a situation where females made up one-third or less of the enslaved population did not favor the population's natural growth. And less so under the peculiar life conditions experienced by enslaved people.

Klein argued that the systematic preponderance of males in the slave trade cannot be explained by the buyers' preference or the voyage costs, but appears to have resulted mainly from the resistance of Africans themselves to export women. Assuming that such resistance existed, it was irrelevant given the final preference of buyers in the Americas. The constant preponderance of males in the slave trade supply – usually the vast majority – should have lowered the cost of males as a result of the large supply. Yet, with very rare exceptions, the price of males was consistently higher than the price of females of similar ages. It is evident that the demand shaped the supply. As we will see below, this trend continued in Brazil's internal slave trade after the end of the African slave trade, which demonstrates the continuance of buyers' preference. A study by Klein himself in collaboration with Fraginals and Engerman concluded that there was a striking similarity in the structure of slave prices in various regions and eras, with higher prices for men than for women (as well as higher prices for enslaved people born

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TABLE 17.1 Sexual composition of the enslaved population in Pernambuco (men/100 women)

	1829	*1842*	*1872*
Africans	162	156	138
Born in Brazil	110	110	111
Total	272	266	249

in the country than for Africans and almost identical gradations of prices for enslaved people in the various age ranges).[2]

Let us examine some facts that demonstrate the predominance of males in the composition of slave workforces.

In 1781, Silva Lisboa wrote regarding Bahia:

> …due to the unquestionable advantage of male labor over female labor, the number of males is always triple that of females, which perpetuates the inconvenience of their meager reproduction, thus hindering the growth of the new generations.[3]

Plantation owners in Pernambuco acted no differently. Koster spoke of "a vast majority of males in many properties" and narrated a characteristic episode that occurred in a rich planter's estate. After a slave complained of his consort's infidelity, she was punished by flogging. At first the man who had complained was glad, but then he grabbed the flogger's hand and asked for the woman to be forgiven, exclaiming: "There being so many men here and so few women […] how can we expect them to be faithful? Why does the master have so many males and so few females?"[4]

For that reason, among others, it was inevitable for plantation owners to continuously resort to the African slave trade to meet their labor force demands. According to Figueira de Mello, the 1829 and 1842 censuses of the Province of Pernambuco indicate 41% and 54% of Africans among the enslaved population, respectively, with a sexual composition that evolved as follows[5]:

Converting the number of males into percentages, we can see that in 1829 men made up 62% of all African enslaved people and 58% of the total enslaved population in the Province of Pernambuco. It is quite likely that the predominance of males was higher in plantations than in the global enslaved population of the province. At least that is what the data from two plantations in Bahia indicate. In the aforementioned São Bernardo plantation, males made up 65% of all African enslaved people and 62% of the plantation's total workforce of eighty-one enslaved people. The Freguesia plantation, also in the Recôncavo region of Bahia, is an interesting case because it gives an idea of the composition of a plantation in its very early days. It was purchased in a state of ruin in 1848 by Antônio Bernardino da Rocha Pita e Argolo, Baron (future Count) of Passe, who reequipped it, including the slave workforce. While in 1832 only thirty-four

TABLE 17.2 Percentage of males among the enslaved population of Vassouras

Period	*Africans*	*Total*
1820–1829	84	77
1840–1849	71	65
1870–1879	71	60
1880–1888	71	56

TABLE 17.3 Enslaved population in Ribeira do Itapicuru

Years	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*
1803	6025	4685	10,710
1804	6302	5195	11,497
1805	6600	5175	11,775

enslaved people were recorded, the inventory of Passe's wife's goods in 1856 documented the presence of 163 enslaved people. Of those, 118 were Africans, i.e., 73%. Excluding thirty-one children (19% of the total), there were 132 adult enslaved people, 103 of which were male, i.e., 82% of the total number of adults.[6]

In the 1820s, Armitage observed that the number of enslaved people remained almost stationary in spite of the large number of enslaved people imported from Africa, explaining the phenomenon by the proportion of one woman for every four men in most plantations.[7] He was no doubt referring to coffee plantations.

In the same period, an identical proportion was observed by Debret, as well as the encouragement or consent of a sort of polyandry:

> Since a slave owner cannot keep the males from visiting females without countering nature, there is the custom in large properties of reserving one female for every four men; it is their duty to make arrangements to peacefully share the fruit of that allowance, made for the purpose of avoiding excuses for flight as well as promoting procreation in order to compensate for the effects of mortality.[8]

Stein's statistical analysis of the municipality of Vassouras confirms Armitage and Debret's observations with strikingly similar results, as can be observed in the following evolution[9]:

Data systematized by Gayoso allow us to observe the phenomenon in Ribeira do Itapicuru, Maranhão, in three consecutive years[10]:

The percentage of males in the three years remained around 56%, even though the total number increased by 10%. Considering that the region's enslaved population had been developing for about forty-five years and that its economy was growing and receiving more enslaved people from Africa, it would make sense to infer that cotton production led to a lower unbalance in the sexual makeup of the enslaved population than coffee or sugar.

Daniel Pedro Muller's statistical analysis of São Paulo provides the following table for the province, which includes the geographical area of the present-day state of Paraná[11]:

Note that the percentage of Africans among the enslaved population of São Paulo was slightly higher than in Pernambuco in 1829, even though the enslaved population of African origin in São Paulo had been developing for only 65 years in 1836, while that of the Northeastern province had begun 250 years earlier.

TABLE 17.4 **En**slaved population in the Province of São Paulo in 1836

	Men	*Women*	*Total*
Mulattoes	7360	7362	14,722
Brazilian-born Negroes	17,110	17,100	34,210
Africans	23,826	14,175	38,001

TABLE 17.5 Percentages of the population in the Province of São Paulo in 1836

	Men	*Africans*	*Up to ten years*
Free population	48	1	31
Enslaved population	56	44	22

While males predominated among the enslaved population of plantations in general, the same was not necessarily the case in certain areas or sectors. In the districts where small farmers prevailed, who employed a greater proportion of domestic enslaved people, a less unbalanced sexual distribution must have been common. This is evident in the following table[12]:

Given the magnitude of domestic slavery in the urban area of Santa Catarina Island, men only made up 52.4% of the total enslaved population. Note that small rural landowners almost entirely opted for male enslaved people for agricultural activities and that only the wealthier ones had the luxury of keeping domestic enslaved people (outside of the island's urban area, a total of 522 domestic enslaved people for 4306 free farmers and cattle raisers). I will not delve into details here, which can be found in F. H. Cardoso's enlightening study of this marginal and atypical area of colonial slavery in Brazil.

The Post-African Slave Trade Phenomenon

After the end of the African slave trade, there was a gradual tendency toward an equal distribution of sexes resulting from the natural reproduction of the enslaved population. However, this tendency was different in slave exporting regions than in importing regions, since transfers were mostly of enslaved males, as can be observed in the following table[13]:

Regarding the Center-South, the 1872 census revealed not only a larger male percentage, but also a much greater concentration of enslaved people between the ages of ten and forty.[14] This can be explained by the same economic reasons for the preference for males when purchasing new enslaved people from the interprovincial trade.

The demographic evolution of the Province of Rio de Janeiro is particularly revealing. As we have seen, in the 1820s, it was common to have three or four men for every woman among the enslaved population of coffee-growing municipalities. In 1873, males made up only 54.8% of the enslaved population of the province as a whole. After that date, the enslaved population of Rio de Janeiro also started to decline: from 1873 to 1881 it decreased from 304,744 to 275,847 individuals. In the last year cited, it had the following composition[15]:

Overall, men made up 54.3% of the enslaved population, almost the same percentage as in 1873. In agricultural labor, the percentage of males was slightly higher: 56.1%.

TABLE 17.6 Enslaved population in Santa Catarina Island in 1872

	Men	*Women*	*Total**
Overall	1543	1401	2944
Domestic enslaved people	161	915	1076
Field enslaved people	699	26	725

** The total number of enslaved people was 3431. There are therefore 487 unclassified enslaved people.*

TABLE 17.7 Percentage of males in the enslaved population

Year	*Northeast*⋆	*Center-South*⋆⋆	*Year*	*Bahia*	*São Paulo*
1872	51.5	54.5	1872	52.9	56.0
1884	49.0	54.5	1884	48.8	57.7
1888	48.8	54.0	1888	49.3	58.3

⋆ Includes Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Sergipe, and Bahia.

⋆⋆ Includes Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, Município Neutro (present-day capital of the state of Rio de Janeiro), and São Paulo.

Law of the Enslaved Population in Cuba

The data systematized by Noel Deerr demonstrates that, from 1774 to 1841, males more or less constantly made up two-thirds of the Cuban enslaved population.[16] Such a long persistence of that unbalance probably indicates an even greater unbalance in the sexual composition of new enslaved people introduced through the slave trade, considering the tendency toward a balanced sexual composition of new native-born generations. In effect, according to Fraginals, men made up 76% of the African enslaved people imported in the last decade of the eighteenth century.[17]

Cuban planters' preference for purchasing enslaved males reached levels of an impressive abstract significance. A random sample of fourteen new plantations studied by Fraginals, corresponding to the period from 1798 to 1822, reveals that males made up 87.5% of the slave workforce. *Some of these plantations only had men, half of them between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, and the other half between the ages of twenty-six and forty.* With an exclusively male slave workforce in an ideal age range for labor, we can assert that these Cuban plantations exhibited an *absolutely extreme expression of the law of the enslaved population*. The plantation owners were able to reach the *optimal* composition of an *entirely* productive enslaved population, without children, elders, or women whose productivity could be hampered by pregnancy and childbirth. Doing so, however, required depending entirely on an *external* supply to make up for losses or to increase the workforce, a supply that was provided by the African slave trade.[18]

Attractive as it could be for the profits it promised, that extreme was nonetheless risky. Since the late-eighteenth century, Francisco Arango y Parreno, the leader of the Cuban sugar aristocracy and a man with a long-term vision, advocated for a policy to foster a balanced sexual composition of the enslaved population and to encourage procreation as a means to renew it. The Spanish Crown itself demonstrated the same concern in the Royal Decree of April 22, 1804.[19] However, Cuban planters showed no interest in changing directions until 1820, when the African slave trade became illegal. Although large numbers of Africans continued to be smuggled into the island in the 1820s, there was always the possibility that the flow would be cut short. In addition, the extraordinary preference for males when purchasing enslaved people

TABLE 17.8 Enslaved population in the Province of Rio de Janeiro in 1881

	Men	*Women*	*Total*
Rural labor	114,528	88,970	203,498
Urban labor	11,683	15,378	27,061
No profession stated	23,732	21,556	45,288
Total	149,943	125,904	275,847

widened the price gap between male and enslaved females. Hence, the reversal observed with the illegal African slave trade, resulting in the following evolution of the proportion of males in the enslaved population in plantations: 1746–1790 – 89.3%, 1791–1822 – 84%, 1823–1844 – 65.8%, and 1845–1868 – 55.4%. In the 1850s, when the illegal African slave trade thrived, the greater demand for enslaved females almost leveled their price with that of enslaved males. As Le Riverend observed, this evolution was accompanied by an increase in Cuban planters' interest in the process of internal procreation of the enslaved population.[20]

Level of Interest in Slave Procreation

It would be excessive to assume that enslaved owners had no interest in procreation as a means to naturally increase their enslaved workforce. The interest existed but was secondary during the centuries of the African slave trade, especially during the phases when the plantation economy thrived.

The relative interest in procreation is evident by the fact that it was not uncommon for masters to enslave their own children born of enslaved females. In 1752, Matheus Dias Ladeira, a colonist residing in Bahia, led the envoy to King Dom José that, among other topics, discussed the "birth of many children of masters with their enslaved females, which the former also enslaved." From the increase in the number of mulatto enslaved people, Saint-Hilaire inferred that "there were free men of our race with a sufficiently cruel soul to subject their own children to slavery." It was because it was not an exceptional practice, preventable by the morals of the time, that José Bonifácio proposed its explicit prohibition in Article IX of his proposal to reform slavery.[21]

José Bonifácio's proposal was never implemented and many fathers continued to enslave and even sell their own children. Burlamaque wrote in 1837:

> Female slave owners almost never liberate the children procreated with his slaves and demands of them all the labor and submissiveness he demands from others; he sells them, exchanges them, or passes them on to his heirs. If one of his legitimate children receives them through inheritance, he makes no distinction between them and other slaves; a brother can thus become the owner of his own siblings, and exercise the same cruelty and satisfy the same desires with them as with others.[22]

In 1869, Correa Júnior wrote that he saw "a White native of Brazil" sell his own daughter born of a slave and "almost as white as him."[23]

On this matter, Evaristo de Moraes wrote:

> One of the greatest atrocities of slavery was the fact that a father-"master" could sell his slave children born of his own slaves. And yet this unspeakable practice was quite frequent.[24]

In this respect, Brazilian slave legislation was behind Roman law, which mandated liberating the slave mother and her children if the father was the slave's master. Since Brazilian law derived from Roman law, Perdigão Malheiro advocated for applying that norm in Brazil. But to no avail, as Evaristo de Moraes also recorded:

> There were lawyers in Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais who attempted to make the courts admit such an obvious principle of morality. They were unsuccessful. The High Court in Rio de Janeiro, through a resolution on October 28, 1873, and the High Court of Ouro Preto, through a resolution on June 1, 1875, decided that, under current conditions, the slave mother and the master's children should all continue to be his slaves![25]

The interest in slave procreation could go as far as to punish those enslaved females who failed to increase the master's slave workforce.[26]

However, the strongest tendencies of the slave regime kept procreation from taking priority, at least as long as slave ships continued to unload thousands of Africans in Brazilian ports. If the proportion of women brought from Africa constituted an unfavorable factor for the natural increase of the enslaved population, the workloads and living conditions in plantations did likewise. During the phases of intense market demand, it was against the planter's interest for pregnancy, childbirth, and the time required to tend to newborns to reduce his enslaved females' ability to work. Antonil mentioned that it was strictly forbidden for overseers to kick pregnant enslaved people's abdomen.[27] Saint-Hilaire's visit to the plantations in Campos dos Goitacases inspired the following commentary:

> When the campaign to abolish slavery [*he must mean to abolish the slave trade* – J. G.] began in Brazil, the government ordered landowners in Campos to marry off their slaves. Some obeyed the mandate, but others argued that it was useless to give husbands to the female slaves, since it would be impossible to raise their children. Immediately after childbirth, the women were forced to work in the sugarcane fields under the scorching sun, and when, after being kept from their children for part of the day, they were allowed to rejoin them, their nursing was insufficient. How could those poor children resist the cruel miseries with which White men's avarice besieged their cribs?[28]

In the aforementioned resolution by the Chamber of Deputies, Cristiano Otôni described an identical situation in the coffee-growing region.[29]

In the capital city of Rio de Janeiro, Kidder visited the *Asilo dos Expostos*, also called *Casa da Roda*, where foundlings could be deposited, guaranteeing the mother's anonymity. Between thirty and fifty, foundlings entered the institution every month. Less than one-third survived. Kidder commented:

> The main factor for this situation is the fact that many foundlings are children of slaves whose masters, not wanting to incur any expenses to raise them, or needing their mothers for domestic labor, force them to abandon them in the "foundling home" where, if they survive, they will become free.[30]

The masters' disinterest in procreation must have led to contraceptive and abortive practices among enslaved females, which resulted in the low fertility rates observed. Antonil mentioned intentional abortion and Fraginals enumerates a wide variety of contraceptive practices among Cuban enslaved people.[31]

Engerman and Klein argue that the low fertility rate was related to the long lactation period, an African cultural trait imported to the Americas. They note that, in the British West Indies, especially in Jamaica, the enslaved people's lactation period was from two to three years, in contrast with one year commonly practiced in the Southern United States.[32] It is true that prolonged lactation has a contraceptive effect, albeit not a total one. Evidently, prolonged lactation tended to reduce the birth rate. But it was only one among several contraceptive and abortive methods practiced by enslaved females. In fact, Engerman and Klein acknowledge that it is impossible to be certain about the effects of prolonged lactation in the case of enslaved populations, yet they do not disguise the conclusion they wish to reach with their arguments. If the causal relation between prolonged lactation and low fertility rates of the enslaved populations were demonstrated, it would prove that natural reproduction depended on the enslaved females' own

decision, by observing, or not, an African cultural tradition. It that were so, we could not speak of induction by the enslaved owners or breading states in the old South.

While lactation is a secondary issue, especially when proposed with a clear ideological purpose, the issue of the enslaved family is truly significant. For some authors like Kátia Mattoso, family life was practically nonexistent among Brazilian enslaved people.[33] That is an overstatement. Although marriages were not legally recognized, their consecration by the Catholic Church provided some possibility of a family life, which also took on adapted African forms, as Herbert Gutman's research demonstrates in the United States. Research by Iraci da Costa demonstrates that the percentage of people married by the Catholic Church, including widows, could vary from 1% for enslaved people and 18% for the free population in Vila Rica in 1804, to 24% for the enslaved population in the Province of São Paulo in 1830 (not including the Paraná area) and 59% of the free population (only counting people aged over ten in the case of São Paulo).[34] The significant number of marriages in São Paulo is confirmed by Church records collected by D. P. Muller for 1836. The 1872 Census revealed a national percentage of marriages of 8% for both enslaved males and females, compared to 20% and 21% for the free male and female population, respectively. In the case of São Paulo, also according to the same Census, the marriage rate of enslaved females was 12% for mulattoes and 15% for Black women, compared to 30% for White women.[35] The data seem to indicate that there was a much higher rate of marriages among enslaved people in São Paulo than the average national rate.

While family life tends to favor the population's natural growth, it is hard to prove that this was necessarily the case for the enslaved population in Brazil. In addition to many other factors, there is the issue of housing. Field enslaved people lived in collective dwellings called *senzalas*, locked up at night, with men and women in separate quarters, leading to hasty and casual encounters even among married couples.[36] In the United States, one or two enslaved families lived in cabins, and only rarely in collective dwellings.[37] The Brazilian slave housing system was therefore less conducive to family life.

But Brazil was no different than other slaveholding regions of the continent in terms of the masters' right to sell slave partners and children separately. A partial prohibition of that practice was only proposed in Article 2 of an ordinance dated September 15, 1869, and confirmed by Article 4, § 7 of the law enacted on September 28, 1871. Note that the law was less ambitious than the ordinance, since it upheld that partners could not be separated, but reduced the age at which children could be separated from fifteen to twelve years.[38]

It is impossible to calculate precisely the rate of infant mortality, but some approximate estimates were made since the time of slavery. Cristiano Otôni estimated that, during the period of the African slave trade, only 5% of unborn babies grew up in coffee plantations. Maria Graham heard from D. Mariana, who owned the Mata da Paciência plantation in Rio de Janeiro, with a total of 200 enslaved people, that not even half of the Black children born there lived to the age of ten. In 1883, in a survey of nine plantations in Cantagalo, in the Province of Rio de Janeiro, Couty reported 322 children under the age of twelve out of a population of 1974 enslaved people, i.e., 16.3% of the total. But his observation of a larger number of plantations led him to conclude that there was an average of 12% of slave children aged up to twelve years in coffee plantations. Enslaved people's birthrate was reflected in the large number of children only a few months old, compared to the few children aged between six and ten years.[39]

Examining municipal areas, Iraci da Costa and Warren Dean provided estimates obtained by applying modern demographic technology. At the parish of Antônio Dias in Vila Rica, from 1800 to 1809, the slave infant mortality rate (deaths during the first year of age) was 224.1 per 1000, compared to 136.4 per 1000 for the free population – 64.2% higher for enslaved people. In Rio Claro, based on the 1872 Census, Dean concluded that the proportion of surviving children

aged three to fifteen years per number of women at a fertile age was three times greater for free women than for enslaved people.[40]

In spite of the above, the statistics demonstrate that there were a number of cases of natural growth of the enslaved population. One example results from comparing the number of births and deaths recorded by D. P. Muller for São Paulo in 1836. Maurício Goulart cited analogous examples in São Paulo, Maranhão, and Distrito Diamantino in Mato Grosso. Gilberto Freyre did likewise regarding the District of Santo Antônio in Pernambuco.[41] There is no reason to reject the possibility of this phenomenon *a priori*, since natural growth in isolated cases is not in logical opposition to its decrease in the overall population over the long run. However, important qualifications must be made. The first has to do with the fact that some of Goulart's and Freyre's statistics calculated births and deaths of Blacks and mulattoes in general, without differentiating between free and enslaved people, which precludes reaching any conclusion. The second and more relevant caveat has to do with the significant fact that many enslaved people died in plantations and ranches and were buried there without officially recording their death, and were therefore not taken into account in demographic statistics, contrary to what happened with free people's deaths.[42] There is therefore an inevitable distortion when comparing slave births and deaths, since it was in the slave owner's own interest for birth records to be closer to the actual truth. Failing to take this into account led Maurício Goulart to accept D'Alincourt's statistics on Distrito Diamantino, which point to the conclusion that the *enslaved* population grew by 0.7% in 1825, while the *free* population dropped by 1.1%. D'Alincourt himself explained that the phenomenon had to do with a series of lethal epidemics.[43] It would be strange for those epidemics to have been less lethal for enslaved people than for free people. It seems evident that slave owners did not take the trouble to record many slave deaths, while the opposite must have been the case regarding free people's deaths. This inevitably made the statistics unreliable. Nonetheless, Maurício Goulart does not conclude from the examples collected that there was a natural growth of enslaved populations in general, but merely disputed statistics that showed a rigid and exaggerated natural decrease in enslaved populations, such as proposed by Pandiá Calógeras.

It appears that only religious orders were systematically concerned with the natural reproduction of the enslaved population. Silva Lisboa wrote that the Jesuits' plantations and ranches were full of enslaved people, but rarely from the African coast. Koster observed that, in Pernambuco, the one hundred enslaved people owned by the Benedictines were all born in Brazil, which was also almost the case with the Carmelites. The friars fostered procreation to the point of allowing free men to marry enslaved people – but not the opposite, i.e., enslaved males with free women (in this case, their children would also be free). In addition, they forced very light-skinned mulattoes to marry darker enslaved people. In any case, there was an effort among religious orders to maintain the number of enslaved people stable, which made the monks' less rigid treatment of enslaved people equally based on calculations of profits as the opposite treatment conferred by plantation owners. According to Ewbank, religious orders were the only examples of deliberate procreation of enslaved people. The Benedictine Order maintained a centralized nursery in a rural establishment in Governador Island, where native Black children were cared for until a certain age, when they were taken to work in the Order's properties in the country's backwoods. Also according to Ewbank, the Carmelites maintained a slave nursery in the Macacu plantation in Rio de Janeiro, from which enslaved people were sent to the city and employed in some profession, with which they obtained double the profits than in agricultural labor.[44]

A research study by Stuart Schwartz confirms Koster's and Ewbank's observations. In the Benedictines' many properties in Pernambuco, Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro – including eleven sugar plantations and several cattle ranches in the mid-eighteenth century – the Order was able

to obtain a moderate performance through a benevolent treatment of enslaved people, which resulted in the growth of the enslaved population. The Benedictines encouraged emancipation, and with the money they received from it, they purchased new enslaved people whenever possible. In the three plantations of the Olinda Monastery, the proportion of new native enslaved people to purchased enslaved people was 3 to 1 from 1778 to 1793.[45]

The extraordinary increase in slave prices and the end of the African slave trade in the mid-nineteenth century increased coffee planters' interest in slave procreation. With the widening gap between the cost of raising a slave and the cost of purchasing an adult one, it was profitable to stimulate and protect procreation. The Baron of Pati do Alferes included the following recommendation in his practical treatise:

> Do not send a female slave who is raising a child to the fields for a period of one year; employ her on domestic chores such as washing clothes, selecting coffee, and other such tasks. Once her child has grown, she will leave it in the care of another female slave of the appropriate age and strength, who will be the nursemaid of all children and who will bathe them, change their clothes, and feed them.[46]

This recommendation was of general interest and was effectively observed, as can be inferred from Ribeyrolles's observation:

> …in most plantations, pregnant women do not work in the fields nor are they employed in other tasks other than domestic ones. After childbirth, they are better fed and housed in a separate location. While they breastfeed their children, they are not employed in hard labor, and their children are tended by elderly slaves as soon as they begin to walk, and up to the age of 16 are only employed as coachmen or shepherds. They need to develop their strength.[47]

The French expatriate also wrote that, "according to customary law," enslaved people were freed when they had seven living children. This was confirmed by Article 20 of the statues of the Alto Retiro plantation:

> Both the female slaves who give birth to seven children and their husband shall be freed from bondage, and the master shall be obliged to give them a plot of land measuring 100 by at least 500 *braças*[48] to live in.[49]

But it was possible for the enslaved female to be cheated out of her freedom before giving birth to her seventh child by being sold by her master.[50]

In 1871, planters from Piraí said that "the most productive slave property is the breeding womb."[51] At the time, a project was under discussion in the Parliament that, once approved, established that children born of enslaved people from that point on would be free, and revoked the classical legal principle of *partus sequitur ventrem*.

In spite of the interest in procreation, Slenes's research demonstrates that the enslaved population of Brazil in the 1870s, considering only its natural movement and not including the effects of escapes and manumission, diminished at a rate of 0.5%–1.5% per year.[52] Therefore, the measures taken to stimulate procreation and improve the enslaved people's treatment were insufficient to eliminate the negative growth rate, although they probably attenuated it significantly.

A similar evolution took place in Cuba as a result of the supply shortages of the African slave trade or its end. The annual replacement rate of the enslaved population dropped from 10% in

the early-nineteenth century to 5% in the 1840s and to 3% in the second half of the nineteenth century. The average annual decrease of the enslaved population dropped from 44 per 1000 in 1835–1841 to 33 per 1000 in 1856–1860.[53]

Manumission as an Element of the Slave System

Manumission (from the Latin *manumissio*) or *alforria* (from the Arabic *al horria*) existed in all slave regimes from Antiquity to the modern era. And it did so not as a random element, but a structural one that responded to certain needs.

Manumission contributed to the following main objectives of slaveholders: it allowed them to get rid of useless enslaved people; when granted as a reward, it stimulated the loyalty of a certain type of enslaved people, such as domestic ones, who represented a greater risk to the owners; it constituted a supplementary source of income derived from their slave property. Obviously, manumission was one factor that diminished the enslaved population. But its practice varied throughout the history of each slave regime, according to endogenous needs and external circumstances.

Roman law provided for gratuitous manumissions or at a price paid by the enslaved. Gratuitous manumissions could be unconditional (immediate) or conditional (subject to becoming effective after a certain period and to other clauses). Manumitted enslaved people remained bound to their former master and were obliged to provide services to him during their entire life, under the threat of returning to the state of slavery if they were deemed "ungrateful." While Emperor Augustus imposed moderation in the treatment of enslaved people, he also created barriers for manumission, limiting the masters' freedom of individual decision-making. Only enslaved people over thirty years of age could be freed, and a limit was established to manumission through wills.[54]

In the Americas, the rules for manumission were restrictive in the British colonies and in the independent United States. Nonetheless, in 1820, the United States had 233,000 free Black men – the equivalent of 15.1% of the enslaved population (in Brazil, in 1817, the 585,000 free Black men were equivalent to 30.3% of the enslaved population). In the nineteenth century, the tendency in the United States was to establish legal restrictions that made manumission extremely difficult or almost impossible. At the same time, with the rise of the slave economy in Southern states, an increasing racial segregation of freed enslaved people ensued.[55] In Cuba and Saint-Domingue, the norms for manumission were relatively liberal in comparison, as long as slavery did not evolve much. The phase of rapid expansion of sugar plantations led to norms that restricted manumission and worsened the conditions of freed enslaved people. The 1840s were years of great discontent on the part of Cuban enslaved people, and uprisings were repressed with extreme violence. This was accompanied by a considerable drop in the number of manumissions.[56]

In Brazil there were never specific legal restrictions to the masters' freedom to grant manumission. This does not mean, however, that reality corresponds to the landscape of generous liberality painted by Tannenbaum and Elkins. Nor can we explain the proportion of freed enslaved people, as Harris does, as the result of the shortage of White colonists, which were insufficient to perform a number of tasks that were inadequate for enslaved people.[57] If we examine the first half of the eighteenth century in Minas Gerais, we see that the proportion of free enslaved people was one of the smallest recorded in slave regimes. This was not the result of legal impositions, but of the extremely high price of enslaved people and the great wealth produced by gold and diamond mining.

The pattern of manumission in Brazil can be outlined thanks to enlightening research studies centered in Pará, Paraíba, Sergipe, Bahia, Espírito Santo, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo. Among

them, the work by Kátia Mattoso stands out for its innovating and systematic character. Her conclusions, by the way, position the practice of manumission in opposition to her patriarchal understanding of Brazilian slavery.[58]

According to the research up to now, the pattern of manumission in Brazil can be synthesized according to the following characteristics: (1) most manumissions were either paid or conditional when they were gratuitous; (2) there was a significant number of unconditional, gratuitous manumissions; (3) there were more manumissions in urban than in rural settings; (4) manumissions were more frequent during economic slumps and less frequent in times of prosperity; (5) most manumissions were of enslaved female, even though they were a minority among the enslaved population; (6) a high percentage of manumissions was of domestic enslaved people; (7) more Mulattoes than Negroes were emancipated; and (8) a large percentage of the enslaved people emancipated was old or disabled.

The last point was refuted by Kátia Mattoso: "Serious studies demonstrate, however, that the percentage of elderly enslaved people emancipated never exceeded 10% of the total."[59] This refutation, shared by other historians, is based only on official registry records. Those records obviously did not record manumissions of disabled enslaved people – a category that includes elderly and seriously ill enslaved people of any age –, which masters threw out on the street without needing to record their cruelty in writing. There is no justification for discarding testimonies as convincing as those by Vilhena, Koster, Saint-Hilaire, Cunha Mattos, Maria Graham, Debret, and Correa Júnior, which reveal the extent to which it was a general practice – from the Northeast all the way to Minas Gerais and Goiás, in the Empire's Court and in the Paraíba Valley during the coffee boom – to liberate old and disabled enslaved people, leaving them helpless and eliminating the cost of sustaining unusable enslaved people in the plantation, ranch, or home.[60] In his 1824 treatise, José Bonifácio included a proposal to make it mandatory for slave owners to sustain their old and incurably ill enslaved people, which demonstrates that freeing them was not an occasional practice. In 1854, João Maurício Wanderley, the Baron of Cotegipe, presented a draft bill to the Chamber of Deputies that required slave owners to sustain their enslaved people emancipated due to illness. It was not approved. José Bonifácio's proposal only came to fruition in the Law of September 28, 1871, Article 6, § 4, under pressure from the abolitionist movement.[61]

Paid manumissions – sometimes on installments, similar to Cuban *coartación* – provided the slaveholder with a supplementary source of income, which allowed him, for example, to purchase a new slave to substitute the one that was worn out. Only after 1871, i.e., after the aforementioned law (Law of Free Birth), did it become mandatory to liberate whatever slave presented the amount of money stipulated as his or her price. However, the vertical rise in slave prices after the end of the African slave trade made it increasingly difficult to gather the sums necessary to pay for manumission, as Handelmann and Ribeyrolles observed.[62]

The promise of manumission after the master's death, conditioned with clauses to continue providing services to his relatives, performing the same task or similar ones, made conditional emancipation a means to ensure the acquiescent exploitation of the candidate to manumission, even though it was gratuitous. This could lead to a more burdensome situation for the freed slave than paid manumission. It is therefore justified to place conditional gratuitous manumission under the same category as paid manumission.

Even the letters granting unconditional gratuitous manumission usually list reasons such as "good service," "loyalty," "obedience," and so on, leading us to the understanding that the expectation of freedom *conditioned* the slave's behavior. The *unconditional* character of manumission was therefore only apparent. Nonetheless, it is in unconditional gratuitous manumissions that we can find expressions of patriarchy and even real friendship detached from commercial concerns. It is likely that mulattoes were given preference over Black enslaved people in this regard.

As Fenoaltea observed, masters did not need to motivate rural enslaved people with the expectation of manumission, but it was useful to do so with urban enslaved people. In Brazilian cities, qualified enslaved people, hired out to an artisan, could obtain from the latter an advance payment with which they could purchase their freedom from their master. In exchange, it was stipulated in writing that they would become the artisan's slave until the debt was paid off with a given number of workdays.[63] When willing to make considerable sacrifices, hired enslaved people (*negros de ganho*) could save enough money to pay for their manumission, during a period that Koster estimated at ten years.[64] For hired enslaved people who were free to move around without strict oversight, the expectation of emancipation served to inhibit flights and to motivate productivity.

Domestic enslaved people were preferred for manumission, which is one of the reasons why most emancipated enslaved people were women. Those actions, often justified with feelings of affection, took place in cities more often than in agricultural establishments.[65]

The higher percentage of manumissions in Brazil derived from several causes. The main one was that Brazilian slavery was the longest in the Americas and underwent several slumps, when many owners were forced to free enslaved people, unconditionally or facilitating their purchase of manumission. Another factor was the habit of enlisting enslaved people as combatants, which was one possible avenue for them to obtain their freedom. Many enslaved people were purchased and liberated by the imperial government in order for them to fight in the Paraguayan War.

Emancipated enslaved people in Brazil were not as integrated from a functional standpoint as Harris and Degler like to assume, no doubt motivated by the extreme racial segregation in the United States. With the exception of unskilled labor in plantations, domestic services, and the activities reserved for hired enslaved people, manual professions could be practiced by enslaved people, emancipated enslaved people, or White people. Competition was frequent, which was unfavorable to emancipated enslaved people, especially Africans. It was common for provincial and municipal legislations to apply the same restrictions and prohibitions to both enslaved people and emancipated enslaved people. The latter had to be careful of threats of re-enslavement, which were sometimes fulfilled, at times through the application of the ungratefulness clause, transferred from Roman law to the Philippine Ordinances and only revoked by the Free Womb Law. According to the Imperial Constitution of 1824, Brazilian emancipated enslaved people were second-class citizens with limited political rights.

Nonetheless, although both were discriminatory, racial relations in the United States and Brazil were different. Harris and Degler point to those differences, but do not explain them correctly. Brazilian relations allowed a certain number of emancipated enslaved people to climb up the economic and social ladders, acquiring enslaved people and other goods. Most of them were small slaveholders, although a few possessed more than fifteen enslaved people, and they compensated for the legal and moral constraints by becoming partially integrated into the system's dominant class.

Treatment of Enslaved People and Assessing It

In and of themselves, living conditions hinder the natural growth of a population with a high death rate. The latter, however, can be perfectly compensated by the birth rate, which explains the very common phenomenon of miserable populations growing faster than wealthy ones.

In the case of enslaved populations, poor living conditions came together with other factors to hinder the natural growth. But were these living conditions truly poor?

Assessing the treatment of enslaved people tends to be one of the most controversial issues in specialized historiographical literature. Especially when it upholds the old notion that the worst

slave owners were Anglo-Saxon and the most benign were Iberian. It is not difficult to trace the origin of that notion to the British abolitionist movement, which for obvious reasons directed its accusations and criticism to the planters in British colonies. In spite of its limitations and internal contradictions, as emphasized by Eric Williams,[66] it is undeniable that the British abolitionist movement gained momentum as a political and mass movement, while in the Iberian world slavery remained an honored and generally accepted institution, condemned only by isolated voices.

As soon as slaveholders found themselves under fire from abolitionist criticism, which spread around the world, their reaction in all countries was to refute it in public speeches and the press, immoderately extolling the idyllic life of *their* enslaved people. Whether Anglo-Saxon or Iberian, slaveholders of all nationalities were prolific in their poetic description and sophistical arguments in defense of slavery in their plantations. All slaveholders of any nationality – wrote Marvin Harris ironically – always seemed to be convinced that "their" enslaved people were the happiest creatures on Earth.[67]

In the Iberian world, there was even an *official* line of defense of slavery, asserting the good treatment given to enslaved people. This was clearly the case in Cuba, during a phase of extraordinary expansion of sugar plantations, when it was imperative to defend the continuity of the African slave trade at all costs. In its Report of January 3, 1792, the Council of the Indies in Madrid compared the "unprecedented rigor" with which the English, the French, the Dutch, and all other nations treated their enslaved people, imposing cruel punishment, exhausting labor regimes, and a complete lack of legal protection, to what happened in Spanish dominions, where "the treatment conferred upon enslaved people was incomparably kinder." On October 21, 1818, Cuban merchants and planters sent a treatise to the Crown arguing against the terms established by the treaty regarding trade between England and Spain, which were more severe than those of a similar treaty with Portugal. They argued that England's objective was to ruin the Spanish colonies and obtain the sugar and coffee monopoly in India, the British West Indies, and Brazil, which the British considered its colony. In support of the continuance of the slave trade, they argued that it was preferable to bring Africans to Cuba instead of Brazil, since the Spanish treated their enslaved people best.[68]

Evidently, the Portuguese did likewise, and Minister Palmella employed the argument of the kind treatment of enslaved people by Luso-Brazilian masters in the negotiations on the slave trade between the governments of Portugal and Great Britain. The myth of the benevolence of slavery in Brazil was therefore created with official support, and it further spread through the works of several foreigners such as Luccock, Spix and Martius, Ebel, Rugendas, Gardner and Couty (Koster also yielded to that "image," but with relevant objections). In the nineteenth century, the abolitionist campaign revealed what lay behind the myth, and did so with understandable uproar. But after the end of slavery and once the echoes of the abolitionist accusations had died down, historians and sociologists applied their efforts to systematically restore the temporarily disfigured "image" of slavery in Brazil, and thus the thesis of a benign form of slavery was officialized in historiographic erudition and schoolbooks.[69]

Gilberto Freyre's work exerted an exceptional influence in this regard. Due to its employment of modern anthropological and sociological research methods, the vast universe of data collected in an apparently coherent manner, and its undeniable originality, this work's influence extended beyond Brazil's borders, attaining international status. Its repercussion in the United States was immense, and to this day, it remains a watershed in historiographical interpretations of the US past itself. Gilberto Freyre's work was undoubtedly one of the inspirations, or at least one of the main support points, of the historiographic current initiated by Frank Tannenbaum and continued by Stanley M. Elkins and Herbert S. Klein. However, while these notable scholars coincided with Gilberto Freyre in his sociological approach, their ideological intentions were

entirely the opposite. As much as we believe they are wrong, we must acknowledge that merit. Because what they attempted was not to ethically exonerate the slaveholding past of their own country – an intention that permeates Freyre's work from beginning to end –, but to point to the peculiar malevolence of US slavery as the source of the also peculiar segregation imposed on the Black population in the United States, before and after the abolition of slavery.

The thesis of the benevolence of Brazilian slavery was coherently challenged by Florestan Fernandes, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Octávio Ianni, Stanley J. Stein, Emília Viotti da Costa, Warren Dean, and Suely Reis de Queiroz. But these scholars only examined southern Brazil, from Rio de Janeiro down. One of the strong points of Gilberto Freyre's work was his analysis of the Northeast, which other scholars have not undertaken at the same level. Systematic research studies such as those mentioned above, and the one by Vicente Salles on Pará, do not exist regarding Pernambuco and Bahia, which are essential for a global understanding of Brazilian slavery. Without delving into monographic detail, which is beyond the purpose of this book, the sources I consulted and from which I extracted the facts examined in the following pages were more than enough to convince me that the Northeast was not in any way different from the Southeast, from Minas Gerais, and from the far South, regarding the controversial issue of the treatment conferred upon enslaved people.

In the United States, the historiographic current initiated by Frank Tannenbaum was contrary to the line of interpretation of Marvin Harris, Sidney W. Mintz, and David Brion Davis. Due the way in which the issue was stated, these authors were obliged to resort to comparative history, to a comparison between slavery in the United States and in Latin America. Kenneth Stampp is a case apart, since his methodology does not resort to comparative history and focuses instead on US slavery *per se*, which he did an exceptional work.

When examining the treatment of enslaved people, the objective criteria cannot be legal texts, Church precepts, or cultural traditions, which are the pillars of Tannenbaum's historiographic school.[70] In my opinion, Genovese took a step forward by discussing the semantic variations of the term *treatment* and identifying three basic meanings: (1) everyday living conditions: quality and amount of food, clothing, housing, workday duration, and other work conditions (here, I would add the types and frequency of punishment); (2) social living conditions: family security, opportunities for independent social and religious life, cultural life; and (3) access to freedom and citizenship, which mainly means the possibility of manumission and an unprejudiced integration in the social setting of free individuals.[71]

Some of these aspects are measureable; others can only be qualitatively assessed. What matters most, however, as Genovese emphasizes, is that these aspects, when correlated, do not point in the same direction. On the contrary, the issue of the treatment of enslaved people is full of contradictions. A relatively good treatment in terms of material wellbeing could coexist with barriers to manumission that were extremely difficult to overcome. And vice versa: a certain facility to obtain manumission could coexist with an infernal treatment of enslaved individuals. Patriarchal negligence could also mean neglecting enslaved people's sustenance, while greater attention to their material living conditions was not incompatible with a more clearly mercantile interest. And so on.

Unlike Genovese, I believe that, while isolated aspects are comparable from country to country, a comparative assessment as a whole is logically and objectively impracticable, precisely because of the innumerable contradictions between the aspects involved. It would be ridiculous to think of combining all of the items mentioned above for the purpose of elaborating a unitary index with which to assess the treatment conferred upon enslaved people.

In US historiography, in a sequence that goes from Tannenbaum to Stampp and Brion Davis, there was a stage in which Ulrich B. Phillips's understanding of a benign, paternal form of slavery in the United States was disproved. But in the next stage, US historiography retracted, and

did so especially with Genovese. In *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, thanks to paternalism, the enslaved people in the Southern United States appear as the working class with the best material living conditions in the entire world. Fogel and Engerman reached the same conclusion in *Time on the Cross*, a work that rejects the notion of paternalism and attributes enslaved people's favorable condition to slavery's capitalist nature. This inversion should perhaps not be surprising, but is nonetheless curious: slavery in the Southern United States, the cruelest in the Americas according to abolitionists' propaganda, was transformed into the most benign in the sophisticated historiography of Genovese, Fogel and Engerman.

Without delving into endless comparisons, I will point out here only two issues. The first has to do with the possibility of manumission and integration of freed enslaved people in the milieu of free individuals. Without considering it a fundamental point of comparison of slave regimes, as Tannenbaum did,[72] it is unquestionable that, in this particular regard, nineteenth-century slavery in the United States was the worst in the Americas for both enslaved people and emancipated enslaved people.

It is also worth noting that the improvement in enslaved people's material wellbeing did not occur only in the United States. The end of the African slave trade imposed a similar improvement also in Brazil and Cuba, a fact that can be objectively verified. It is unquestionable that this trend developed the most in the United States, since the African slave trade was abolished there much earlier and the successful process of internal procreation motivated planters to promote family life among enslaved people. On the other hand, as Blassingame demonstrated, the slave trade practiced by slave owners separated at least one-third of slave families, additionally subjected to further humiliation from the sexual abuse practiced by masters and their representatives.[73] Blassingame rejected Elkins's comparison of slave plantations with Nazi concentration camps. Instead, he observed that enslaved people in the Southern United States were able to maintain their personality and develop original cultural creations. However, this was achieved through a strenuous resistance to the slave system.

One misunderstanding that must be corrected is the presumed difference in the treatment conferred to enslaved people between large and small owners. According to some authors, the paternalist inclination of small slaveholders led them to tend to their few enslaved people with personal attention and kindness. Although Schwartz upheld this thesis, he previously demonstrated the opposite – the extent to which sugarcane planters in Bahia, most of which were small or medium slaveholders, acted according to mercantile interests and imposed on their enslaved people a regime of hard work and material scarcity. In his examination of French Guiana, Ciro Cardoso observed that small slaveholders maintained their enslaved people under the most precarious and exhausting working and material living conditions, which was not so often the case with large planters, who had more resources to provide their enslaved people with better material conditions.[74] Actually, observations in this regard are extremely variable and do not allow us to establish a clear and constant difference between large and small slaveholders.

Hasenbalg identified three different approaches in US historiographic literature that emphasize different aspects of the formation of Black personality under slavery: coercive, rewarding, and moral/paternalist, respectively, emphasized by Elkins, Fogel-Engerman, and Genovese. After questioning the unilateral exaggerations of each approach, Hasenbalg proposed that the three are not mutually exclusive, but coexist to various extents of preponderance depending on the current circumstances. Nonetheless, if we aim at systematizing the three approaches cited above, it would be a mistake to place them on the same level. The coercive aspect, whether latent or explosive, was always the main and primordial approach to treat enslaved people.[75]

In terms of comparative history, it is correct to conclude, like Brion Davis, not that enslaved people were better treated in a certain country, but that there were *different forms of oppression* at

every given moment in the history of slavery in all countries.[76] For that reason, I also agree with his assertion that the differences between slavery in Latin America and the United States were no greater than regional and temporal differences within each country. This

> …would lead us to suspect that the slavery of Black people was a unique phenomenon, or *Gestalt*, whose variations were less significant than the underlying patterns of unity.[77]

Instead of *Gestalt*, I would say that the mode of production, whose essence was identical in all countries, underlay its various national expressions.

A fundamental aspect correctly emphasized by Davis, Mintz, and Genovese is that of current conditions, especially when undertaking international comparisons.[78] If the examples I have provided regarding Brazilian slavery are insufficient, let us examine the Cuban case. The relatively soft or less harsh treatment that characterized Cuba up to the mid-eighteenth century was followed by harsh and cruel treatment as sugar plantations multiplied and the import of Africans increased, making enslaved people's existence a living hell not unlike that of other Caribbean islands. It is significant that the Royal Decree of May 31, 1789, with its detailed regulation of enslaved people's education, treatment, and occupations for the purpose of providing minimal legal protection, was aggressively combatted by Cuban slaveholders, who were sufficiently strong to force the Spanish Crown to revoke it and replace it with the insignificant recommendations of the Royal Decree of April 22, 1804.[79]

Reiterating what I have already said, it is important to emphasize that circumstantial differences do not imply differences between slave *systems*, some presumably patriarchal and others, capitalist. Despite variations in time and space, the system was always the same – the articulating and totalizing system immanent in the colonial slave mode of production.

In *New World in the Tropics*, the book where Gilberto Freyre summarized and systematized his conclusions, he stated that slave rebellions in Brazil were never as plentiful or as violent as in other parts of the Americas,

> …perhaps because the treatment conferred upon slaves by the Portuguese, and later by the Brazilians, did not induce them so much to rebellion.[80]

The conclusion that Brazilian and foreign historians have been arriving at is quite the opposite. H. O. Patterson believes that it was precisely Brazil's slaveholding society which experienced the most continuous and intense slave revolts in the New World.[81] The only thing we did not have was a general slave rebellion similar to Haiti's, which was no doubt successful thanks to the favorable conditions created by the French Revolution. Other than that, the various acts of rebellion and nonconformity – assaults, flights, suicides, maroon communities, conspiracies, and insurrections – continue to be topics for research studies, which constantly uncover new facts. It is impossible not to relate that incessant rebelliousness to the brutality with which enslaved people were treated in Brazil.

Gilberto Freyre's method was always a kaleidoscopic impressionism from which a landscape emerges where the shadows are enveloped and blurred by the "poetic" light that shines on it as a whole. Only thus can he declare that the benevolence of Brazilian slavery has been well documented and even reiterate, as a sort of ethical justification, the worn-out argument that the living conditions of European workers in the first half of the nineteenth century were worse than the "well-treated" enslaved people of Brazilian plantations.[82] A typical argument employed by slaveholders against abolitionists. We can see it in Bishop Azeredo Coutinho's words, who asserted that enslaved people were more protected and better provided in their material needs than free laborers in Europe, who were presumably free "only by name."[83] And we find it in

the 1841 report by the government of Havana, which said that Europe's working class was more wretched than Cuban enslaved people.[84] Marx also compared the misery of English workers at the time of the Industrial Revolution to the situation of enslaved people in the Americas. However, he did not do it to ideologically justify one of the exploitation regimes, but to debunk the ideologues of both from the standpoint of the exploited. In addition, from the standpoint of worldwide historical progress, only capitalism creates the conditions that allow laborers to definitively emancipate themselves from any form of exploitation.

It is evident that an objective approach to the matter is incompatible with the official myth and with regionalist eulogies that claim that the primacy of slaveholding kindness belonged to either the Northeast or to Rio Grande do Sul.[85] I believe that, to examine slave treatment objectively, it is important to avoid two common distorting approaches. First, to focus primarily on domestic slavery, which neither allows a correct examination of domestic slavery itself, nor permits an analysis of slavery as a system. I will return to this issue in a special chapter. Second, but just as important, to establish a methodologically deficient correlation between slavery as an economic and social system and miscegenation and its social effects. The much celebrated Luso-tropical propensity for miscegenation and the presumed absence of racial prejudice has been thoroughly debunked by Boxer,[86] and J. H. Rodrigues correctly argued that the Portuguese were unable to create a mestizo population in Africa because, since White colonists only settled there in the late-nineteenth century, they no longer found slavery, "which, with or without prejudice, allowed them to use and abuse their enslaved females at a purely material and sexual level."[87] However, regarding the effects of miscegenation in Brazil, J. H. Rodrigues said that it "discouraged resistance, facilitated conviviality, and, in short, appeased the Black masses."[88] Ianni himself, one of the best scholars of racial relations in Brazil, saw the biological phenomenon of miscegenation as a revolutionary social factor:

> The mulatto is [...] a dialectic product, negation of the slave and the master, and therefore one of the agents of the destruction of slavery. As a category resulting from the interaction of the asymmetric extremes of the current order, of the internal contradictions that are inherent to the system, it is one of the elements that undermines it. At the heart of the process of miscegenation, with its reflex cumulative effects, the mestizo in turn is an agent of decomposition.[89]

Miscegenation went hand-in-hand with slavery everywhere, and nowhere did it change the situation of the mass of enslaved people or have any negative effect on the stability of the slave regime. In Brazil, the incorporation of miscegenation into the slaveholding society served as a means to preserve it and not to decompose it, as Florestan Fernandes convincingly demonstrated.[90] While the reaction to miscegenation and to the free Black population was certainly not the same in the United States as it was in Brazil, and the differences in their development after abolition are undeniable, the reason is not to be found in the slave mode of production itself, but in other factors of their historical formation.

In short, the issue of the treatment of enslaved people must be approached from the perspective of the slave *system*, and therefore within the basic lines of the mode of production. From that standpoint, it is not difficult to observe that the mechanism of that mode of production implied norms of conviviality between masters and enslaved people, and even patriarchal forms of behavior on the part of the masters, but it also implied depleting the slave's vitality in a certain, calculated time period. And it implied physical coercion in an environment of permanent fear instilled on the mass of enslaved people, which required daily routine punishment and exceptional punishment with a "pedagogical" intent, no less violent in Brazil than in other slaveholding regions, as demonstrated by Father Benci or the historiographical works by Artur Ramos and J. Alípio Goulart.

It was the same economic mechanism that led most masters to improve the treatment of enslaved people and to extend their useful life after the mid-nineteenth century. We have already examined the measures taken to protect slave mothers and their newborn children. In large coffee plantations, clinics were established and medical assistance was promoted, with the shortages and precariousness of the time. Greater, regular attention was paid to food, clothing, and hygiene. In spite of his opposition to slavery, Tavares Bastos acknowledged:

> Since Negroes are no longer abundantly available at a measly price, and because of the havoc created by yellow fever and cholera, masters are more mindful today of the rules of hygiene, the comfort of housing facilities, cleanliness, and food.[91]

But this state of affairs, which characterized the late period of slavery, should not be extrapolated in retrospect to its entire duration. And we should also remember that the improvement in the material living conditions did not reduce the long workdays or the merciless severity of punishments. The inflexible harshness in the treatment of enslaved people, even in the context of the regime's downfall, is demonstrated by the precise information on coffee plantations collected and analyzed by Stanley J. Stein, Emília Viotti da Costa, Warren Dean, and Suely Reis de Queiroz.

While certainly better treated, the enslaved remained an exploited, humiliated, and punished slave. Mariano Pereira dos Santos and Maria Benedita da Rocha, who experienced slavery in its final stage, spoke of it in oral testimonies as a living nightmare. Mariano, who was enslaved in a plantation in Paraná, went about barefoot even in frosty weather because Brazilian enslaved people received no shoes – their bare feet were an indication of their subhuman condition. One of the punishments inflicted by overseers was to punch holes with a knife on the sole of their feet in order to turn the mere act of walking into a torment. Maria Benedita, an indigenous woman illegally enslaved in São Paulo when she was barely a few months old, had her hand broken and an eye permanently damaged with the blow of a stone when she was still a child – pedagogical resources of the overseer to educate the slave child into submission for slave labor.[92]

Notes

1 Cf. Antonil. Op. cit., p. 180, 190; Ribeyrolles. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 37.
2 Cf. Klein, Herbert S. *The Middle Passage*, p. 37; Fraginals, Manuel Moreno; Klein, Herbert S.; Engerman, Stanley L. El nivel y estructura de los precios de los esclavos de las plantaciones cubanas a mediados del siglo XIX: algunas perspectivas comparativas. *Revista de Historia Económica*, n. 1, p. 97–120.
3 Lisboa, Silva. Op. cit., p. 502.
4 Koster. Op. cit., p. 502, 530.
5 Apud Eisenberg. Op. cit., p. 169. Data for Table X extracted from Table 24, p. 173.
6 Brandão, Júlio de Freitas. Op. cit.; Pinho, Wanderley. *História de um engenho do Recôncavo*, p. 187–195, 253–254.
7 Cf. Armitage, João. *História do Brasil*, p. 131.
8 Debret. Op. cit., t. I, p. 196.
9 Cf. Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 90–93. Data extracted from Graphs 1 and 2.
10 Data extracted from Gayoso. Op. cit. Table on p. 164.
11 Data extracted from Müller, Daniel Pedro. Op. cit., p. 169.
12 Data extracted from Cardoso, F. H. *Cor e mobilidade social em Florianópolis*. Tables on p. 72, 77, 81.
13 Data extracted from Conrad, Robert. *Os últimos anos da escravatura no Brasil*. Appendix I. Tables 4, 17, and 18.
14 Ibidem, p. 79–80, Figure 4.
15 Data extracted from Taunay. *História do café no Brasil*, t. IV, v. 6, p. 323–331. For 1873, see Slenes. Op. cit.
16 Cf. Deerr. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 280.
17 Cf. Fraginals. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 42.
18 Ibidem, p. 39–42.

19 Saco, J. A. *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana*, t. III, p. 4, 51–53; Fraginals. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 41.
20 Cf. Fraginals. Op. cit., v. 1, chap. 6, v. 2, p. 83–87; Fraginals, Klein, and Engerman. Op. cit., p. 108–110; Le Riverend. Op. cit., p. 334–339.
21 *ABN*, v. 31, p. 19; Saint-Hilaire. *Viagem à Província de São Paulo*, p. 80; Bonifácio, José. Op. cit., p. 63.
22 Burlamaque. Op. cit., p. 31.
23 Correa Júnior. A. P. Op. cit., p. 125–126.
24 Moraes, Evaristo de. Op. cit., p. 174.
25 Ibidem.
26 Cf. Koster. Op. cit., p. 529.
27 Antonil. Op. cit., p. 152.
28 Saint-Hilaire, *Viagens pelo Distrito dos Diamantes*, p. 403–404.
29 Apud. Nabuco, Joaquim. *O abolicionismo*, p. 89–90.
30 Kidder. Op. cit., p. 60–61.
31 Antonil. Op. cit., p. 164; Fraginals. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 52–63.
32 Engerman. Op. cit., p. 270–274; Klein, Herbert S., and Engerman, Stanley L. Fertility Differentials between enslaved people in the United States and the British West Indies: A Note on Lactation Practices and their Possible Implications. *The William and Mary Quarterly,* v. 35.
33 Cf. Mattoso, Kátia de Queirós. *Ser escravo no Brasil*, p. 128.
34 Costa, Iraci del Nero da. *Vila Rica: população (1719–1826)*, p. 152; Costa, Iraci del Nero da e Gutierrez, Horácio. Nota sobre casamentos de escravos em São Paulo e Paraná (1830). *História: Questões & Debates*, year V, n. 9, p. 313–321.
35 Cf. Müller, Daniel Pedro. Op. cit., p. 173–187; Merrick, Thomas W. and Graham, Douglas H. *População e desenvolvimento econômico no Brasil de 1800 até a atualidade*, 1979, p. 85–86. Regarding enslaved families in Espírito Santo, see Almada, Vilma. Op. cit., p. 142–143.
36 Cf. Tschudi. Op. cit., p. 56–58; Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 185–186.
37 Cf. Stampp. Op. cit., p. 314–317; Genovese. *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, p. 524.
38 *CLIB*, 1869, Part One, 1871.
39 Cf. Nabuco, Joaquim. Op. cit., p. 90; Graham, Maria. Op. cit., p. 326; Couty, Louis. *Étude de biologie industrielle sur le café*, p. 111. Regarding enslaved birth and infant mortality rates, see also *Reflexões sobre a escravatura das fazendas no Brasil*. Leaflet published in Rio de Janeiro in 1845 and signed by O. Muniz. Summary in Taunay. Op. cit., t. II, v. 4, chap. 63.
40 Cf. Costa, Iraci da. Op. cit., p. 106; Dean, Warren. Op. cit., p. 72–73. **Table 3.10**.
41 Cf. Müller, Daniel Pedro. Op. cit., p. 196; Goulart, Maurício. Op. cit., p. 155–158; Freyre, Gilberto. *Casa-grande & senzala*, t. II, p. 563–564, n. 195.
42 Cf. Saint-Hilaire. *Viagem à Província de São Paulo*, p. 75, n. 134; Moraes, Evaristo de. Op. cit., p. 4–6, 211. On the extraordinary disdain with which enslaved people were buried, see Carneiro, Edison. Nego veio quando morre... In: *Ladinos e crioulos*.
43 Cf. D'Alincourt, Luiz. Op. cit., p. 354.
44 Cf. Lisboa, Silva. Op. cit., p. 502; Koster. Op. cit., p. 297, 311, 511–513; Ewbank. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 129; v. 2, p. 360.
45 Schwartz, Stuart B. The Plantations of St. Benedict: the Benedictine Sugar Mills of Colonial Brazil. *The Americas*, v. 39, n. 1.
46 Werneck, F. P. Lacerda. Op. cit., p. 26–27.
47 Ribeyrolles. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 37.
48 One *braça* is equivalent to 2.20 meters. (T.N.)
49 Ibidem; Castro, Veiga de. Op. cit., p. 42.
50 Cf. Reis de Queiroz, Suely. *Escravidão negra em São Paulo*, p. 93.
51 Cf. Nabuco, Joaquim. Op. cit., p. 124.
52 Cf. Merrick e Graham. Op. cit., p. 88.
53 Cf. Fraginals. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 120; v. 2, p. 15, 88.
54 Cf. Schtaierman, E. M. and Trofimova, M. K. *La schiavittú nell'Italia imperiale*, chaps. 4 and 7; Malheiro, Perdigão. Op. cit. Part One. Section 3a.
55 Cf. Tannenbaum. Op. cit., p. 68–72; Stampp. Op. cit., p. 253–257; Genovese. *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, p. 51–53, 406–407; Harris. Op. cit., p. 85–86; Degler. Op. cit., p. 43–44, 52, 58, 95.
56 Cf. Le Riverend. Op. cit., p. 79–84; Midlo Hall. Op. cit., chap. 6.
57 Tannenbaum. Op. cit., p. 58–67; Elkins. Op. cit., p. 229–231; Harris. Op. cit., chap. 7.
58 Mattoso, Kátia de Queirós. *Ser escravo no Brasil*. Op. cit., chaps. 7–9; Idem, A Carta de Alforria como fonte complementar para o estudo da rentabilidade da mão de obra escrava urbana (1819–1888). *A moderna história econômica*. Carlos Manuel Pelaez and Mircea Buescu (Coords.); Schwartz, Stuart B. A manumissão dos escravos no Brasil colonial – Bahia, 1684–1745. *Anais de História*, year VI; Oliveira, Maria Inês Cortes de. O liberto: o seu mundo e os outros (Salvador, 1790–1890); Luna, Francisco Vidal. *Minas Gerais: escravos*

e senhores. Análise da estrutura populacional e econômica (1718–1804), p. 96, 134; Costa, Iraci da. *Vila Rica: população*, p. 77, 81–82, 147; Souza, Laura de Mello e. *Desclassificados do ouro. A pobreza mineira no século XVIII*, p. 148–152; Almada, Vilma. Op. cit., p. 105–107, 146–154; Galliza. Op. cit., Chap. 4; Figueiredo, Ariosvaldo. Op. cit., p. 56–60; Reis de Queiroz, Suely. Op. cit., p. 92–97; Dean, Warren. Op. cit., p. 81–84; Cunha, Manuela Carneiro da. *Negros estrangeiros. Os escravos libertos e sua volta à África*, p. 9–100; Salles, Vicente. *O negro no Pará*. Op. cit., p. 149–156; Mott, Luiz R. B. Cautelas de Alforria de duas escravas na Província do Pará (1829–1846). *Revista de História*, n. 95; Idem, Pai dos pretos em Sergipe: 1774–1851. *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, n. 18.

59 Mattoso, Kátia. *Ser escravo no Brasil*, p. 186.

60 Cf. Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 133; Koster, H. Op. cit., p. 510. Saint-Hilaire, Auguste de. *Viagem à Província de São Paulo*. Op. cit., p. 80; Idem, *Viagens pelo Distrito dos Diamantes*, p. 212–213 and 230; Mattos, Raymundo José da Cunha. Corografia Histórica da Província de Goiás. *RIHGB,* t. XXXVII. Part One. 1874. p. 311; Graham, Maria. Op. cit., p. 159 e 219; Debret. Op. cit., t. I, p. 224 e 253; Correa Júnior, A. P. Op. cit., p. 134. On coffee planters' custom of liberating disabled enslaved people, cf. Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 93–94, n. 68, p. 223; Motta Sobrinho, Alves. Op. cit., p. 49 and 53.

61 Cf. Costa, Viotti da. Op. cit., p. 263–264. See also Moraes, Evaristo de. *A campanha abolicionista*, p. 115–116.

62 Cf. Handelmann, Gottfried Heinrich. *História do Brasil*. *RIHGB*, CVIII. v. 162, p. 378; Ribeyrolles. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 38.

63 Cf. Debret. Op. cit., t. I. p. 215–216.

64 Cf. Koster. Op. cit., p. 509; Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 141.

65 Cf. Ribeyrolles. Op. cit., v. 2, p. 38.

66 Cf. Williams, Eric. *Op. cit.*, chap. 11.

67 Cf. Harris, Marvin. Op. cit., p. 71–75.

68 Cf. Saco, J. A. Op. cit., t. III, p. 138, 215–256.

69 On the officially-forged myth of the benevolence of Brazilian slavery, cf. Costa, Viotti da. Op. cit., p. 280–281; Goulart, J. Alípio. *Da palmatória ao patíbulo*. Op. cit., p. 31–38.

70 See aforementioned works by Tannenbaum, Elkins e Klein. In the anthology *Slavery in the New World,* op. cit., see also Tannenbaum, Frank. Slavery, the Negro and Racial Prejudice, p. 3–7; Klein, Herbert S. Anglicanism, Catholicism, and the Negro Slave, p. 138–166.

71 Cf. Genovese, Eugéne D. The Treatment of Slaves in Different Countries: Problems in the Applications of the Comparative Method. *Slavery in the New World*. Op. cit., p. 203.

72 Cf. Tannenbaum. *El negro en las Américas*. Op. cit., p. 70–71.

73 Blassingame. Op. cit., p. 82–84, 89–92.

74 Cf. Schwartz, Stuart B. Free Labor in a Slave Economy. Op. cit., p. 172–175; Cardoso, Ciro Flamarion. *Economia e sociedade em áreas coloniais periféricas: Guiana Francesa e Pará (1750–1817)*. p. 58–61.

75 Hasenbalg, Carlos Alfredo. *Discriminação e desigualdades raciais no Brasil*. Chap. 1.

76 Cf. Davis, David Brion. The Comparative Approach to American History: Slavery. *Slavery in the New World*. Op. cit., p. 67.

77 Idem, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*. Op. cit., p. 254.

78 Idem, The Comparative Approach. Op. cit., p. 67–68; Genovese. Op. cit., p. 204–205; Mintz, Sidney W. Labor and Sugar in Puerto Rico and in Jamaica, 1800–1850. *Slavery in the New World*. Op. cit., p. 176.

79 Cf. Saco, J. A. Op. cit., t. HI, p. 8–17.

80 Freyre, Gilberto. *Novo Mundo nos trópicos*. p. 65–66.

81 Cf. Patterson, H. Orlando. The General Causes of Jamaican Slave Revolts. Op. cit., p. 211.

82 Cf. Freyre, Gilberto. Op. cit., p. 66–70, 179.

83 Cf. Coutinho, Azeredo. Op. cit., p. 256–257.

84 Cf. Saco, J. A. Op. cit., t. IV, p. 129130.

85 On the myth of "*gaucho* racial democracy," see Cardoso, F. H. *Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil meridional*. Op. cit., chap. II, 2; chap. III.

86 Boxer, C. R. *Relações raciais no Império Colonial Português (1415–1825)*.

87 Rodrigues, J. H. *Brasil e África*. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 63. See also p. 14–16.

88 Idem, A rebeldia negra e a Abolição. *História e historiografia*. p. 78.

89 Ianni, Octávio. *As metamorfoses do escravo*. Op. cit., p. 197.

90 Cf. Fernandes, Florestan. *Brancos e negros em São Paulo*. Op. cit., p. 82–123.

91 Bastos, Tavares. Op. cit., Appendix IV. p. 264.

92 Cf. Maestri Filho, Mário José. Entrevista Histórica. Op. cit., p. 831; Idem, E como eu digo: de agora, depois da libertação, "tamo na glória"! Testimony by the former slave Mariano Pereira dos Santos. *História: Questões & Debates*. Year IV, n. 6, p. 81–97.

PART IV

Territorial Regime and Land Rent

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TERRITORIAL REGIME IN SLAVEHOLDING BRAZIL

Plantations and Large Landed Estates

According to widespread observations, the abundance and ease of access to fertile lands was one of the main conditions for the development of colonial slavery. Note: a condition, and not a determining cause. Plantations in turn determined the use of the land in the form of large landed estates and large-scale production. This becomes evident when examining the circumstances inherent to sugar plantations.

Silva Lisboa said that "a landowner with fifty enslaved people working constantly and regularly can easily produce one hundred *tarefas* of sugarcane."[1] Since a Bahian *tarefa* measures 4356 m^2, a medium-sized plantation cultivated 43.5 hectares of sugarcane per year. A large plantation with one hundred field enslaved people would have 87 hectares of sugarcane fields. By today's standards, this is a far cry from large-scale production. We should consider, however, the peculiarities of the agricultural technology at the time and the structure of slave plantations. Since they did not use fertilizers, planters needed reserve areas to change the location of the fields periodically. There are references to fields being cultivated for sixty and ninety years uninterruptedly, but Vilhena disapproved of it because it lowered production. The extended use of the land was done only to save the expenses of creating a new field. Many years earlier, Antonil warned that planters should not abuse the land, suggesting that six or seven years of continuous use exhausted the land. In the Province of Rio de Janeiro, Saint-Hilaire observed that there were lands where sugarcane fields produced for twelve years, while others produced no more than two or three years. Also according to the French naturalist, in the São Paulo plateau there were virgin lands that produced for twenty consecutive years, but common lands yielded no more than three harvests, after which they had to remain uncultivated for two to six years. Schorer Petrone's general conclusion is that, in São Paulo plantations, the sugarcane fields and sometimes the mill were itinerant.[2] Assuming that the extension of the reserve lands was three times greater than the land tilled, a medium-sized plantation would need about 174 hectares of lands appropriate for sugarcane. In addition to the sugarcane fields, there were lands where foodstuffs for self-consumption were grown and pastures for horses and cattle. Lacking valid data to arrive at average estimates, I focus exclusively on the Salgado plantation, which was meticulously observed by Tollenare. Its total cultivated area measured 370 hectares, with another area of the same size reserved for pastures.[3] Therefore, 740 hectares were effectively used. Approximately half of this area would be used by a medium-sized plantation.

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Plantations also needed forests to obtain firewood and wood for construction, clay pits to extract the raw matter to manufacture items such as sugar molds, tiles, and bricks, an area to build a weir in the case of water-driven mills, an area for residential and production facilities, etc. As we can imagine, not all plantations had adequate spaces for all of the above. Once their forest area was depleted, many plantations were forced to buy firewood. It was not always convenient to manufacture clay items in-house, as Antonil argued. In the sixteenth century, there are news that there was even a collective clay pit that supplied several plantations close to the city of Salvador. Collective clay pits still existed in São Paulo in the nineteenth century. On average, we can suppose that a plantation with forty to fifty field enslaved people that produced from 3000 to 4000 *arrobas* of sugar per year required about 1000 hectares to operate regularly for a long time. Schorer Petrone mentioned two plantations in Itu with a greater sugar production per appropriated area. Both of them produced 3000 *arrobas*, one of them with 508 hectares and the other one with 699.[4] I believe that both of them were favorably positioned in terms of the productivity of the land, under the technical conditions of Brazilian slavery.

The plantations of other export products followed the model of sugarcane plantations, adapted to their peculiarities. Without going into detail, I mention only the very itinerant nature of cotton and coffee plantations. According to Gayoso, in Maranhão, cotton fields yielded two or three harvests in recently cleared lands. According to Spix and Martius, only rarely was a cotton field exploited for more than three or four consecutive years: considering the fertility of virgin lands, it was preferable to create a new field than to restore the exhausted one.[5] The itinerant nature of coffee plantations is also well known, as planters sought virgin lands and left behind exhausted ones. The Paraíba Valley is one such example, where the hills suffered extreme erosion in the nineteenth century.[6]

While plantations implied large-scale production, in general the planters' estates far exceeded the dimensions strictly required by the technical needs of the time. Salgado's property measured two square *sesmaria* leagues, the equivalent of 8712 hectares, of which only 8% was used. This was not an isolated case; it was a common trait of the entire Zona da Mata in Pernambuco, as Tollenare observed. In the sugar-producing region of São Paulo in 1818, according to the aforementioned study by Alice Canabrava, 5.58% of landowners held 64.50% of the appropriated land, with properties measuring an average of 6190 hectares.[7]

The same historian observes that, when explaining the phenomenon in a particular cultural context, "it is difficult to separate and assess the specific importance of economic factors in each case."[8] In addition to economic factors, there are others of a different kind, the most relevant of which was the process of conferring land grants through *sesmarias*, discussed below. Land was appropriated not only for economic reasons, but also for the sake of status. I believe, however, that noneconomic motivations did not exert the primordial and all-encompassing influence that Oliveira Vianna attributed to them, initiating a school of thought in this regard.[9] The plantation form itself led to the monopoly of land by a privileged minority of planters. Each planter attempted to obtain as much land as possible before their competitors. This behavior was also observed in the British and French Antilles, where large estates also included large uncultivated areas, even though the land available was infinitely smaller than in Brazil, and despite the capitalist mentality that was predominant in the metropolises.[10]

Large landed estates, considered in the specificity of the local circumstances, represented a structural element of slavery in the entire American continent. However, their processes of formation were not always the same, in part as a result of the policies adopted by the different European powers in their respective colonies.[11] Hence, the pertinence of examining the particularities of the formation of the territorial regime in slaveholding Brazil.

Hereditary Captaincies

The legal frameworks for land appropriation in colonial Brazil derived from Portuguese law at the time, which corresponded to a particular stage of the evolution of feudalism. But legal frameworks are not equivalent to territorial regimes, since the latter obeyed the demands of the mode of production established in the colony. Between reality and the legislation, between the effective territorial regime and the legal norms, there were discrepancies and contradictions, which were resolved in practice by rejecting some elements of the law and absorbing others, properly adapted by the effective territorial regime. From this perspective, I shall examine two typical institutions in the context of our object: hereditary captaincies and *sesmarias*.

The issue of hereditary captaincies is interesting especially because of what it reveals of the tendencies in the colonization process. From a concrete historical standpoint, we know that the institution's influence was secondary, since the economic force of the Portuguese colony derived from the state system of royal captaincies and the general governments.

The controversy surrounding hereditary captaincies is well known, and there is therefore no need to examine it in detail. The authors who have analyzed them from the legal standpoint have consistently highlighted their feudal aspects to a greater or lesser extent. On this line of interpretation are Varnhagen, Handelmann, João Ribeiro, Capistrano, Malheiros Dias, Caio Prado Júnior, Nestor Duarte, Nelson Werneck Sodré, and Manuel Correia de Andrade. On the other hand, Simonsen and Alexander Marchant asserted the originally capitalist nature of the *donataria* system.[12]

I believe that the system must be understood as the peculiar expression of a type of European colonizing project at the time of mercantilism. A type that was characterized by a broad delegation of sovereignty, which included companies with trade privileges. Organized as joint-stock companies managed by large commercial capital and with no relationship whatsoever with feudal law, trade companies enjoyed sovereignty rights over their conquered and colonized areas that were much broader than those conferred to *donatários* (I am therefore not referring here to strictly commercial companies). One revealing example in this regard is the Dutch West India Company. It had powerful military forces at its disposal and all aspects of the government of Dutch Brazil were under its supreme responsibility, from the appointment of top government officials to the establishment and collection of taxes, the administration of justice, the organization of civilian life, etc., enjoying complete legal freedom to that effect.[13]

It seems evident to me that Portuguese *donatarias* in Brazil fall under feudal law, consolidated at the time by the Manueline Ordinances. It is important, however, to acknowledge their limitations in terms of Portuguese feudal law, which was already different from medieval law at the time. If we examine the texts of the *Cartas de Doação* (Grant Letters) and the *Forais* (Foral Letters), we will find ourselves far from Varnhagen's apologetic view, for example. A view whose extremism is quite characteristic of a historiographical tendency, which I reproduce here for that reason:

> This way, the Crown transferred most of its royal rights to the *donatários* and almost made protectorates of the new Brazilian captaincies, with limited powers in exchange for very modest tributes, including the tithe, from which it paid public worship and remunerated the captaincy's lord. We can almost say that Portugal recognized Brazil's independence before it was colonized.[14]

But the *donatários* had no legislative power and were entirely subordinate to the kingdom's ordinances, except in those areas explicitly stated by the Grant Letters, which were issued by the

Crown itself. The Foral Letters, which regulated relations between *donatários* and private colonists, were also issued by the Crown. Instead of reviving medieval localism, colonial *donatarias* fell under the dominion of a strongly centralized absolute monarchy, of which Portugal was the pioneer in Europe.

An analysis of the Grant Letters, which are based on a uniform model,[15] demonstrates that there was a clear intention to strictly delimit the prerogatives of hereditary captains. These became the *private* owners of only 20% of the area of their captaincy and were obliged to distribute the remaining 80% as gratuitous *sesmarias*, except for those areas where any personal facilities existed. It would be absurd to classify the colonists' obligations, such as paying taxes and providing military services to defend de colony, as feudal. The *donatários* had no eminent right over the *sesmarias*, with their prerogatives limited to the exercise of public power. It is according to Weber's typologies that one could understand income from tax collection as capitalism, which was the only source of "profits" for *donatários* as such.

The public revenue of the Captaincy of Pernambuco gives us an idea of the position of the captaincy's *donatário* and the profits derived from his "royal rights." Gabriel Soares de Sousa wrote that Jorge de Albuquerque Coelho, the captaincy's heir, obtained an annual income of 10,000 *cruzados*, which amply compensated the expenses incurred by the founding *donatário*, but there were plantation owners who obtained the same income. About thirty years later, Fernandes Brandão reported that Duarte Albuquerque Coelho, the *donatário* at that time, obtained about 20,000 *cruzados*, which is an indication of the captaincy's progress. However, the Royal Treasury obtained about 100,000 *cruzados* from taxes and the monopoly of brazilwood in Pernambuco, five times more than the *donatário*. This does not include the payments for sugar exports in the Lisbon customs office, which totaled 300,000 *cruzados* per year for exports from Pernambuco, Itamaracá, and Paraíba. Based on the survey of plantations carried out by Friar Vicente do Salvador, we can attribute two-thirds of that sum to the custom fees paid for Pernambucan sugar. This leads to the conclusion that *donatários* were merely a minor partner of the Crown, receiving only a modest portion of the fiscal revenue.[16]

Sesmarias

I will now examine the issue of the legal process of distributing colonial agricultural land through *sesmarias*. Let us see how this institution of Portuguese feudal law was applied in Brazil.

D. Fernando I's law of *sesmarias* established important restrictions to property rights, since it mandated distributing unused seigneurial lands, whether they belonged to the King or the Crown, the clergy, or nobility. But the *sesmaria* institution maintained the feudal tributes due on the distributed lands, and only prohibited – after the Manueline Ordinances – the collection of additional tributes. Only those *sesmarias* consisting of formerly exempt lands were exempt from paying tribute, but there were few of them other than communal lands in Portugal.[17]

However, *all* of the lands in Brazil were originally exempt from feudal tributes, since they belonged to the Crown as the holder of the Order of Christ. The Foral Letters conferred to the *donatários* maintained the lands exempt of tribute, granting them as *sesmarias* "with no obligations other than the tithe, which they must pay to the order of our Lord Jesus Christ, out of everything present in those lands." As we will see below, the ecclesiastical tithe in Brazil lost the quality of a feudal tribute, becoming only a fiscal obligation. The *Regimento* by Tomé de Sousa, the first governor-general, maintained the principle established in the Foral Letters, which was also unaltered by Roque da Costa Barreto's *Regimento*. Later, *sesmaria* Grant Letters included a clause that required providing access to springs, bridges, and quarries, as well as other similar clauses of public service, obviously not of a feudal nature. Unlike emphyteusis, *sesmaria* lands

were granted in Brazil without the imposition of temporary or perpetual seigniorial duties. Caio Prado Júnior was therefore right when he wrote that *sesmaria* property was *freehold* property, devoid of any personal dependency. In addition, it was freely alienable, with a single restriction established by Tomé de Sousa's *Regimento* – that it could only be alienated after a period of three years after being granted. The legal logic of that restriction was that, in that period, the recipient should have the *sesmaria* populated and cultivated, or risk having the grant revoked.[18]

As we can see, from a legal standpoint, the territorial regime instituted in Brazil profoundly differed early on from the regime instituted in Portugal, since it shed the feudal characteristics that were peculiar to the latter. This certainly did not occur without resistance. There is at least one indication that the Lisbon Court hesitated regarding the path to take. This indication is found in the two Royal Charters addressed to Martim Afonso de Sousa regarding *sesmarias* in Brazil, both of them dated November 20, 1530. They are actually two versions of the same Royal Charter, the first one annulled by the second, after the royal delegate's departure to Brazil. The "mystery" of the two versions, both of them authentic, is resolved in light of the two options probably debated among the Crown's counselors regarding the territorial regime to be established in the colony. The option adopted in the first version was of feudal inspiration, since it prohibited the inheritance of lands granted to private individuals, thus making them inalienable, while it granted the royal delegate Martim Afonso de Sousa, a man of the high nobility, the right to appropriate unlimited extensions of land without that restriction. The changes enacted in the second version, especially the right of bequeathing the lands granted to anyone, can be explained by the understanding that the territorial regime proposed in the first version was unfeasible in Brazil.[19]

In addition to this episode, there were some unsuccessful attempts to transplant feudal procedures to the colony. Capistrano correctly pointed to two donations with characteristics that did not prevail in Brazil's territorial regime. One of them was the *sesmaria* granted to Brás Cubas, which included a clause of perpetual inalienability and established a direct transversal succession. The other one was the grant of the Santo Antônio Island to Duarte de Lemos by the *donatário* of Espírito Santo, Vasco Fernandes Coutinho, which transferred to the recipient almost all of the public prerogatives of the *donatário*.[20] In both cases, the grants copied feudal procedures and acquired the characteristics of a subinfeudation. But it is for that very reason that they were not a general phenomenon in Brazil, but isolated attempts that left no further trace. The legislation regarding *sesmarias* in the colony was contrary to subinfeudation.

Institutional Metamorphoses

We must now clarify the nature and function of certain Portuguese institutions in Brazil: the ecclesiastical tithe, the emphyteutic fees, and the *morgadios* or *majorats*.

The Ecclesiastical Tithe

Armando Castro asserts that the ecclesiastical tithe had the character of feudal rent under Portuguese socioeconomic conditions, while Caio Prado Júnior understood it as a simple tax, obviously under the conditions of its existence in Brazil.[21] In effect, there was a fundamental difference from the start regarding the position of the Catholic clergy and the Church in the metropolis and in the colony. In Portugal, the clergy was one of the privileged bodies exempt from paying tribute, like the nobility. The ecclesiastical tithe belonged to the clergy and was received by it directly. The colonization of Brazil took place under the religious jurisdiction of the Order of Christ, whose command the popes assigned to the Royal Family. As a result, it was

the Crown which collected the ecclesiastical tithe, with the obligation of providing for priests in Brazil. The colonial clergy was therefore placed in a position analogous to that of public servants. If this situation was sufficient to give the tithe a fiscal character, it was aggravated by the fact that, considering the large sums collected, the Crown had no qualms about using part or most of it for nonecclesiastical purposes, as it did with any revenue to cover the state's expenses. This fact was perceived by Fernandes Brandão and Friar Vicente do Salvador, both of them emphasizing, without further delving into the complex issue, that *all* of the Crown's expenses in Brazil were paid with the tithe.[22]

From an individual standpoint, priests in Brazil were not exempt from paying taxes and were subject to fiscal duties like any other lay colonist. This was contrary to what happened in Portugal, where priests were exempt from paying taxes, which led the Crown to forbid clergymen, religious orders, and ecclesiastical individuals to acquire real estate in royal lands, in an attempt to defend its sources of revenue (a legal principle consolidated in the *Philippine Ordinances*, Book Two, Title 16). In Brazil, clergymen as private individuals had the right to obtain *sesmarias* and acquire land in other ways, but with the same obligations as any other colonist. There were priests who dared resist the obligation of paying the tithe and other tributes, claiming their right to the privilege enjoyed in Portugal, and even appealing to the Ecclesiastical Court. On September 30, 1667, in response to the claims by clergymen who owned plantations, the Governor-General Alexandre de Sousa Freire issued a resolution that obliged all sugarcane plantations to pay the tithe, "with no exceptions whatsoever." The Crown itself reacted decidedly and ordered the payments made, with the Secular Court as the only recourse, as is evident in the Royal Ordinances of November 16, 1691, and September 4, 1709, the former addressed to the governor of Pernambuco and the latter to the Trustee of the Plantation of the Captaincy of Rio Grande (present-day Rio Grande do Norte). As an example, the 1716 *sesmaria* Grant Letter to Father Domingos Dias da Silveira contains all of the clauses imposed on lay colonists, including the obligation to pay the tithe.[23]

Only religious orders *as institutions* were exempt from paying the ecclesiastical tithe. Since this went against the Crown's interests, short of funds as it was, and irritated the colonists in their competition with the opulent economic undertakings of the clergy, the Royal Charter of June 27, 1711, eliminated the tithe exemption for new lands obtained by religious orders as of that date.[24]

I believe that enough has been said to demonstrate the metamorphosis of the ecclesiastical tithe: under colonial conditions, it stopped being feudal rent and became a fiscal obligation.

Emphyteutic Fees

As we have seen, the legislation at the beginning of colonization exempted *sesmarias* from paying any fees. However, the Royal Charter of December 27, 1695, determined that "a fee in accordance to the dimensions or the kindness of the land" would henceforth have to be paid. This was reiterated in the resolution of January 20, 1699, on which the *sesmaria* grants in Pernambuco were based. It stipulated a fee to be charged by the state for its own benefit, and not by private recipients of *sesmarias* as individuals. As a result, land in Brazil became taxable, thus revoking the original exemption established in the Ordinances.[25]

Felisbello Freire interpreted the innovation as the abolition of the full right of property of the land and the transformation of the holders of *sesmarias* into emphyteutae of the state.[26] According to Cirne Lima, this single decision was responsible for "a complete transformation of the legal situation of the national land." As tributaries of the Order of Christ up to that point, the lands could not be appropriated, but the imposition of the fee opened the door to the legal

appropriation of the direct domain of land in Brazil, turning *sesmarias* into concessions of latifundia carved out of the royal domains.[27] In other words, it was at that moment that private property of the land was fully established in Brazil.

In my opinion, both interpretations – Felisbello Freire's and Cirne Lima's – even though they are diametrically opposed, are constrained by legal formalism. The fee established by the Royal Charter of December 27, 1695, was not a faithful replica of the Portuguese emphyteutic fee, but a substantially mutilated copy. The medieval copyhold was associated to the laudemium, to the right of preemption in favor of the eminent or direct proprietor, to alienation only possible with the landlord's authorization, and to the full maintenance of seigneurial duties and other clauses that protect the real estate's eminent domain.[28] This emphyteutic usufruct remained in effect in the Modern Age, consolidated by the Philippine Ordinances, as is evident in Title 38 of Book Four, where all of the clauses mentioned above are present. None of them included a state fee applied to Brazilian *sesmarias*. It could be argued that those fees were implied in the institution itself, but the truth is that there is no evidence that they had any practical effect.

It is its practical effect which will clarify the nature of the fee charged by the Crown for *sesmaria* lands in the late seventeenth century. In Bahia, only in 1777 did the governor Manuel da Cunha Menezes order *sesmaria* holders to pay the fee to the state, stipulated according to the appraisal made by each district's Chamber. It is after 1780 that *sesmaria* grants contain a clause instituting an annual fee per square league, for an amount varying from $500 to 6$000 per league depending on the region. This allows a comparison between the *state* fee charged for the best lands of one of the wealthiest captaincies and the *private* fee of 10$000 per square league charged for the lease of the worst lands in the country in the Northeastern *sertão*. In Pernambuco, the first *sesmaria* with a fee clause was granted in September 1699, according to a special council's resolution. The following year, the Royal Charter of September 27 approved the special council's resolution, which established a fee of 6$000 per square league for lands located at a distance of 30 leagues from Recife and Olinda and of 4$000 for those located beyond that distance. However, Fragmon Carlos Borges observes in an important study that a many *sesmaria* holders did not pay the fee owed to the Royal Treasury, to the point that *sesmaria* grants started to require a reliable underwriter established in Recife who could be held responsible for the fee's payment. This was no doubt a ridiculous provision, since those were probably the most profitable lands at the time. Half a century after the fee was established, the revenue obtained from it by the Royal Treasury in Pernambuco was estimated at 240$570, which demonstrates that few proprietors paid it.[29]

Finally, Article 51, § 3 of the law of November 15, 1831, abolished *sesmaria* fees.[30] The fact that this legislative measure was summarily included in a budget law – the first law at the national level in Brazil – demonstrates that the tribute was never anything more than a simple territorial tax, unwillingly accepted by landowners, and therefore almost ineffective.

The levy I called a state fee was instituted in 1695 and was collected by the power that granted the *sesmaria* from its holders. It differed from the fee charged by the holders to the emphyteutae established in their *sesmarias*. I call the latter a private fee and I consider it a form of land rent. Gabriel Soares de Sousa informs of the existence of this characteristically emphyteutic private fee as early as the late sixteenth century,[31] and it became customary to charge it for leased land for cattle raising in the Northeast. The Crown acknowledged its legality by permitting the practice of emphyteusis in the aforementioned resolution of January 20, 1699.[32] Later, the Crown changed its mind and attempted to oppose the spontaneous tendency toward diffusion of the land's revenue through tenure in the form of copyhold and leasing, perceiving an obstacle to a faster settlement of the colonial territory in these practices. It therefore forbid *sesmaria* holders from profiting from them through copyhold or leasing.[33] Except for isolated interventions, such as the one that inspired the Royal Charter of October 20, 1753, the prohibition remained

on paper since, in addition to contradicting established practice, it clashed with the tendencies inherent to the latifundium structure, created and maintained with the Crown's consent.

A special case of an emphyteutic fee was the one charged by Municipal Councils of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro for *sesmarias* granted by the governors. As a result, municipal lands occupied by private individuals remained public property, and their use became a source of revenue.

This was the understanding implicit in § 29 of the charter issued on October 5, 1795, which mandated providing the chambers with *sesmarias* which could be held through the payment of fees, according to the Kingdom's legislation. They therefore implicitly assumed the form of emphyteusis. In fact, in the charter issued on April 10, 1821, regarding municipal lands in Rio de Janeiro, emphyteusis is explicitly mentioned, reestablishing it by revoking the June 20, 1812 Resolution by the Public Revenue Court. Laudemium and the perpetual nature of the tenure are also mentioned in that charter. The fact that in Royal Charters regarding the state fee there is no mention to the Kingdom's legislation on copyhold, emphyteusis, laudemium, etc., as was the case in concessions of municipal lands, serves as a confirmation that the state fee for private *sesmarias* was merely a territorial tax.[34]

The problem is not the obvious transfer of the institution of emphyteusis to Brazil, nor are we interested in debating its feudal origin (although its roots are remotely based on Roman law). What matters for our purposes is to study the economic and social nature of land rent in colonial Brazil, which will be the object of a special chapter below.

Finally, let us examine the issue of the fee that applied specifically to sugar plantations. It was one of the privileges granted by the Crown to the *donatários* of hereditary captaincies: the right to issue construction permits for sugar mills by charging a fee, later called *pensão*. Tomé de Sousa's *Regimento* determined the opposite – that no fee could be charged for accessing water or building mills.[35] As a result, plantation fees were charged in hereditary captaincies but not in royal captaincies. As can be inferred from Gabriel Soares de Sousa, this difference might have had an influence on the choice of the location to build the mill, at least during the early colonial times. From the same writer, we can infer that plantation fees were around 2% of the sugar production in hereditary captaincies included in the geographical area of the present-day state of Bahia. Regarding Pernambuco, there are news of fees established at 3% or 4% of the sugar production.[36]

The aforementioned law of November 15, 1831, also abolished the fees charged to sugar plantations, whose revenue the Treasury of independent Brazil deemed unnecessary.

Morgados

This institution arose in Portugal in accordance to the economic and social needs of the dominant class under feudalism, during the phase characterized by the end of serfdom. For that reason, as Armando Castro points out, the *morgado* system experienced an enormous development beginning in the thirteenth century and remained in place for seven centuries. Its institutional function was to defend the territorial economic foundation of the nobility, preventing the fragmentation of the land through hereditary transmission. The *morgado* system legally bound the seigneurial dominions to the family, making them inalienable, indivisible, and not apportionable after the death of the holder, being transmitted to a single descendant – the firstborn son or, in his absence, to a daughter, returning to the male lineage as soon as there was one. When applied to the Church, this type of perpetual bond of certain lands to religious entities was denominated *capela*.[37]

It is true that we had *morgados* and *capelas* in colonial Brazil, but there is insufficient data to estimate their proportion to nonbonded lands. Independently of the extent of their presence, the

institution in Brazil could not have the same function as it did in Portugal, since in Brazil land tenure was not the sole factor that determined a person's economic and social condition. It was pointless to inherit land without enslaved people or the possibility of acquiring them. It is therefore understandable that sometimes the lands of *morgados* and *capelas* were simply abandoned, as Koster observed.[38]

The dynamics of slavery were not adequate for permanent bonds, but for the full alienability of the land. Regarding land sales, Fernandes Brandão provides information on the early seventeenth century. The chronicler observed that some recipients of *sesmarias* did not have the means to develop plantations and were forced to sell the lands. The Count of Linhares, Mem de Sá's heir (through marriage with the governor's daughter), sold large portions of his property. Antonil speaks of land mortgages and sales as common occurrences and devotes an entire page to advise land buyers. In the eighteenth century, Wenceslau Pereira da Silva and Silva Lisboa reported on the common practice of buying and selling plantations in Bahia. In São Paulo, Schorer Petrone observed that, with time, purchasing land became the predominant way of acquiring it in the sugar-producing region closest to the coast, which had been exploited the longest. In the Paraíba Valle, the increase in coffee production raised real estate prices in the region and some large landowners profited with the sale of lands previously acquired for free or for an insignificant price. This indicates that the availability of land in Brazil was not unlimited as some authors propose. Fertility and location created limits and levels of preference among planters, who could find it convenient to purchase relatively expensive lands along the coast instead of receiving them gratuitously as a *sesmaria* in a distant and arid region.[39]

In Portugal, a liberal/bourgeois revolution was necessary in the nineteenth century to extinguish *morgados* and *capelas* and free up all bonded lands, a process accomplished by a long series of legislative measures. In Brazil, *morgados* and *capelas* were abolished without a revolution. Political independence and the arrival of liberal European ideas, interpreted as was convenient to the slaveholding dominant class, sufficed. In 1828, the Chamber of Deputies approved the law that abolished the bonds, but the next year the Senate rejected it with a single-vote majority, thanks to the reactionary efforts of José da Silva Lisboa, Viscount of Cairu. The law's advocates argued quite pertinently that there was a significant difference between "feudal times," during which *morgados* were justified, and the existing conditions in Brazil, which made it an entirely "exotic" institution, unfit for the social organization. However, the complete abolition of *morgados* and *capelas* was not long in coming, with Law 57 of October 6, 1835, approved by the Legislative Assembly and enacted by the Regency. Brazil was thus ahead of its former metropolis, where such a drastic measure was only enacted with the decree of May 19, 1863.[40] This was because in Brazil it was merely a matter of eliminating an extravagant appendix that was harmful to slavery, while in Portugal a revolutionary process was required to root out ancient feudal institutions, and it did so in an incomplete and certainly undemocratic manner.

Finally, it should be noted that the territorial regime underwent analogous metamorphoses in Cuba, as demonstrated by Julio Le Riverend's insightful study. The island's colonization began with feudal agrarian institutions transplanted from Spain, all of them with the common trait that they did not allow for the full ownership of the land, but only its usufruct by the land grant's recipient. Such was the case with the *mercedes*, the *comunera* lands, the *ejidos*, the royal lands where *vegas* were established by small producers to grow tobacco. This territorial regime met no opposition as long as there were few colonists and their activity was limited to cattle raising and tobacco production. But after the extraordinary expansion of sugar plantations in the second half of the eighteenth century, the territorial regime underwent a radical change with the elimination of the traditional feudal institutions and the establishment of full and unrestricted private property of sugarcane latifundia. As cattle and tobacco were displaced, sugar plantations

became entrenched in the colonial slave mode of production, which required a territorial regime suitable to its nature. In other words, a regime of large landed estates – unbounded, alienable, and free of seigneurial dues.[41]

Sesmeiros

In the *Sesmarias* section of this chapter, I examined *sesmarias* as an institutional process of distribution of colonial agrarian lands. I will now examine the people who received them. They were called *sesmeiros* in Brazil, unlike in Portugal, where that denomination applied to the magistrates in charge of distributing the *sesmarias*.[42] This curious semantic inversion should suffice to alert us regarding the sociological inversions of many institutional elements of the metropolis transplanted to the colony.

Who were the *sesmeiros*? Stated otherwise: which social elements had access to *sesmarias*?

Oliveira Vianna answered the question with his well-known thesis on the aristocratic colonization of Brazil. Alberto Passos Guimarães tuned that thesis into an unquestionable premise, only adding that, under colonial conditions, noblemen without a fortune, the "men of qualities," had to associate with plebeians enriched through commerce and usury, the "men of wealth." But in this association, the former took precedence, given the "caste spirit" with which the distribution of the Brazilian territory was imbued, handing over immense latifundia to the nobility. The transposition of Portuguese feudalism to Brazil was presumably not only inevitable, but a deliberate project of the colonizing metropolis.[43]

The sixteenth-century Portuguese feudal production system – a real fact – does not constitute a premise from which one can abstractly deduce its inevitable reproduction in Brazil. It is historical research, and not formal logic, which must resolve the issue. Nor is the thesis of aristocratic colonization useful, considering the feebleness of its factual foundation.

Without deeply delving into the old controversy, I shall merely make a few observations. First, it is elementary to distinguish simple *sesmeiros* from *donatários*. Of the first twelve *donatários*, Martim Afonso and his brother Pero Lopes de Sousa were members of the high nobility, while the rest belonged to the low nobility or the middle bureaucracy. After them, some members of the high nobility obtained hereditary captaincies in Brazil. In all, there were only a few dozen privileged families who were granted or purchased captaincies. On the other hand, there were thousands of *sesmeiros*, and only a few of them belonged to the Jaboatão and Pedro Taques noble families. In short, even if the genealogies composed by those and other eighteenth-century authors are correct, they provide a very feeble foundation for Oliveira Vianna's and Oliveira Lima's assertions regarding a Brazilian seigneurial class belonging to the old Portuguese nobility. Alcântara Machado dismantled such a pleasant illusion regarding the first colonists in São Paulo. In the Northeast, there were a certain number of colonists from the low nobility who owned tiny properties in Portugal and who, for that reason, were interested in the possibility of enriching overseas. The same applied to some non-firstborn children of noble families, disowned by *morgadio* regulations. But this social characteristic does not apply to most recipients of *sesmarias*.

In this respect, it is worth mentioning the deportees that the Portuguese ships continuously unloaded on the Brazilian coast and who prospered here. In response to an objection by Alviano regarding the early colonization of Brazil "by deportees and criminals," Brandônio said with coarse irony:

> There is no doubt about it. But you should know that those colonists who first arrived in Brazil soon became wealthy thanks to the generosity of the land, and with their wealth they shed the evil nature that their poverty in the Kingdom made them utilize. And their

> children, enthroned with the same wealth and the government of the land, shed their old skin like a snake, employing always the most honorable means, and then many high noblemen came to this state and married here, creating blood relations with those born in the country, so that among all of them a quite noble mixture of blood has resulted.[44]

It is not difficult to perceive, in fact, that the Crown itself soon had to forego its intention to ensure an aristocratic colonization, if it ever truly conceived it. In both versions of the Royal Charter of November 20, 1530, the same formula is present regarding the donation of land to people who deserved it "for their services and qualities." This would give preference to colonists of noble origin. However, Duarte Coelho's Foral Letter dated September 24, 1534, categorically prescribed that the *donatário* and his successors distribute all *sesmaria* lands "to any person of any quality or condition as long as they are Christian." Tomé de Sousa's *Regimento* does not even allude to the qualities or social conditions of candidates to *sesmarias*.[45] The Charter of December 8, 1590, determined that "*sesmaria* lands must be granted to anyone willing to go with his wife and children to any part of Brazil." The Crown itself acknowledged the senselessness of aristocratic colonization, since the priority was to immediately raise the economic value of the Brazilian territory. As an example, in a period of forty-two years, from 1689 to 1730, no candidate to *sesmarias* in Pernambuco and nearby captaincies invoked noble titles, claiming instead services rendered to the King by conquering territories and displacing the natives, the advantages to the Royal Treasury derived from an increase in the tithe and fees, the need to build plantations or cattle ranches, etc. It is worth reiterating that, unlike in Portugal, in Brazil there were no colonial classes exempt from paying tribute, and the occasional claims of noble privileges were therefore pointless. In a Mandate dated January 7, 1655, addressed to Francisco Barreto, Governor of Pernambuco, the King ordered the tithe to be collected from knights of military orders, rejecting their claim to be exempted from payment. Since the Knights of the Order of Christ insisted on the privilege of exemption, it was categorically revoked by the Royal Charter of July 24, 1658, also addressed to Francisco Barreto, the then Governor-General of Brazil.[46]

This obviously does not mean that colonial land was distributed according to democratic criteria. Several governors-general or their sons and protégés received immense *sesmarias*, sometimes veritable captaincies. Such was the case with Tomé de Sousa, Garcia d'Ávila, Álvaro Costa, Mem de Sá, and Luís de Almeida de Brito, as evident in the documentation collected by Felisbello Freire. The preferences of the Court and the colonial governors always influenced the largest and best land grants. But the main selection criterion was the law itself, which conditioned the extension of *sesmarias* to the candidates' possibilities of cultivating them.[47] Tomé de Sousa's *Regimento* made it clear that colonists with resources to build sugar plantations were preferred, since the governor-general was obliged to give them access to water from rivers or streams, establishing yet another highly selective economic condition: that *sesmeiros* should build a tower or fortified home and obtain the minimum weaponry necessary to ensure the plantation's security. Roque da Costa Barreto's *Regimento* of August 3, 1677, which was the last one addressed to a governor-general, reiterated the Crown's concern with the expansion of the sugar economy and recommended observing the privileges and exemptions of plantation owners.[48]

With time, the slaveholding character of the economy became explicit in the requirements for *sesmarias* and in the legislation itself. The Marquis of Lavradio mentioned the "slave force" owned by the recipient as a criterion for granting *sesmarias*. Stanley Stein pointed to several *sesmaria* requests whose authors emphasized that they owned enough enslaved people to till the land. The Charter of October 1785, which the Crown intended to serve as a Law of Sesmarias applied in Brazil, determined that the extension of the land granted should be in accordance

to the number of enslaved people owned, going as far as establishing, in § 12, that those who acquired them through inheritance or otherwise and did not have "possibilities and slaves" to cultivate them would be forced to sell or surrender them within a period of two years.[49]

Other demands by the Portuguese government created further difficulties for petitioners, such as the requirement to legally delimit and measure the *sesmaria* and to have the measurements confirmed by the Overseas Council in Lisbon.

It is worth emphasizing that there were always flagrant contradictions between the legislations enacted by the metropolis and their application in the colony. It suffices to examine the many attempts to limit the extension of *sesmarias* and to enforce their cultivation within a certain period. I will not delve into details that have been examined by other authors.[50] What is important is to emphasize the ineffectiveness of legal barriers to the tendency inherent to slavery toward the *full* right of private ownership of the land. In theory, the legislation governing *sesmarias* did not provide for that full right, since the land granted could be revoked if it remained uncultivated for a certain period. In practice, the landlords' social power prevailed, maintaining latifundia that were much larger than they could exploit. After the Royal Charter of March 16, 1682, addressed to the governor of Rio Grande do Norte, there were a number of Royal Decrees mandating that those *sesmarias* which remained uncultivated be transferred wholly or in part, that their limits should be confirmed, and establishing the maximum extension of future grants, which was finally set at three square leagues.[51] This limit became the rule, but there were still plenty of outrageous exceptions and circumventions. We can also imagine that revoking and transferring previous concessions did not depend solely on the law and a proven accusation that the *sesmaria* had remained partially or wholly uncultivated. In those cases, power relations between the current owner and the new candidate prevailed.

Instead of *sesmarias*, the only way for poor colonists to obtain land was through possession, incapable as they were of overcoming the bureaucratic obstacles. In some cases, the right of possession of lands previously granted to *sesmeiros* was maintained. One example, narrated by Father Estevam Pereira, regarded the occupants of Engenho do Sergipe do Conde. However, small occupants were usually defeated when they clashed with the *sesmaria* institution.[52] Felisbello Freire recounted that, in the early nineteenth century, a *sesmaria* was granted in Vila de Jaguaripe, Bahia, in an area already inhabited by one hundred occupants who cultivated cassava. The *sesmeiro* unjustly forced some of the occupants to purchase the land they occupied and others to pay an annual fee. The rest were simply expelled. Tollenare witnessed the expulsion of an entire population of about 1200 people whose families had occupied the land for a long time. The process of land appropriation in the Paraíba Valley by coffee growers was done through the use of violence against the occupants, who were expelled through legal dispossession, brute force, or even murder.[53]

With time, occupations were so widespread that the pressure exerted by them led to the abolition of the *sesmaria* system, further undermined by the chaos that the institution itself created in land distribution. Through the Ordinance issued by the Royal Superior Court on March 14, 1822, the Prince Regent D. Pedro determined that, when establishing the boundaries of *sesmarias*, those occupants who effectively cultivated the land should be respected, so that prior occupancies would take precedence over *sesmarias* granted afterward. Shortly thereafter, through the Resolution of July 17, 1822, resulting from a petition to preserve an occupation, José Bonifácio's government definitively suspended all *sesmaria* grants.[54]

From 1822 to 1850, occupation was the only legitimate way of appropriating public lands. But it was available to both large and small occupants. While the latter grew rapidly, there were also some very large occupations. Law 601 of September 18, 1850, regulated by Decree 1318 of June 30, 1854, put an end to occupations of public lands, which were henceforth only legally acquired through purchase. Prior occupancies should be legalized through formal

measurement and the acquisition of property titles issued by the government. The bureaucracy, which favored the powerful, added to the 1850 land law a number of measures that hindered the poor from gaining access to land property and ensured the maintenance of the latifundium structure in place.[55]

The history of the territorial regime in colonial Brazil allows us to understand how the Portuguese institution of *sesmarias* was adapted to the interests of slave owners, even when the metropolitan government opposed them in some regards. In the colony, only those aspects of its original legal form which were convenient to the slaveholding economic and social content were preserved.

Economic Significance of Land Ownership

The ownership of large landed estates on its own is insufficient to explain the economic system. This is obvious and trivial but is unfortunately unnoticed by those who dogmatically associate latifundium with feudalism.

Large land property became the decisive structural element in colonial Brazil – an element that could only be feudal if, in addition to other conditions, there had been a preexisting and sufficiently plentiful peasant population bound to the land whose surplus product could be turned into feudal rent. Since such peasant population did not exist and its formation was unfeasible, the type of domination could not possibly be feudal.

Among the first colonists, there were certainly some of noble origin who came to Brazil with the hope of living in a feudal manner in the new continent. Friar Gaspar da Madre de Deus wrote about them:

> Some of them soon perceived their mistake and returned to Europe, realizing that in Brazil everyone gratuitously obtains more land than they need, which is granted to any colonist who requests it, so that no one needed to till someone else's land with the obligation of paying an annual fee; and for that reason, never, or only after a few centuries, would wealthy homes be permanent there. Experience has demonstrated that their assessment was entirely correct, for in this state those who do not own or trade slaves live in utmost poverty. Furthermore, it is not enough to own many slaves in order to be rich, which are useless to their owners if they are lazy workers, so that the slave owners must supervise them directly.[56]

The seventeenth-century historian perspicaciously tells us that, in Brazil, the skills required were those of a slave owner and not of a feudal lord, who were accustomed to profiting from peasants' tributes. Father Estevam Pereira speaks of the fees charged from cassava farmers as "petty proceeds, poorly and belatedly paid."[57] The Jesuit found it preferable to reserve the leased lands as a source of firewood for sugar mills, therefore demonstrating his understanding that, as an economic practice, the slave economy was superior to imitations of feudalism.

In colonial Brazil, there were no conditions for the successful establishment of a territorial regime based on the distinction between eminent or direct ownership, attributed to landlords, and usufruct, attributed to peasants. It was therefore impossible to transplant to Brazil the *complexum feudale*, that extremely diverse variety of private tributes that constituted feudal rent in Portugal and other European countries. One could not expect the presumed colonial feudalism to reproduce all of the characteristics and peculiarities of European feudalism. However, it should at least present the essential elements of its structure: a seigneurial territorial regime and an economy based on small autonomous units of peasants who paid tribute and on independent

artisan workshops.[58] There was no such structure in Brazil, but any objective research can find the dominant and contrasting presence of large-scale production obtained through slave labor and based on large, tribute-free, and alienable landed estates.

See, for example, what A. P. Guimarães writes:

> In the *production system*, as in the entire pre-capitalist economy of colonial Brazil, the fundamental element, the dominant characteristic to which all other economic relations were subordinated, was the feudal agrarian property, with the land being the main and most important means of production.[59]

I agree that the land was the main and most important means of production, since, unlike the dehumanizing perspective of slaveholders, I do not consider enslaved people a means of production. However, when speaking of *property*, we are referring to *relations* of production and not to concrete production itself. The slave relations of production inevitably acquired an economic and legal expression in slaveholding territorial property, no matter how much certain institutional appendages transplanted from Portugal disguised it – appendages that were either undermined or acquired a different function in Brazil. Most importantly, among the property relations in place in colonial and imperial Brazil, the one with the *main* and *decisive* economic function was not the ownership of the land, as was the case in feudalism, but the *ownership of enslaved people*.

Studying the sugar economy of São Paulo, Schorer Petrone concluded correctly that there was no regular correlation whatsoever between the dimensions of the land and production. A wide variety of correlations were observed between the plantation's extension and its sugar production. Excluding small properties unsuitable for plantations, the number of enslaved people was not regularly proportional to the size of the plantation: in many cases, smaller properties had more enslaved people than larger ones. The historian wrote: "There is only a correlation between production and the number of slaves." Furthermore: "What determined the planter's importance was not so much the extension of the land, but the number of slaves." The exceptions to the regular correlation between the number of enslaved people and sugar production can be coherently explained by the fact that either the plantation was still under development, with the sugarcane fields in the process of being created, or it engaged in a significant production of spirits and other products in addition to sugar.[60]

The end of the African slave trade led to a sudden increase in the price of enslaved people – the human production force – and the relative depreciation of the material production forces, especially the land. The usual correlation between production factors reached its most extreme expression during this phase of slavery, with the greatest difference between the value of enslaved people and the land. A. P. Guimarães noted that Couty found perplexing the insignificant value of coffee plantations, in particular the extremely low value of the land, during the prosperous years from 1874 to 1878.[61] If the author of *Quatro Séculos de Latifúndio* had reflected further on the phenomenon, he would have realized that it does not make sense in feudalism, but can be explained without theoretical violence when viewed from the standpoint of the political economy of colonial slavery.

When studying Brazilian slavery in its final decade, Couty observed that mortgage loans to coffee planters did not correspond to land prices, but "to another value that is more easily perceived – the slaves." Generalizing this fact to all of Brazil, he proposed:

> The value of mortgages for agricultural facilities in Brazil, assessed according to old bank estimates, is minimal: it is far from the purchase price of human cattle. As a result, it does not take into account the land, the cultivated fields, the buildings, and the various means of exploitation.[62]

All of these material, objective resources had a price. However, banks did not provide mortgage loans based on that price, but only on the purchase price of another factor that the realism of the economic practice proved to be decisive – enslaved people; especially as this factor became increasingly scarce.

This also explains the radical difference between Brazil and capitalist countries, where land prices were much higher and tended to increase. Simultaneously, the interest and capitalization rates, which were inversely proportional to the price of the land, were much lower in those countries than in Brazil. After examining the issue from this perspective, Couty observed:

> While production is capitalized in France in such a way that the average revenue in some departments is from 3.5% to 4.5%, and 3% in the others; while in the United States of America the capitalization of cultivated lands is 5% in New England and 10% in the newer regions, in Brazil the same capitalization obeys no set rule. But in no case can it be achieved for less than 15% to 18%, and more often from 25% to 30%.[63]

The lower the price of the land, the higher the capitalization rate of the revenues obtained from its production. In capitalist countries, an increase in productivity raised the price of the land, while land was depreciated in Brazil during Couty's time not because of its availability, but because of the peculiar effects of the decline of slavery.

In one of his works, Nelson Werneck Sodré realized that the land donated by the Crown was practically gratuitous and worthless. The decisive factor was the ownership of enslaved people. How, then, could feudalism have been established in Brazil from the beginning of colonization? That is what the same historian argues.[64] Feudalism is an economic regime in which the land is the most valuable factor: those who rule over it also rule over the direct producers. Is it possible that what we had in Brazil was a *sui generis* form of feudalism in which the land was worthless?

It is a bad habit to become attached to certain viewpoints. Especially when one is not sufficiently careful to avoid elementary logical/formal contradictions.

Notes

1 Lisboa, Silva. Op. cit., p. 500.
2 Ibidem, p. 499; Vilhena. Op. cit., p. 176–177; Antonil. Op. cit., p. 174; Saint-Hilaire, *Viagens pelo Distrito dos Diamantes*, p. 251, 263; *Viagem à Província de São Paulo*, p. 132, 205, 218, 226; Petrone, Schorer. Op. cit., p. 93.
3 Cf. Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 71–72.
4 Cf. Antonil. Op. cit., p. 215; Sousa, Gabriel Soares de. Op. cit., p. 145; Petrone, Schorer. Op. cit., p. 67–68, 104.
5 Gayoso. Op. cit., p. 227–228; Spix; Martius. *Viagem pelo Brasil*, v. 2, p. 282.
6 See Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 55, 256–269.
7 Canabrava. A repartição da terra na Capitania de São Paulo. Op. cit. Table on p. 91.
8 Ibidem, p. 110.
9 Cf. Vianna, Oliveira. *Populações meridionais do Brasil*, p. 60.
10 Cf. Canabrava. *O açúcar nas Antilhas*, p. 85–90.
11 Cf. Cardoso, Ciro. El modo de producción esclavista colonial en América, p. 225–226.
12 Cf. Varnhagen. Op. cit., t. I, p. 180–184; Handelmann. Op. cit., chap. 2; Ribeiro, João. Op. cit., p. 61–67; Abreu, Capistrano de. *Capítulos de história colonial*, p. 92–95; Dias, Carlos Malheiros. Introdução and O regime feudal das donatárias. *HCPB*, v. 3; Prado Júnior, Caio. *Evolução política do Brasil e outros estudos*, p. 13–14; Duarte, Nestor. Op. cit., p. 18–25. Sodré, Nelson Werneck. *Formação histórica do Brasil*, p. 77–82; Andrade. Manuel Correia de. *Economia pernambucana no século XVI*, p. 17–27; Simonsen. Op. cit., t. I, p. 122–129; Marchant, Alexander. Feudal and Capitalistic Elements in the Portuguese Settlement of Brazil. *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, v. 22, n. 3, p. 493–512.
13 Cf. Wätjen. Op. cit., p. 78–85, 317; Boxer, C. R. *OS holandeses no Brasil*, p. 9–19.
14 Varnhagen. Op. cit., t. I, p. 182.

15 See Cartas de Doação a Duarte Coelho, donatário de Pernambuco. *HCPB*, v. 3, p. 309–311; a Pero Lopes de Sousa, donatário de Santo Amaro e Itamaracá. Madre de Deus, Frei Gaspar da. Op. cit., p. 147–161; a Vasco Fernandes Coutinho, donatário do Espírito Santo. *RIHGB*, 1861, t. XXIV, p. 175 et seqs.
16 Cf. Sousa, Gabriel Soares de. Op. cit., p. 58; Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. Op. cit., p. 50, 119–120; Salvador, Frei Vicente do. Op. cit., p. 421.
17 *Ordenações Manuelinas*. Book Four, Tit. 67, § 12; *Ordenações Filipinas*. Book Four, Tit. 43, preâmbulo, § 13; Barros, Gama. Op. cit., t. VIII, p. 312.
18 See Foral de Duarte Coelho. *HCPB*, v. 3, p. 312; Regimento de Tomé de Sousa. Ibidem, p. 346; Regimento de Roque da Costa Barreto. *RIHGB*, t. v, p. 323, § 26; Prado Júnior, Caio. Op. cit., p. 14.
19 Cf. Carta para o Capitão-Mor Dar Terras de Sesmaria. *HCPB*, v. 3, p. 160. See also p. 147. Texto da segunda versão da mesma Carta. Madre de Deus, Frei Gaspar da. Op. cit., p. 9–10.
20 Cf. Abreu, Capistrano de. Note. In Salvador, Frei Vicente do. Op. cit., p. 85. See Texto da doação a Duarte de Lemos. *HCPB,* v. 3, p. 265–266.
21 Cf. Castro, Armando. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 279 et seqs.; Prado Júnior, Caio. Op. cit., p. 14.
22 Cf. Lacombe, Américo Jacobina. A igreja no Brasil colonial. *HGCB*, t. I, v. 2, p. 349; Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. Op. cit., p. 120; Salvador, Frei Vicente do. Op. cit., p. 349.
23 Cf. Pinho, Wanderley. Op. cit., p. 285; ABN, v. 28, p. 339–340; *Documentação histórica pernambucana – sesmarias*, p. 211–213.
24 ABN, v. 28, p. 340–341; Fragmentos de uma memória sobre as sesmarias da Bahia. *RIHGB,* t. III, reprint of 1860, p. 382.
25 Cf. Fragmentos. Op. cit., p. 379; ABN, v. 28, p. 293–294; *Documentação histórica – sesmarias*. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 63 et seqs.
26 Cf. Freire, Felisbello. *História territorial do Brasil*, 1906. v. 1, p. 136–137.
27 Cf. Lima, Cirne. Op. cit., p. 38.
28 Cf. Barros, Gama. Op. cit., t. VIII, p. 13–30, 109–133; Castro, Armando. Op. cit., v. 5, p. 102–107; v. 7, p. 426–433.
29 Cf. Fragmentos. Op. cit., p. 380; ABN, v. 28, p. 293, 340; *Documentação histórica – sesmarias*, v. 1, p. 63–65; Freire, Felisbello. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 137–138 et passim.; Borges, Fragmon Carlos. O problema da terra em Pernambuco – origens históricas da propriedade da terra. *Estudos Sociais*, n. 1, p. 55.
30 *CLIB*, 1831.
31 Cf. Sousa, Gabriel Soares de. Op. cit., p. 148, 153 et passim.
32 ABN, v. 28, p. 293–294.
33 See Confirmação da doação de uma sesmaria de dez léguas quadradas datada de 28 de abril de 1708. *Documentação histórica – sesmarias*. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 163; Carta Régia de 20 de outubro de 1753. Freire, Felisbello. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 194–195.
34 Alvará de 5 de outubro de 1795. *CLP,* v. 3; Alvará de 10 de abril de 1821. *CLIB,* 1821. Regarding municipal lands of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro respectively, see Mattos, Waldemar. Prefácio. *Livro do tombo da Prefeitura Municipal da Cidade do Salvador*; Rodrigues, José Honório. A concessão de terras no Brasil. *História e historiografia*, p. 60–61.
35 Cf. Carta de Doação da Capitania de Pernambuco a Duarte Coelho. *HCPB,* v. 3, p. 310; Regimento de Tomé de Sousa. Ibidem, p. 346.
36 Cf. Sousa, Gabriel Soares de. Op. cit., p. 157; Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. Op. cit., p. 131.
37 Cf. Castro, Armando. Op. cit., v. 9, p. 350–361; Idem, O morgado em Portugal. *Estudos de história socioeconômica de Portugal*, p. 67 et seqs.
38 Cf. Teixeira, Cid. Contribuição ao estudo dos morgados em Portugal no Brasil. *Centro de Estudos Baianos*, n. 19; Koster. Op. cit., p. 436.
39 Cf. Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. Op. cit., p. 126; Pereira, Padre Estevam. Op. cit., p. 777; Antonil. Op. cit., p. 143–144; Parecer de Wenceslau Pereira da Silva, em que se propõem os meios mais convenientes para suspender a ruína dos três principais gêneros do comércio do Brasil, açúcar, tabaco e sola. February 12, 1738. *ABN*, v. 31, p. 28; Lisboa, Silva. Op. cit., p. 501; Koster. Op. cit., p. 438; Taunay. Op. cit., t. VI, v. 8, p. 218; Petrone, Schorer. Op. cit., p. 56–58.
40 Cf. Armitage, João. Op. cit., p. 175; *CLIB*, 1835; Castro, Armando. O morgado em Portugal, Op. cit., p. 77.
41 Cf. Le Riverend. Op. cit., p. 4, 10, 154–163, 295–305.
42 Cf. Observation made by the author of Fragmentos. Op. cit., p. 381, n. 16.
43 Cf. Vianna, F. J. Oliveira. *Populações meridionais do Brasil*. Op. cit., p. 103–107; Idem, *Recenseamento de 1920 – o povo brasileiro e sua evolução*, p. 6–8. Idem, *Introdução à história social*. Op. cit., chap. XI; Guimarães, A. P. Op. cit., p. 23–24.
44 Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. Op. cit., p. 134. Constituiu política deliberada da Coroa a de povoar o Brasil com degredados. Cf. Garcia, Rodolfo. *Ensaio sobre a história política e administrativa do Brasil (1500-1810)*, p. 22.
45 Cf. Madre de Deus, Frei Gaspar da. Op. cit., p. 9–10; *HCPB*, v. 3, p. 160, 312, 345–350.

46 *ABN*, v. 28, p. 339; Fragmentos. Op. cit., p. 377; *Documentação histórica – sesmarias*. Op. cit., v. 1; Freire, Felisbello. Op. cit., v. 1 et passim; Pinho, Wanderley. Op. cit., p. 285, 291.
47 *Ordenações Manuelinas*. Book Four. Tit. 67, § 3º. *Ordenações Filipinas*. Book Four. Tit. 43, § 3º.
48 In *HCPB,* v. 3; p. 346–347; *RIHGB,* t.V, p. 323, § 26.
49 Cf. Relatório do Marquês do Lavradio de 19 de junho de 1779. Armitage, João. Op. cit., Document n. 1, p. 267; *CLP*, v. 3; Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 65–66.
50 Felisbello Freire, Cirne Lima, F. C. Borges, J. H. Rodrigues, A. P. Guimarães, and Manuel Diégues Júnior.
51 Fragmentos. Op. cit., p. 378–381, 384–385.
52 Cf. Pereira, Padre Estevam. Op. cit., p. 777.
53 Cf. Freire, Felisbello. Op. cit., v. 1, p. 207–208; Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 94, 99–100; Saint-Hilaire. *Segunda viagem*, p. 38–40; Taunay. Op. cit., t. III, v. 5, p. 157–161; Stein, Stanley J. Op. cit., p. 14–20.
54 *CLIB*, 1822.
55 *CLIB,* 1850, 1854. On that land law, see Lima, Cirne. Op. cit. Chaps. III and IV.
56 Madre de Deus, Frei Gaspar da. Op. cit. p. 60–61. On this topic, see the excellent analysis by Prado Júnior, Caio. Op. cit., p. 15–16. n. 8.
57 Pereira, Padre Estevam. Op. cit., p. 780.
58 For a synthetic definition of the feudal mode of production, see Marx, K. *Das Kapital*. Book One, p. 354, 745. n. 192.
59 Guimarães, A. P. Op. cit., p. 29.
60 Cf. Petrone, Schorer. Op. cit., p. 67–68, 75–76, 110, 112–113.
61 Cf. Guimarães, A. P. Op. cit., p. 85. See also Couty. *Étude de biologie industrialle sur le café*, p. 84–90.
62 Couty, Louis. *Le Brésil en 1884*, p. 87–88. See also Couty, Louis. *L'esclavage au Brésil*, p. 62.
63 Idem, *Le Brésil em 1884*, p. 94–95.
64 Sodré, N. W. *Formação histórica do Brasil*, p. 71.

19

INDUSTRIAL SLAVE RENT AND SLAVE GROUND RENT

Sugarcane Farmers without Their Own Mill

The existence of sugarcane farmers who processed it in someone else's mill was a particular feature of Brazilian slavery. In English and French sugar-producing colonies, planters industrialized only their own sugarcane, with no exceptions recorded.[1] This Brazilian peculiarity therefore cannot be considered essential to the colonial slave mode of production. But studying it can reveal certain structural characteristics and dynamics of that mode of production.

The need to receive sugarcane from autonomous farmers cannot be explained by the exceptional size of the mills. It might be possible to explain it by a lack of resources for investment. While there were mills that were unable to process all the sugarcane planted, as Fernando Cardim observed in the late sixteenth century,[2] it was probably more common for plantations to produce insufficient sugarcane to meet their full milling capacity due to a shortage of labor force. On the other hand, there were colonists whose initial funds were enough to plant sugarcane but not to establish a mill, and therefore had to resign themselves to the role of raw matter providers. This problem did not affect planters of cotton, coffee, and other export products whose processing facilities were much less complex and expensive than those employed for sugar production, and could be easily adapted to the level of agricultural production.

The extent of the phenomenon at the beginning of colonization and the possibility of its expansion led to a first legal regulation, included in Tomé de Sousa's *Regimento*, which obliged plantation owners to process the sugarcane from farmers in a certain area, while farmers received *sesmaria* lands with the obligation of providing sugarcane to a certain plantation's mill.[3]

As the sugar economy evolved, three categories of sugarcane farmers arose, described by Silva Lisboa as follows:

> There are three types of farmers: those who own their own land and who are free to process their sugarcane in the mill of their choice, greatly benefitting the plantation owner; those who also own their land, but are required to process their sugarcane only in a certain plantation, with the possibility of being legally forced to do so; and those who till the lands of the plantation owner, to whom they are obliged to pay an annual fee.[4]

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In addition to these three categories, which were revealing of the farmers' position relative to the plantation owner, there was a gradation of their economic power. In any case, they should not be confused with peasant families. While many of them also worked on the land and lived a simple life, they were slave owners, and their economic importance was founded on the exploitation of enslaved labor. For that reason, Anonymous Author included them in a single, rhetorically glorified class together with plantation owners. In fact, the farmers were sometimes relatives of the plantation owner, his children or siblings. When properties were divided through inheritance, one of the heirs received the mill and some of the lands, while the rest received only the sugarcane fields.[5]

Van der Dussen gives us an idea of a farmer's resources in the 1640s:

> A farmer needs a workforce of twenty Negroes with their tools (hoes, sickles, axes) – with which they are obliged to provide the mill with 40 *tarefas* per year – and four, six, or eight oxcarts, depending on the distance of the sugarcane fields from the mill […].[6]

Antonil mentioned "wealthy men" who, instead of being plantation owners, preferred to be "powerful sugarcane farmers, with one or two harvests of 1,000 sugarloaves, with thirty or forty field slaves."[7]

Farmers could own veritable latifundia. In São Paulo, one farmer owned 1633 hectares: the lack of a mill and his role as a mere provider of raw matter were unrelated to the size of the property, but were the result of insufficient of capital.[8]

Of course, not all farmers had dozens of enslaved people. In his list of plantations in Pernambuco, Van der Dussen documented, in the first half of the seventeenth century, farmers with fifty to eighty *tarefas*, while many others cultivated only fifteen or even five *tarefas*. The former had from twenty-five to forty enslaved people, while the latter had seven or less. In 1817, Tollenare estimated that farmers in Pernambuco owned an average of six to ten enslaved people. At the same time, in Vilas de Santo Amaro and São Francisco, in the Recôncavo region of Bahia, sugarcane farmers owned an average of 10.5 enslaved people.[9]

De Mornay provides a revealing general sketch:

> The farmer's position is considered an entirely gentlemanly occupation […] however, there are farmers with all levels of color and respectability, some of them producing fifty tons of sugar per year […] and others no more than one or two tons.[10]

It is difficult to accurately estimate sugarcane farmers' contribution to sugar production, but everything indicates that in general they provided less than half of the raw matter industrialized by the mills (except in the short period documented by Father Estevam Pereira and Van der Dussen). In the region of Campos dos Goitacases in 1779, Caio Prado Júnior cited numbers that indicate that farmers provided about 37% of the sugarcane processed. In 1817, with two or three farmers for each plantation in Pernambuco, their enslaved people probably made up an average of one-fourth to one-third of the laborers employed in each property. In the Bahian Recôncavo that same year, 478 farmers – two or three per plantation – owned 5010 enslaved people, which, as Schwartz's study shows, made up 31.6% of a total of 15,823 enslaved people employed in sugar production in Vilas de Santo Amaro and São Francisco. From De Mornay's data on the 1840s, we can infer that the 600 plantations in Pernambuco, with an average of forty enslaved people each, owned a total of 24,000 enslaved people. In addition, there were 7200 enslaved people belonging to 600 farmers, with twelve enslaved people per farmer on average. The farmers therefore owned 23% of a total of 31,200 enslaved people employed in sugar plantations in the

province. As Eisenberg's study shows, in the 1850s, farmers produced 42% of the sugarcane industrialized in the Pernambucan municipality of Jaboatão.[11]

Contradictions between Plantation Owners and Farmers

Although Anonymous Author placed plantation owners and farmers on the same social level, the truth is that there were conflicting interests between them, with the former clearly having the upper hand.

Among the categories of farmers, tenants were the most dependent. Since they tilled someone else's land, their earnings from the final product were lower than those of farmers who owned the land and they were subjected to abuses by the plantation owner. Those abuses, which could lead to the tenant's ruin, were discussed by Antonil, Silva Lisboa, Vilhena, and Rodrigues de Brito.[12] But while tenants depended on the plantation owner, the latter often needed the tenants as well, which contributed to the establishment of a relatively stable relationship. As Luccock observed, land leasing was particularly common during the plantation's early years:

> That arrangement is considered beneficial to those who own land but lack sufficient capital, since it allows them to build mills of a size appropriate to the entire property, maintaining them constantly active.[13]

Leasing land to raw matter suppliers therefore prevented a partial idleness of the processing facilities.

There were two kinds of landowning farmers: "bound" and "free." The former were those who were legally bound through a clause in the purchase contract to process their sugarcane exclusively at a certain mill. That clause could apply as of the date of the *sesmaria*, as prescribed in Tomé de Sousa's *Regimento*, or the date of the purchase deed. The sale of *bound* land was practiced as early as the seventeenth century. According to Father Pereira, some of the lands of Engenho do Sergipe do Conde belonged to buyers who had the perpetual obligation to process their sugarcane at the Jesuit's mill and to pay a fee of "a few chickens," whose symbolic value was meant to reaffirm an alleged lordship. At the time of the harvest, the owners of those lands had to inform the administrator, who could sometimes free them from the obligation of processing their sugarcane there and authorize them to do it elsewhere. This obligation protected the Jesuit's mill from a shortage of raw matter in certain years. Bound farmers in turn "purchased their sugarcane freedom at a high price."[14] Plantation owners' interest in having bound suppliers led them to sell the land for a price that was lower than normal, with the obligation of processing the sugarcane at the owner's mill as long as the debt was not fully paid.[15] As we can see, plantation owners used their financial power to bind farmers in trouble.

Farmers of lands without obligations were obviously less dependent on plantation owners, since they were free to choose where they would process their sugarcane every year. This advantageous situation did not prevent them from being pressured when plantation owners wanted to force them to hand over their sugarcane or when they wanted to take over their lands, which must not have been uncommon. Tollenare did not mention landowning farmers in the Zona da Mata in Pernambuco, but only tenant farmers, since all of the lands were already in the hands of plantation owners.

Industrial Slave Rent

Half of the sugar produced with the farmer's sugarcane belonged to the plantation owner, and the other half to the farmer. This universal norm remained unchanged through time. In the case of tenant farmers, they also had to pay the land's rental price, and therefore received less than

half the sugar produced. In this section, I will examine the relation resulting from the industrialization of sugarcane, independently of the specific issue of land leasing.

In addition to half of the sugar, the plantation owner also kept all of the residual molasses from the first draining stage in the clay molds. From this by-product, the plantation owner could extract a significant amount of sugar called *batido* or stirred sugar – both white and muscovado – or spirits. According to Tollenare, the plantation owner in turn provided the wooden boxes to pack the farmer's sugar. However, at the time of Van der Dussen, it was the farmer who paid for the boxes. Neither Antonil nor the other authors who wrote about the topic identified who was responsible for paying for the boxes. In any case, the expense must have been significant, since they were manufactured with boards that as early as the seventeenth century were made in independent slave-driven sawmills, at a cost of 450 to 500 rs per box. At the beginning of the following century, the price rose to 1$000 or 1$200.[16]

The ecclesiastical tithe was paid by the farmers in the plantation owner's name from their portion of the sugar produced with their sugarcane.

An analysis of this allotment contract reveals what it meant for each of the parties.

The farmer delivered the sugarcane *in natura* and received it transformed into sugar, i.e., the final product. It is true that he only received half of the sugar produced, but he saved all of the expenses required to industrialize the raw matter. The half appropriated by the plantation owner contained the payment for industrialization. There is no reason to assume that the contract was necessarily unfair to the farmer. With good reasons, the economist Silva Lisboa argued to the contrary. Although in absolute terms the income obtained by the plantation owner was much higher than that obtained by the farmer, both were almost proportional to each of their investments.[17]

Regarding the plantation owner, it is evident that his rent was only a fraction of the full value of his half of the sugar. From this value, he had to deduct the entire cost of industrial production, divided into the cost of the enslaved labor force, the depreciation of the fixed funds, and the price of the circulating funds. The remaining sugar after deducing the abovementioned items represented the rent paid by the farmer to the mill owner.

Since it was the result of slave surplus labor, the slaveholding nature of the rent contained in the value of the sugar processed with the raw matter provided by the farmer is more than evident. What is important to emphasize here is that it was a form of *industrial slave rent*, i.e., of rent created by applying slave labor to an industrial process. Although that process was part of an agricultural establishment complex, the labor was not agricultural in nature and not bound to the land, and the resulting rent cannot be identified as any sort of ground rent.

As long as planters processed only the sugarcane cultivated at their own expense, there would be no theoretical interest in discriminating rent of a different nature in the value of the final product. As a whole, it was simply slave and money rent, whether it was called rent or profit in common language. But the partial separation of between the mill and the fields, as it occurred in Brazil from the standpoint of property, constitutes a peculiarity of the objective reality that contributes to the advancement of our theoretical analysis. By analyzing this peculiarity, we can classify the total slave rent according to two new distinct categories: industrial slave rent and slave ground rent.

Contractual Situation of Tenant Farmers

Only industrial slave rent derived from the relation between the plantation owner and the free or bound farmer who owned his own land. In the relation between the plantation owner and the tenant farmer, in addition to industrial slave rent, there is also slave ground rent. Vilhena described the situation that gave rise to the latter:

> By *engenho* we understand an extension of two, three, four or more leagues of tillable lands and scrublands. The tillable lands are divided into different areas. However, the largest area is reserved to the owner for his own crops and the rest, called *fazendas* are leased to various farmers, including scrublands for the barns and to raise some cattle, if they have the capacity to do so […]. The agreements with which they lease these *fazendas* are that the farmer is obliged to grow the sugarcane, which he can only process in the owner's mill, who keeps half of the sugar produced as payment for milling, in addition to which he also keeps one out of fifteen sugarloaves as *renda da terra* [ground rent], and these are called *fazendas obrigadas* [bound farms].[18]

As we can see, Vilhena denominates *ground rent* a part of the surplus product other than the rent contained in the half of the sugar appropriated by the plantation owner to pay for industrialization. Rodrigues de Brito uses the same denomination of ground rent to refer to that same parcel of the surplus product.[19]

For the sake of expository coherence, I will not examine the ground rent itself at this point. Before doing so, I believe it is necessary to clarify the contractual conditions surrounding it.

The first issue is the lease periods. The oldest reference – Father Pereira's – mentions periods of fifty years. Schwartz observed effective lease records for fifty and twenty-five years, although nine-year periods were more common.[20] This was the case close to the mid-seventeenth century. In the early eighteenth century, Antonil wrote:

> These [leases] are usually for a period of nine years plus one for relocation, with the obligation of leaving a certain number of *tarefas* of sugarcane planted, or for eighteen years or more, with obligations and the number of *tarefas* established according to local custom.[21]

The periods were stipulated in *written* contracts together with other clauses. It is symptomatic that Antonil discusses at length the need to establish the terms of the lease in writing to protect the plantation owner's interests, which he believed could be negatively affected by the tenant.[22]

One century later, the situation was very different in Bahia and Pernambuco. Instead of written contracts and lengthy lease periods, there were verbal agreements and lease periods established at the plantation owner's discretion, as was also the compensation for the improvements made by the tenant.

Vilhena wrote in this regard:

> …the plantation owner can expel the farmer whenever he wishes to have the lands for himself or to give them to someone else, paying for all improvements, but always in detriment of the farmer; and if it is the latter who wants to leave, he usually loses all improvements or receives very little for them.[23]

Tollenare made the same point:

> The farmers are tenants without lease contracts […]. Since there are no contracts, as soon as they make the land productive, the plantation owner has the right to expel them with no compensation; evidently, lease periods of only one year are not favorable for agriculture. Farmers barely build a miserable hut, do not work to improve the soil, and set up only temporary fences, because they can be expelled from one year to the next and therefore lose all their work. They employ their capital in acquiring slaves and cattle, which they can always take with them.[24]

By going from Father Pereira to Antonil, Vilhena, and Tollenare, we can trace an evolutionary process at the end of which the situation was significantly worse for tenant farmers. From a stable contractual situation with long-term leases to an extremely unstable contractual situation subject to the whim of the plantation owner, with lease periods as short as one year. This evolution coincides with a decrease in the amount of land that could be appropriated and a simultaneous increase in the demand for tillable land, which permitted plantation owners to impose their will on tenant farmers with greater ease.

A counterproof for this interpretation is the situation of tenant farmers in the Province of Rio de Janeiro between 1813 and 1818, as it was described by Luccock and Saint-Hilaire. Especially in the region of Campos dos Goitacases, sugar production had been under development for only half a century, and although there were four immense latifundia in the region, the correlation between the supply and the demand of leasable lands was not yet as favorable to plantation owners as it was in the Northeast, with its almost 300 years of colonization and sugarcane production. In this respect, it suffices to read Saint-Hilaire's words:

> The tenant is under obligation to pay an annual fee and the lease is usually renewed every four years […]. The farmer has the right to make whatever improvements he may need on the leased land; they become his property and he can even sell them to someone else, who then becomes a tenant. On the other hand, the owner can take back the land at the end of each contract, but he must pay for all buildings and improvements made by the tenant […]. The owners so rarely expel the tenants from their land that farmers tend to live very securely. They build large homes and sugar mills in lands leased for only four years, and these lands are often passed on to other people for the price it had prior to the improvements.[25]

The contrast with tenant farmers in the Northeast at the same time is so flagrant that no explanation is necessary. I only add Luccock's observations, which confirm the strict respect of the right to receive compensation for whatever improvements the "emphyteutae" introduced.[26] In terms of categories, they were not strictly emphyteutae, but tenant farmers.

Ground Rent – Theoretical Elements

The study of the slave ground rent requires a succinct introduction to the theory of ground rent in general and its main categories.

The surplus product of agricultural labor fully or partially acquires the character of ground rent when appropriated *exclusively in the name of property in land*. Independently of the mode of production in which it exists, the general nature of ground rent is that it is the form in which property in land is realized economically.[27]

It is evident that the objective substance of the ground rent is the product of the surplus labor, the surplus product beyond the labor necessary for the sustenance of the direct agricultural producers. Surplus labor is a *necessary* condition for the existence of ground rent, but not its *only* condition. In order for agricultural surplus labor to acquire the character of ground rent, it must also be appropriated in the name of property in land. *The latter does not create the agricultural surplus product, it only converts it into the economic category of ground rent*.

Having clarified the common characteristic of all ground rent, let us examine the differences that give rise to its different socioeconomic types. For the purposes of this introduction, I will focus only on their main distinctive traits, therefore simplifying Marx's theory of ground rent.[28] Let us therefore examine two specific categories of ground rent as they appeared in history: feudal rent and capitalist rent.

In its generalized forms – whether successive or simultaneous – as labor rent, product rent, and money rent, feudal ground rent is characterized by the absorption of the *totality* of the surplus product by the landlord. *In this case, the agricultural surplus product as such is completely identified with the ground rent*. The agricultural surplus product only gives rise to the category of capital *profit* in an embryonic manner. When it exists, embryonic profit is excess ground rent and not the other way around. Embryonic profit, which was casual and ephemeral during the height of feudalism, disseminated and strengthened when that social regime was declining.

What characterized capitalist ground rent is that, due to its intrinsic nature, it cannot encompass the entire agricultural surplus product, *but only a part of it*. Under the conditions of the capitalist regime, *the agricultural surplus product is divided into average profit from capital and ground rent*. This becomes fully evident when the person who exploits the land is not the same as the person who owns it, i.e., when the land is exploited by a capitalist tenant who receives the average profit, while the landowner provides the land only in exchange for the ground rent. The capitalist ground rent is the excess average profit, and the latter constitutes the basic boundary beyond which the ground rent cannot exist.

Capitalist ground rent is also a *differential* rent. Under the same conditions of capital investment, the various types of land have different levels of productivity depending on two factors – *natural fertility* and *location*. Due to the monopoly of the land, the value and the production price of agricultural products are not determined by the *average* productivity of socially necessary labor, but by the *lowest* productivity, i.e., the productivity of the worst type of land cultivated, in terms of fertility or location or both. As a consequence, the labor applied to all types of land that are better than the worst land cultivated creates a surplus profit or an excess profit from the average profit, which results precisely from the differential productivity. Instead of being socialized and incorporated to the distribution of the average profit among the various individual capitals, as is the case in the industrial sphere, this surplus profit materializes in the form of ground rent received by the owners of the land property. When the owners of the land property are also the owners of the capital that exploits it, the average profit and the ground rent do not lose their distinct existence but are simply obtained by the same individuals.

Regarding the worst type of land exploited, the ground rent cannot be differential, since the productivity is the lowest there and has no differential productivity margin relative to an inferior type of land. While lands with greater productivity than the lowest in existence obtain a surplus profit and convert it into differential rent, the land property itself engenders *absolute* rent as the form of rent of the worst type of lands cultivated at any given moment. This is so because, in this particular case, ground rent is made possible by the land property itself and not by the differences in productivity among the various types of land. For that reason, instead of being differential, the capitalist rent of the worst type of land is and can only be absolute.

Slave Ground Rent

In order to qualify the slave ground rent, one must first quantify it, and to do so I will refer to the authors who left precise information in that regard. I will omit the discount of the ecclesiastical tithe, since it was a fiscal imposition that the plantation owner and the farmer paid separately on their own. The tithe is therefore included in the gross production, relative to which the ground rent must be calculated.

The oldest reference, by Fernandes Brandão, describes the process as follows:

> When all the sugarcane produced belongs to the plantation owner, all of the sugar is also his. But there are not many who can do that because of the large installations necessary

> to be able to house both the fields and the mills, and therefore most landowners lease out the sugarcane fields in the following manner: the plantation owner provides the land and some additional aid, and the farmer is obliged to plant the sugarcane, tend to it, cut it, and take it to the mill, and once the sugarcane is crushed and the sugar produced to perfection, his tithe is paid first, and the rest is divided in thirds, fifths, or halves. When in thirds, two parts of the sugar go to the plantation and one to the farmer; when in fifths, three parts are for the plantation and two for the farmer; and when in halves, both receive the same amount. But the sugar is rarely divided in halves because it is not very profitable for the plantation, unless the person is a bound farmer or provides his own sugarcane.[29]

Thus, in the early seventeenth century, the ground rent rates in Pernambuco were 10% (division in fifths) and 16.6% (division in thirds).

Writing about Bahia in the 1630s, Father Pereira noted that division in thirds was practiced in lands on the coast or along navigable rivers, with a privileged location. The Jesuit administrator further said in this regard:

> There are also divisions in fourths, where only one fourth of the sugar is paid to the farmer, and this happens in lands that are far from ocean ports or rivers. In these cases, since it is more expensive to transport the sugarcane, the rent is reduced.[30]

Note the different criteria regarding the amount of the rent according to the location of the leased land. Regarding the percentage of the ground rent, it was 12.5% or 16.6% of the farmer's total product. By the farmer's total product I mean the unprocessed sugarcane harvested by him. The industrial rent and the ground rent were paid by the farmer with the raw sugarcane and not with sugar, since the latter was the result of an operation carried out exclusively by the plantation owner. The ground rent corresponded to the percentages mentioned above, applied to the *total* sugarcane harvested by the tenant.

Father Pereira's information regards Bahia. At precisely the same time, Van der Dussen writes about Pernambuco:

> The sugar is split with the plantation owner depending on the following: those farmers who have their own lands can process their sugarcane wherever they want, and the sugar is usually divided in halves; those who plant on lands belonging to the plantation owner divide it with one third for the farmer and two thirds for the plantation owner when the lands are fertile and close to the mill, which means that the farmer does not have many expenses; in most cases, the division is made on the basis of two fifths for the farmer and three fifths for the plantation owner.[31]

Once the half received by the plantation owner as industrial slave rent was subtracted, the specific ground rent in these cases was equivalent to 10% or 16.6% of the sugarcane, depending on the differential advantages of the land, with 10% being the most common.

In 1711, Antonil mentioned ground rents in Pernambuco that corresponded to 10% of the farmer's product, while in Bahia they corresponded to 5% or 6.6% "depending on what was agreed in the lease, because the lands were already productive or because they needed less clearing."[32]

As we saw previously, at the end of the eighteenth century, Vilhena noted that farmers had to pay one sugarloaf out of fifteen from their half of the sugar, "for the ground rent." Relative to the total sugarcane harvested by the farmer, the percentage of the ground rent was 6.6%.

It is worth noting that, at least since the late eighteenth century, there are no further references to ground rent rates of 10% or higher. The lease rates must have been falling well before that time, which might at first sight seem like an improvement in sugarcane farmers' situation. But the opposite was the case. The rise in the ratio between *the price of enslaved people and the price of sugar* eliminated the possibility of divisions by thirds, fourths, or fifths. According to Schwartz, the price of enslaved people evolved as follows, assuming a constant physical productivity of *half a ton of sugar per year* per worker: 1622 – 446 kg of sugar, 1700 – 714 kg, 1720 – 1735 kg, and 1810 – 909 kg.[33]

The ratio between *the price of enslaved people and the price of sugar* in the first half of the seventeenth century explains why farmers could pay ground rent rates of up to 16.6% of their part of the product, which led landlords, as we saw in Chapter 11, to prefer processing sugarcane from tenant farmers. Some went as far as completely eliminating their own fields, as was the case with Engenho do Sergipe do Conde. The lease rates at the time neutralized the effects of the law of the rigidity of the slave workforce. But this was not always sufficient to avoid losses on the part of plantations that depended exclusively on farmers' fields, as was the case in fact with the Jesuits' plantation. The significant increase in the price of enslaved people relative to the price of sugar led to a drop in the lease rates. As a result, the law of the rigidity of the slave workforce came into full effect and the plantations started to need their own fields as their main source of raw matter.

Regarding Campos dos Goitacases, Saint-Hilaire observed that, in the Benedictine's plantation, leasing 100 square *braças* cost two *patacas*.[34] This was equivalent to leasing an area of 4.84 hectares – the equivalent of one *alqueire* in Minas Gerais and two *alqueires* in São Paulo – for 640 rs.[35] For the sake of reasoning, note that the *annual* ground rent of a high-quality Minas *alqueire* appropriate for sugarcane production represented the same amount necessary to hire an unqualified slave for *four days* at that time.

In his *Notas Dominicais*, Tollenare only mentioned the division of sugar in halves between the plantation owner and the sugarcane tenant farmer. De Mornay also only refers to a division in halves among both parties. It is difficult to imagine that, having been witnesses, both of them would have failed to perceive that there was another portion specifically as payment for the ground rent. Why would plantation owners in Pernambuco accept such a decrease in the joint revenue from industrial rent and ground rent? In order to avoid groundless speculation, I can only suppose that the ground rent was paid in some form not documented by Tollenare and De Mornay. We can infer this from Luccock, according to whom the "emphyteuta" in Rio de Janeiro, in addition to paying the landlord half of the sugarcane as the price for industrialization, were also obliged "to plant a certain amount of sugarcane in other areas […]."[36] Planting these other areas must have served as a separate payment for the ground rent.

What is unquestionable is that the rates paid for the ground rent by Brazilian sugarcane farmers were much lower than the rates paid by peasants in Portugal. In Portuguese medievalism, the feudal ground rent was on average 30% of the gross agricultural product, according to Armando Castro's estimate, with some peasants paying 50% and even 70%. The difference in the rates highlights the typological difference between the ground rent in Brazilian slavery and in Portuguese feudalism.

As we have seen, there were significant differences among sugarcane farmers. The poorest depended on their own labor and that of a few enslaved people. But Antonil speaks of tenant farmers who became wealthy. Silva Lisboa considered that farmers' occupation was a profitable one. According to Luccock, "there are many emphyteutae whose situation improves, they stand out from other farmers and end up becoming landowners." And Tollenare emphasized that tenant farmers were able to *capitalize*, obtaining an average annual income equivalent to 400 *arrobas* of sugar.[37]

Retaining part of the surplus product was implicit in the tenant's condition as slave owner, since only from the surplus product would he be able to obtain the yearly amount equivalent to the amortization of the purchase price of the slave workforce. Otherwise, he would be unable to renew the workforce as the enslaved people became disabled. It was also from the surplus product that he extracted what was necessary to maintain his slave owner status, since farmers, as Tollenare explains, in spite of their humble dwellings and rustic life, "when they put the hoe aside to go to Sirinhaém or to church, they dress up like city men and ride a good horse with silver stirrups and spurs."[38]

While slaveholding tenant farmers had no resemblance to feudal peasants, their situation was *analogous* to the situation of capitalist tenants. Not only because they kept a part of the surplus product and because they could accumulate, but also because of a certain differential characteristic of the ground rent, since, as Father Pereira, Van der Dussen, and Antonil observed, the lease rates varied depending on the land's location and fertility.

The analogy between the slave plantation economy and capitalist agriculture drew Marx's attention. Without analyzing it in depth, he touched on essential points:

> And even in the agricultural economies of antiquity showing the greatest analogy to capitalist agriculture, namely Carthage and Rome, the similarity to a plantation economy is greater than to a form corresponding to the really capitalist mode of exploitation. A formal analogy that, however, turns out to be completely illusory in all essential points to a person familiar with the capitalist mode of production, who does not, like Mister Mommsen, discover a capitalist mode of production in every monetary economy – a formal analogy is not to be found, in fact, in continental Italy during antiquity, but at best only in Sicily, since this island served Rome as an agricultural tributary, so that its agriculture was aimed chiefly at export. Tenant farmers in the modern sense existed there.[39]

What Marx is saying is therefore that the analogy between slave agriculture and capitalist agriculture might be purely formal, completely illusory, even though in an export agriculture such as existed in Sicily there were tenant farmers in the modern sense. This should be interpreted only in the sense that the surplus product was distributed among those farmers and the landowners. And only in that sense, since Marx establishes an unquestionable and essential distinction between the plantation economy – thinking undoubtedly about the slave plantation – and the true capitalist mode of agricultural exploitation. In a note to the excerpt cited above, he added:

> Adam Smith emphasizes how, in his time (and this applies also to the plantations in tropical and subtropical countries in our own day), rent and profit were not yet divorced from one another, for the landlord was simultaneously a capitalist, just as Cato, for instance, was on his estates. But this separation is precisely the prerequisite for the capitalist mode of production, to whose conception the basis of slavery moreover stands in direct contradiction (*mit deren Begriff die Basis der Sklaverei zudem überhaupt im Widerpruch steht*).[40]

This separation existed in a rough form in the plantations of Brazil's sugar region, a peculiarity unknown to Marx. Brazilian slaveholding tenants were also farmers in the modern sense, like those of ancient Sicily. But even in this case, the concept of capitalism is unthinkable, *since it was in direct contradiction to the basis of slavery.* The analogy between the slaveholding farmer and the capitalist farmer can only be formal, referring only to their external characteristics, since each was governed by unique specific laws that were entirely different from each other. In the

context of the colonial slave mode of production and its specific laws, the rent paid by the tenant farmer was *slave* ground rent, a part of the surplus product created by enslaved people through agricultural labor.

In Brazil, ground rent emerges very early in the first century of colonization. The best lands in terms of fertility and location could never be freely appropriated, but were granted for free to a limited group of privileged individuals. A certain number of colonists with modest resources obtained land property in regions that were more favorable to the export economy, but others were forced to pay ground rent. Nonetheless, it would be false to study the ground rent in Brazil from an unsystematic and ahistorical standpoint, avoiding the issue of the process of its emergence, its categorical content, and its peculiar evolution. Everything said up to now indicates that the ground rent in our country had a history of its own, was not transferred from Portugal in its final form, and was not immune to gradual changes and typological transformations through time. The division by halves and by thirds that Brazilian peasants only knew after the end of slavery or in the process of its extinction were already familiar to peasants in Portuguese medievalism. Instead of continuing Portugal's historical process, the ground rent in Brazil had an original point of departure and underwent an original evolution.

Notes

1 Cf. Canabrava. *O açúcar nas Antilhas*, p. 91.
2 Cf. Cardim, Fernão. Op. cit., p. 334.
3 *HCPB,* v. 3, p. 346.
4 Lisboa, Silva. Op. cit., p. 500.
5 Cf. Autor Anônimo. Op. cit., p. 32; Andrade, Manuel Correia de. *A terra e o homem no Nordeste*, p. 74; Pétrone, Schorer. Op. cit., p. 56, 67.
6 Dussen, Adriaen Van der. Op. cit., p. 93–94.
7 Cf. Antonil. Op. cit., p. 141.
8 Cf. Petrone, Schorer. Op. cit., p. 67.
9 Cf. Dussen, Adriaen Van der. Op. cit., p. 31–80; Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 93; Schwartz, Stuart B. Padrões de propriedade de escravos nas Américas: nova evidência para o Brasil. *Estudos Econômicos*, v. 13, n. 1, p. 269, Table 3.
10 Apud Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 2. p. 357.
11 Cf. Prado Júnior, Caio. *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo*, p. 140; Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 93; Deerr, Noel. Op. cit., v. 2. p. 358; Eisenberg. Op. cit., p. 209; Schwartz. Op. cit., p. 274–276, Tab. 6.
12 Cf. Antonil. Op. cit., p. 145–147; Lisboa, Silva. Op. cit., p. 500; Vilhena, Op. cit., v. 1. p. 181; Brito, Rodrigues de. Op. cit., p. 57. See also Andrade, M. C. de. Op. cit., p. 76–77.
13 Luccock. Op. cit., p. 194.
14 Pereira, Padre Estevam. Op. cit., p. 779.
15 Cf. Antonil. Op. cit., p. 171.
16 Cf. Pereira, Padre Estevam. Op. cit., p. 784; Dussen, Adriaen Van der. Op. cit., p. 94–95; Antonil. Op. cit., p. 193, 222; Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. Op. cit., p. 129–130, 148; Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 93
17 Cf. Lisboa, Silva. Op. cit., p. 500–501.
18 Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 1. p. 180–181.
19 Cf. Brito, Rodrigues de. Op. cit., p. 57.
20 Cf. Pereira, Padre Estevam. Op. cit., p. 778; Schwartz. Free Labor in a Slave Economy. Op. cit., p. 153–158.
21 Antonil. Op. cit., p. 144.
22 Ibidem.
23 Vilhena. Op. cit., v. 1. p. 181.
24 Tollenare. Op. cit., p. 93–94.
25 Saint-Hilaire. *Viagens pelo Distrito dos Diamantes*, p. 394–395.
26 Cf. Luccock. Op. cit., p. 195.
27 Cf. Marx, K. *Das Kapital*. Book Three, p. 647.
28 Ibidem. Book Three. Section Six. Chaps. XXXVII–XLVII.
29 Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes. Op. cit., p. 129.

30 Pereira, Padre Estevam. Op. cit., p. 778.
31 Dussen, Adriaen van der. Op. cit., p. 93.
32 Antonil. Op. cit., p. 222.
33 Cf. Barrett, Ward J. and Schwartz, Stuart B. Comparación entre dos economías azucareras coloniales: Morelos, México y Bahia, Brasil. *Haciendas, latifundios y plantaciones en America Latina*. Op. cit., p. 544, 562–563, 568.
34 One *braça* was equivalent to 2.2 m; one *pataca* was equivalent to 320 *réis*. (T.N.)
35 Cf. Saint-Hilaire. Op. cit., p. 394.
36 Luccock. *Op. cit.,* p. 194.
37 Ibidem. p. 195; Antonil. *Op. cit.,* p. 147; Tollenare. *Op. cit.,* p. 94.
38 Ibidem. p. 95.
39 Marx, K. Op. cit., Book Three, p. 795.
40 Ibidem, n. 42.

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