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Gustavo Acioli Lopes

*Centro de Ciencias, Humanas, Letras, e Artes*, [aciolilopes@usp.br](mailto:aciolilopes@usp.br)

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## September 2007 Newsletter

### **Pernambuco's Slave Trade from *Costa da Mina* and Transatlantic Competitions in the Early Eighteenth Century**

By Gustavo Acioli Lopes<sup>1</sup>

This study presents new estimates of the number of enslaved laborers imported into Pernambuco, Brazil, from locations in West Africa and analyzes key features of that part of the transatlantic slave trade during the eighteenth century. This article is divided into three parts. First, I present a new assessment of the number of enslaved persons imported into Pernambuco in the years 1696-1760 from Costa da Mina, an area of West Africa that was also referred to as the Slave Coast and the Bight of Benin. Utilizing archival research of primary sources, as well as published secondary sources, I have compiled a detailed chronology of slave imports within this overall time period. These import figures are then compared to the numbers of enslaved persons imported into Bahia, Brazil, from the Costa da Mina in the same period, and then with statistics for overall numbers of enslaved persons imported into all of Brazil during that time. In order to understand the Pernambuco slave trade in the context of a transatlantic perspective, in the second part of this article I compare and contrast the Pernambuco import data with the European slave trade in the same region of West Africa. This comparison enables me to evaluate the relative significance of Pernambuco's role in the overall market of slave trading that impacted this region of West Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> The author is a Ph.D. candidate in Economic History Program of São Paulo University, Brazil and holds a fellowship in CNPq (the Brazilian National Science Foundation).

In the third part of this article, I address the conditions and factors that shaped the Luso-Brazilian slave trade in this period of 1696-1760. Business interests in Pernambuco and Bahia competed with the strong influences of European investors, particularly British and French, who were engaged in the transatlantic slave trade targeting locations in the Bight of Benin. In order to compete, business concerns in Pernambuco and Bahia worked to manipulate interrelated trading of enslaved laborers, tobacco, manufactured goods, and smuggled gold.

### **I. Pernambuco Slave Trade from *Costa da Mina*, 1696-1760: A New Estimate.**

Philip Curtin's monumental work issued in 1969<sup>2</sup> estimated the total number of enslaved persons exported from Africa and the numbers of enslaved laborers imported into different regions of the Americas over a period spanning the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries. Curtin drew attention to the need of new research on each of national slave trade carriers. Since the publication of his study, several researchers have answered his challenges with new inquiries on the subject, and the slave trading activities of the English,<sup>3</sup> French, Dutch and other Europeans<sup>4</sup> have been reassessed in order to check the reliability of Curtin's findings. Other historians, however, have claimed the necessity of re-examining the total figures suggested by Curtin, and have called for upward revisions of his figures.<sup>5</sup> In regard to the Brazilian slave trade, an important study, even before Curtin's 1969 *Census*, put forward a reliable estimate of

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<sup>2</sup> Phillip D. Curtin: *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1969.

<sup>3</sup> Anstey, Robert. The Volume and Profitability of British Slave Trade, 1761-1807. In: Engerman, Stanley L.; Genovese, Eugene D. (Ed.). *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere*. Quantitative Studies. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975, 3-31.

<sup>4</sup> Richardson, David. "The Eighteenth Century British Slave Trade: estimates of its volume and coastal distribution in Africa." *Research in Economic History*, Connecticut: Jai Press, vol. 12, p. 151-195; Idem. "Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700-1810: New Estimates of Volume and Distribution." *The Journal of African History*, vol. 30, n. 1, 1989, p. 1-22.

<sup>5</sup> Inikori, Joseph. "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Assessment of Curtin and Anstey." *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, vol. 17, n. 2, 1976, p. 197, 205, 208, 222 and *passim*.

slave imports into Brazil throughout those four centuries.<sup>6</sup> Other works assessed one or another of the specific branches of Brazil's slave trade, but none has tried to undertake a new calculation of the total numbers of enslaved persons brought into Brazil during that period.

As Rio de Janeiro and Bahia were the two major slave trading markets within colonial Brazil in the eighteenth century, those two centers have drawn more attention than any other captaincy. "Captaincies" in the Portuguese colonial structure were administrative jurisdictions covering particular areas, such as Pernambuco and Bahia. In the Bahia case, Mauricio Goulart, Pierre Verger, and Jean Baptiste Nardi,<sup>7</sup> respectively, suggested import figures from the Bight of Benin (Costa da Mina) throughout the eighteenth-century. Patrick Manning,<sup>8</sup> utilizing shipping data published by Verger, also reassessed the volume of Bahia slave imports for that century.

For the Pernambuco captaincy we have no estimate for the whole eighteenth century, as regards the Costa da Mina trade, except Goulart's "guesswork,"<sup>9</sup> whose estimate was of 90,000 slaves imported by Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro together. Goulart's study does not show a breakdown for each of those two captaincies, and therefore does not specify the numbers imported into Pernambuco in particular. The study presented here contributes to improving our knowledge of the slave trade in the northeast coast of Brazil and provides further details of that trade's connections with locations in West Africa.

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<sup>6</sup> Goulart, Maurício. *A Escravidão Africana no Brasil*. (Das origens à extinção do tráfico). 2<sup>a</sup>. ed. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1950. Curtin, *op. cit.*, p. 205-7, relies on Goulart work as regards to Brazil slave import.

<sup>7</sup> Goulart, *op. cit.*, p. 211-6; Verger, Pierre. *Fluxo e Refluxo do Tráfico de Escravos entre o Golfo de Benin e a Bahia de Todos os Santos: dos séculos XVII a XIX*. (Trad.). Salvador: Corrupio, 1987, p. 692-707, (1<sup>th</sup>. ed. 1968); Nardi, Jean Baptiste. *O fumo brasileiro no período colonial*. Lavoura, Comércio e Administração. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1996, p. 224, 381-94.

<sup>8</sup> Manning, Patrick. The Slave Trade in the Bight of Benin, 1640-1890. In: Gemery, Hogendorn. (ed.). *The Uncommon Market*. Essays in the Economic History of Atlantic Slave Trade. Nova York: Academic Press, 1979, p. 118, 136-7.

<sup>9</sup> Curtin, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

A few works provide figures for the Pernambuco slave trade for some years. We have figures for 1722-1731, analyzed for J. Galloway, but I preferred to review the original sources, because the Galloway series shows inconsistencies.<sup>10</sup> The most known period of the Pernambuco slave trade in the eighteenth century is a span of years during which the Pernambuco and Paraíba Trade Company operated a monopoly (the *Companhia de Comércio de Pernambuco e Paraíba*). Relying on the Company's records, researchers can assess the total volume of slave imports from Costa da Mina and Angola in the years 1761-1777.<sup>11</sup> Fortunately, one more source, a single letter, provides data for 1742-1760.<sup>12</sup> I have chosen 1760 as the end year for my study, because the slave trade was carried out within similar conditions, that is, free trade, of the former years.

The estimates further presented here rest on shipping data ("generally accepted as the most reliable basis for such calculations"<sup>13</sup>), tobacco exports figures for the slave trade,<sup>14</sup> and interpolations to fill the gaps for years with no data. In lieu of resorting to patterns of slaves/tonnage ratios, I have preferred to use calculations of the mean slave carrying capacity in the years 1722-1731 and 1742-1760, which are almost the same, as will be discussed further below. When calculating the number of enslaved persons arriving in Brazil based on data of shipments leaving African locations, one must also account for the loss of lives during the middle passage across the Atlantic. To estimate the Pernambuco imports of enslaved persons

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<sup>10</sup> Galloway, J.H. "Nordeste do Brasil, 1700-1750. Reexame de uma crise." *Revista Brasileira de Geografia*. Rio de Janeiro, 36 (2), p. 85-102, abril/junho, 1974, p. 102. (Translated).

<sup>11</sup> Ribeiro Jr., José. *Colonização e Monopólio no Nordeste do Brasileiro*. A Companhia Geral de Comércio de Pernambuco e Paraíba. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1976, p. 130-1.

<sup>12</sup> "Atestação passada pelo proprietário dos despachos." AHU, Caixas de Pernambuco, n. 67. Apud: Idem, *ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>13</sup> Richardson, David. "The Eighteenth Century Slave Trade: estimates of its volume and coastal distribution in Africa." *Research in Economic History*, London; Connecticut: Jai Press, vol. 12, 1989, p. 159.

<sup>14</sup> Used as a proxy rather than a prime cost, for reasons that I shall address further below.

from Costa da Mina, I employ a calculation of probable mortality rates during the middle passage that are based on other studies.<sup>15</sup>

I have calculated the imports of slaves into the Pernambuco captaincy from year to year in the period of 1696 to 1760, and combined those statistics with data for those years for which useful calculations already existed and with issued data for the Bahia captaincy. I have set these data out in five-year increments in Tables I and II below. Table II provides the total number of enslaved persons imported into Pernambuco from the Costa da Mina region for these five-year periods. Table I provides the mean annual amounts of enslaved persons imported into each of Pernambuco and Bahia over the same time periods. Thus, for example, column 1 in Table I for the years 1696-1700, reflects an annual average of 419, which is one-fifth of the total of 2,095 for Pernambuco in that period as shown in Table II. Similarly, the total figures for Bahia in each five-year span can be calculated by multiplying the annual averages provided in Table I by five.

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<sup>15</sup> Klein, Herbert S., and Engerman, Stanley L. A Note on Mortality in the French Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century. In: Gemery, Henry A.; Hogendorn, Jan S. (ed.). *The Uncommon Market*. Essays in the Economic History of Atlantic Slave Trade. Nova York: Academic Press, 1979. Studies in Social Discontinuity, p. 261-72. Klein; Engerman. "Long Term Trend in African Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade." *Slavery and Abolition*.

Table I

Annual Slave Imports from Costa da Mina (Five Years Average)					
	Pernambuco		Bahia		5
	1	2	3	4	
Years	Slaves	Index	Slaves	Index	Col. 1/Col. 3
1696-1700	419	100	1264	100	33,1
1701-1705	448	107	1158	92	38,7
1706-1710	382	91	1043	83	36,6
1711-1715	321	77	1188	94	27,0
1716-1720	701	167	2171	172	32,3
1721-1725	2405	574	2256	178	106,6
1726-1730	2311	552	3978	315	58,1
1731-1735	1319	315	4175	330	31,6
1736-1740	999	238	6055	479	16,5
1741-1745	550	131	4209	333	13,1
1746-1750	1080	258	4380	347	24,7
1751-1755	840	200	3581	283	23,5
1756-1760	940	224	3931	339	23,9

Sources: to Bahia: Nardi, *op. cit.*, p. 224, 381-94; to Pernambuco, see Appendix I.

Table II

Pernambuco Gross Slave Imports from Costa da Mina	
Years	Slaves
1696-1700	2095
1701-1705	2240
1706-1710	1910
1711-1715	1605
1716-1720	3505
1721-1725	12025
1726-1730	11555
1731-1735	6595
1736-1740	4995
1741-1745	2750
1746-1750	5400
1751-1755	4200
1756-1760	4700
Total	63575

Sources: See Appendix 1.

As we can see, the variations in the slave imports for those two captaincies are rather similar up to 1730, except for one half decade (1701-1705), with similar degrees of increases and decreases from one period to the next. So, there was a downward movement in the ten years 1706-1715 and an upward trend thereafter. Nevertheless, the pace of growth for each captaincy's slave trade was not the same. Pernambuco imports showed a significant increase in the first half of the 1720s and a steady decrease in the 1730s onward. Their richer neighbor, Bahia, whose starting point (1696-1700) was higher than Pernambuco's figures, seems to undergo a major increase in slave imports only in the second half of 1720s. On the other hand, the decrease in Bahia's imports was not as strong as was the decrease for Pernambuco and that trend for Bahia started only in the 1740s.

As these data indicate, Bahia and Pernambuco did not show the same pattern in their activities of importing slaves from the Costa da Mina. These differences likely resulted from competition between the slave trading enterprises based in Bahia and Pernambuco, with the increased rates for the former having an impact of downward rates for the latter.

## **II. Pernambuco Slave Trade from *Costa da Mina* in the Context of Others Branches of the Transatlantic Slave Trade**

The levels of Brazilian slave imports from Angola, when compared to imports from the Costa da Mina in the same period, seem to present a different pattern. The second and third decades show a decrease when compared to the first ten years of the eighteenth century, but an almost steady rise in the three next decades,<sup>16</sup> although not as fast as the rate of increases in the Bahia slave trade from Bight of Benin. Maybe we can assign these features, on the one hand, to

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<sup>16</sup> Goulart, *op. cit.*, p. 203-9; Curtin, *op. cit.*, p. 206-8.



the partial withdrawal of the Bahian merchants from Angola toward the Bight of Benin, followed by Pernambuco slave traders, and, on the other hand, the rise of Rio de Janeiro as a major slave market would explain the increase of the 1730s onward.<sup>17</sup>

In gross numbers, the Pernambuco imports from the Costa da Mina are considerable. The number of slaves which Bahia imported from the Costa da Mina in the period 1696-1760 ranged from 185,296 to 200,455.<sup>18</sup> The figures for Pernambuco for the same time span are 63,580 slaves. Therefore, Pernambuco imports amounted to approximately 30% of the Bahia imports.

The last effort to estimate the Pernambuco slave trade in the eighteenth century assigned 32,024 slaves imported from Angola to the period 1701-1750.<sup>19</sup> Considering the data presented here, Pernambuco imports from Costa da Mina appear to have contributed more than 60% of the total of Pernambuco slave imports in the first half of the eighteenth century. But this is not quite true, because those data record only 1,785 slaves imported from Angola<sup>20</sup> for whole first quarter of the eighteenth century, which is very likely an understated figure. It is more probable that captives from Costa da Mina accounted for 50% of all enslaved persons brought into Pernambuco in this period.

The significance of these numbers of enslaved persons brought to Pernambuco can also be evaluated in relation to the overall numbers of captives exported from African locations by all colonial slave trading carriers. Pernambuco's share in such activities can be assessed as two

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<sup>17</sup> Goulart, *op. cit.*, p. 211-2.

<sup>18</sup> Nardi, *op. cit.*, 224, 381-94. I prefer Nardi figures than Verger and Manning ones, because to the shipping data he added tobacco export cargoes figures, instead use only patterns of carrying capacity. The four hundred slaves per vessel ratio used by Verger and Manning for the first quarter of eighteenth century seems too high.

<sup>19</sup> Data from *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (hereafter "TSTD"), apud Silva, Daniel Domingues Barros da. "O Tráfico Transatlântico de Escravos de Pernambuco (1576-1851): notas de pesquisa." *Anais do VI Congresso da ABPHE*. Registro, RJ: Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores em História Econômica, 2005, p. 22, Annex 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 22, Annex 2.

levels. Their share in the West and West-Central African exports and in the Costa da Mina exports. Pernambuco imports from the Costa da Mina equalled 2.4% of the gross African slave exports in the 1700-1760. In the context of the region of West Africa, Pernambuco's portion was more significant, ranging from 6% to 18% and averaging 10% of the total Costa da Mina slave exports in the 1700-1760.<sup>21</sup>

If one sums the Bahia and Pernambuco share in the slave imports from the Costa da Mina region and compares that to the shares accounted for by other slave trade carriers, the relative importance of the Costa da Mina within the overall African slave trade changes slightly, ranging from 25% to 23%.<sup>22</sup> The distribution pattern over time of the Luso-Brazilian slave trade in the region calls for a revision. My own figures and Nardi's work for Bahia support a redistribution of the Brazilian slave exports along the six first decades of the eighteenth century. The exports in the 1700-1720 period seems to be quite smaller than it was suggested hitherto; on the other hand, if exports during those first two decades were overestimated, the exports of the four following ones are understated.<sup>23</sup> The Luso-Brazilian exports from the Costa da Mina during 1730-1760 were rather greater than they were twenty years earlier -- in fact, more than four times greater.

Perhaps, the Bahia and Pernambuco rate of imports from Costa da Mina during the first fifteen years examined in this study was partially due to the increase in French and British

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<sup>21</sup> Lovejoy presents export figures from Bight of Benin gleaned from Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database, but since the TSTD is not comprehensive with regards to Portuguese slave trade in the period before 1750, I use the Richardson figures from the article in the note 15. Cf. "The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM." Review by Thornton, John. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 33, n. 1, 2000, p. 140-1; and Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*. Restoring the links. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005, p. 29. Lovejoy, Paul. *A Escravidão na África: uma história de suas transformações*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2002, p. 101 (Translation).

<sup>22</sup> Richardson, David. "Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700-1810," *op. cit.*, p. 16-8.

<sup>23</sup> For the whole period see Goulart, *op. cit.*, p. 215; Verger, *Fluxo e Refluxo do Tráfico de Escravos*, *op. cit.*, p. 692-707; Manning, *op. cit.*, p. 118, 136-7.

demand in the early decades of the eighteenth century. However, Richardson has showed that the English slave trade from the Bight of Benin in the first half of eighteenth century was smaller than the levels that Curtin and Lovejoy stated.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the slave trade of the two captaincies of Pernambuco and Bahia benefited from the rise in demand for enslaved labor during the early Brazilian gold boom, and also from the continuing steady supply of enslaved laborers from the Costa da Mina during the first half of eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

### III. Tobacco and Gold in the Luso-Brazilian Slave Trade

Trading in a region where Portugal did not have any territorial control nor even a fortress,<sup>26</sup> Portuguese slave merchants in West Africa, unlike their position in Luanda, had to face an open competition with others European slave dealers demanding coerced African labour. In general, the chief imported goods in slaver ports of the Slave Coast and Bight of Benin were textiles (mainly Indian), guns, powder, and cowries, whereas ironware and tobacco had a modest share.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, to succeed in these market locations in West Africa, the slave traders had to supply goods with characteristics and prices required by local merchants and tastes.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Richardson, 1989a, p. 13-5, Tables 5 and 6.

<sup>25</sup> The captives from Dahomey and Oyo wars; cf. Curtin, *op. cit.*, p. 227; Law, "Royal Monopoly and Private Enterprise in the Atlantic Trade: The Case of Dahomey." *The Journal of African History*, vol. 18, n. 4, 1977, p. 556-9; Manning, *Slavery and African Life*. Occidental, Oriental and African slave trade. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 96; Lovejoy, *op. cit.*, p. 95-8, 101-2, 134-7, 142.

<sup>26</sup> Portugal built a modest one only in 1721, by efforts of general-governor Vasco Fernandes Cezar de Meneses and a suspicious slave trader. For all the episodes of these developments, see Verger, Pierre. *Fluxo e Refluxo do Tráfico de Escravos*, *op. cit.*, p. 159-60.

<sup>27</sup> Eltis, David. *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 175-7, 187; Manning, Patrick. *Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 44, note 64.

<sup>28</sup> Richardson, David. West African Consumption Patterns and Their Influence on the Eighteenth-Century English Slave Trade. In: Gemery; Hogendorn, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

The Portuguese merchants had increasing difficulties in the later half of seventeenth century in trying to compete in these open markets of the West African coast.<sup>29</sup> This resulted in part because Portugal's trade in the Indian Ocean, as a source of Asian cotton goods, declined in the face of fierce competition by Dutch and British rivals, leading to Portugal's loss of several factories and fortresses.<sup>30</sup> Most historiography on Brazil's direct slave trade with Africa has argued that this branch of Atlantic slave shipping rested mainly upon by-products of Brazil's economy: third degree tobacco and sugar cane brandy (*jeribita* or *cachaça*).<sup>31</sup> The fact that Portuguese metropolitan merchants were focused on Angola and, hence, that colonial merchants based in Brazil's harbours faced hard competition from their mother country's counterparts, resulted in the displacement of the slave trade of the sugar captaincies (Bahia and Pernambuco) toward the Slave Coast and Bight of Benin,<sup>32</sup> where the former could offer a trade good demanded by African dealers and with no European rivals: tobacco.

During the last quarter of seventeenth century, Brazil's sugar production suffered under the concurrency of West Indians' production and a growing protectionism in European national markets. The procuring of African slave laborers from the Slave Coast in exchange for a tropical by-product (third degree tobacco) may have helped to diminished the costs of production

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<sup>29</sup> Luso-Brazilian businesses were obliged to trade only in four ports of West Africa due to a treaty between the Dutch and Portuguese governments in the middle of seventeenth century.

<sup>30</sup> Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *O Império Asiático Português, 1500-1700*. Uma história política e econômica. Lisboa: Difel, 1995, p. 207-27, 232-45. (Translated).

<sup>31</sup> See mainly Alencastro, Luiz Felipe de. *O Trato dos Viventes: formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000, p. 307-26 (although the author chiefly approaches the later half of seventeenth century); Florentino, Manolo. *Em Costas Negras*. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, p. 122-6 (his data concern the early decades of nineteenth century); Verger, *Fluxo e Refluxo do Tráfico de Escravos*, *op. cit.*, p. 20 *et passim*.

<sup>32</sup> Miller, Joseph C. A marginal institution on the margin of the Atlantic System: the Portuguese southern Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century. In: Solow, Barbara L. (Ed.) *Slave and the rise of the Atlantic System*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 136-7.

incurred by Bahia<sup>33</sup> and Pernambuco sugar mills. This is certainly likely in Pernambuco where business interests were engaged in reconstructing their sugar economy after wars to throw the Dutch Company of West Indies out of the region.

Nevertheless, the known role which tobacco exerted in colonial slave ships bound for the Slave Coast tells only half the story. Although the ships' cargo lists upon departing from Bahia and Recife (the Pernambuco capital) ports declared only tobacco rolls, some contemporary witness accounts testified that it was not possible for traders to fill their slave ship's carrying capacity with only tobacco. The actual cargoes of Recife's slave ships bound for the Slave Coast were made up of miscellaneous goods, such as

Sugar cane brandy, wrought and dust gold, jaguar (*onça*) hide, worked and raw, hammocks, silk umbrella, ox tails, sharp-pointed knives with turtle handle, European white fabrics and from India, [...] and some light silk.<sup>34</sup>

The evidences indicate that tobacco and gold had the greatest value among all of these goods. Slave traders that departed from Pernambuco (and we can suppose from Bahia too) to Costa da Mina carried some volumes of gold in their holds, in addition to tobacco made specifically for this trade (processed with molasses and aromatic herbs).

Two reasons explain traders carrying of gold. First, it was not possible to trade with African slave merchants supplying only one good, given that slave lots were purchased using a bundle of commodities which usually should contain textiles and European firearms.<sup>35</sup> Second,

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<sup>33</sup> Alencastro, Luiz Felipe de. "Engenho de Sempre." *Novos Estudos Cebrap*, São Paulo, n. 24, julho, 1989, p. 201.

<sup>34</sup> Translated from Portuguese; cf. Informação Geral da Capitania de Pernambuco [General Information of Pernambuco Captaincy]. *Annaes da Bibliotheca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. XXVIII, 1906, p. 482-3. This source is an official report.

<sup>35</sup> On the role of guns in the region's slave trade, including Portuguese difficulties in supplying, cf. Kea, R. A.. "Firearms and Warfare in the Gold Coast and Slave Coast from the Sixteenth to the

several lines of evidence show that even the smallest slave ship's tobacco cargos (equal in value to less than 200 slaves) would not suffice to purchase all the enslaved persons which those ships could load. To optimize the number of slaves they could purchase and transport in their return trip, colonial Brazil's slave traders had to resort to other slave trade commodities (with better terms of trade than tobacco), purchased from Europeans, to fulfil their carrying capacity. This commercial strategy is confirmed in Bahia, where a witness recorded that two thirds of the captaincy's imported slaves were paid for with gold. This witness asserted that the same was true, even more so, as regards the Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco slave trade.

A colonial magistrate alerted the Portuguese crown to the unrestrained smuggling of gold to West Africa through the slave trade. In a letter to the king Pedro II, João Guedes de Sá stated

I have notices that from Santos (a southern port close to Rio de Janeiro) departed a Portuguese *patacho* to make trade in *Costa da Mina*, carrying some volume of gold dust, which someone told amounted to two thousand [cruzados<sup>36</sup>], and that in Ajuda,<sup>37</sup> Ardra's<sup>38</sup> port, in the referred Coast, [the *patacho*] traded slaves and goods with a British ship in exchange of gold, [...]; there is no doubt about the certainty of this new, and even less that the fifth [o *quinto* owed to the crown] is not collected, when the gold is diverted by this way: and because in this way goes to Foreign hands, [...] the Brazilian gold; supposing that by way of Bahia, and the other captaincies, in which navigation to the *Costa da Mina* is usual, can repeat the same escape, I give notice to Her Majesty this damage."<sup>39</sup>

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Nineteenth Centuries." *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, vol. 12, n. 2, 1971, p. 185-7.

<sup>36</sup> A Portuguese unit of value equal to four hundred *réis*, the Portuguese currency.

<sup>37</sup> This is the "Uidah" harbour to the British, and "Ouidah" to French traders.

<sup>38</sup> "Allada" to the British traders.

<sup>39</sup> Translated from Portuguese. See Carta do [ouvidor geral da capitania de Pernambuco], João Guedes de Sá ao rei [D. Pedro II] sobre um *patacho* português que partiu de Santos para a *Costa da Mina*, levando ouro em pó para negociar escravos e fazendas com navios ingleses, e as desvantagens de tal negócio à Fazenda Real. Recife de Pernambuco, 11 de setembro de 1702. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU). Documentos Avulsos da Capitania de Pernambuco (DACP), Doc. 1892.

It seems that this magistrate was indirectly denouncing what actually was happening in the Bahia and Pernambuco slave trade. When the crown forbade Brazil's slave ships to carry gold to the Slave Coast, Pernambuco's governor did not deny the smuggling and even tried to justify it:

I have no doubt that some gold goes at despite of it is forbidden, what can not be avoided, nor I judge [prohibition] adequate to the service of Her Majesty rather very prejudicial that gold does not go, because the ships departed overloaded with tobacco and some leave incapable of sailing with deck in the water-line, but such cargo is not enough to ships take back the slaves of its carrying capacity; so, the European goods which they take [...] in exchange for that gold, or money which they carry, is like salt in the sauce of pan.<sup>40</sup>

It is clear that Brazil's slave trade in the first half of eighteenth century was financed at least partially with smuggled gold. In locations along West Africa's coast, Europeans procured this gold by selling fabrics and assorted goods or slaves<sup>41</sup> to Luso-Brazilian slavers. It is not matter of chance that the Royal African Company sent orders to the English factories in Africa to make deals with Luso-Brazilian slave traders only after the Brazilian gold boom. The Royal African Company's director wrote to the *Cape Coast Castle's* factors and for Uidá's factory, in 1707:

We had forbade [the factors] to trade with the Portuguese [...]. But now we see that there are possibilities of gain fair profits, if they could be influenced to bring gold for the Coast in lie of others goods. We desire that [...] you urge the most possible the Portuguese, but under condition they don't take European

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<sup>40</sup> [Carta do governador Duarte Sodré Pereira Tibão] In: Carta dos oficiais da Câmara de Recife ao rei [D. João V], pedindo deferimento da conta que deu a dita Câmara e a proposta que fizeram os homens de negócio do Recife sobre a proibição do comércio [de escravos] com a Costa da Mina. Recife 23 de abril de 1732. AHU, DACP. Cx. 43, Doc. 3860. Though this letter is dated thirty years later, this was not the first time that Portuguese crown prohibited slave traders in dealing with gold.

<sup>41</sup> Despite a rivalry between Dutch and Portuguese along the African coasts, Brazil's slavers bought slaves from the former in Mine Castle; cf. Postma, Johannes. *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 77-8, Table 3.1

merchandises and that they could procure, *in exchange of gold*,  
merchandise and blacks [...].<sup>42</sup>

This was, therefore, a channel through which a good deal of Brazilian gold found its way into central European economies. One can get a sense of the contribution of smuggled Brazilian gold to the wealth of British trade houses in the case of the Thomas Hall Company, one of greatest British slave trading firms. Brazilian gold procured from Luso-Brazilian traders made up 30% to 40% of that company's profits in the 1730s and 1740s.<sup>43</sup>

However, besides the gold, tobacco was a usual cargo of Pernambuco's slave ships. This commodity was grown in the northeast region of colonial Brazil, particularly in Bahia (the greatest producer) and Pernambuco. A third degree type of tobacco was specifically dedicated for use in the slave trade, and the Portuguese crown set apart the first and second degree types of tobacco for export back to Europe. Pernambuco's tobacco was raised in small farms scattered across the region, mainly by families using their own work as the labor source.

This small growers' tobacco production was channelled to markets by merchants linked to the captaincy's slave trade. Although those families produced and sold a cash crop, significant profits did not accrue to them, because traders made payments in advance, not in cash, but in goods. Merchants manipulated the ratio between the quantity of tobacco which small farmers had to deliver and the goods they received in exchange. Similarly, payment in advance was a usual merchant's practice in colonial Brazil in order to control the supply of commodities, even that produced by the colonial elite, that is, sugar.<sup>44</sup> This underdog condition,

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<sup>42</sup> Cited in: Verger, *Fluxo e Refluxo do Tráfico de Escravos*, *op. cit.*, p. 61 (bold added). Cf. also, Idem, p. 57-62.

<sup>43</sup> Inikori, Joseph E. *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England*. A study in the international trade and economic development. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 244, n. 82.

<sup>44</sup> See Schwartz, Stuart B. *Segredos Internos*. Engenhos e escravos na sociedade colonial. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1999, p. p. 173-84. (Translated). Sugar-mill owners tended to use sugar to pay for slaves while tobacco growers tended to use tobacco to procure consumption goods.



or “formal subsumption of work to capital,”<sup>45</sup> led to the transfer of profits from tobacco crops from farmers to merchants. This state of affairs provoked one witness at the time to assert that the tobacco growers “certainly would be incomparably much more happy, if they had not as enemies the profiteers [*os atravessadores*], the merchants,”<sup>46</sup> and a governor of Pernambuco similarly labeled tobacco growers as “the poorest people of Brazil.”<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusion

David Richardson has suggested that Luso-Brazilian slave trading from Angola was stable or in decline in the 1710s and 1730s.<sup>48</sup> However the same is less true as concerns to the trade in the Costa da Mina region. As we have seen, the Bahia and Pernambuco imports showed a growing pattern in the fifteen years after 1716, and especially in the third decade of the eighteenth century, similar to other carriers, mainly English and French slave traders.

Pernambuco’s contribution to the rise of Costa da Mina slave exports has not been considered previously in scholars’ studies of the regional details of the transatlantic slave trade. Maurício Goulart assigned 90,000 slaves imported by the Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro captaincies for entire eighteenth century,<sup>49</sup> a figure that Curtin considered too high and accordingly reduced it by 10 per cent.<sup>50</sup> The import figures for 1696-1760, added to figures for

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<sup>45</sup> Marx, Karl. *O Capital: Crítica da Economia Política*. Livro 1. Vol. I. Transl. São Paulo: Difel, 1982, p. 354; *ibidem*. Livro 1. V. II. Trad. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1968, p. 585-6.

<sup>46</sup> Discurso Preliminar, Histórico, Introdutório, com Natureza de Descrição Econômica da Comarca e Cidade da Bahia, In: *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, vol. XXVII. Rio de Janeiro: BN, 1906, p. 322.

<sup>47</sup> Do G[overnador] Francisco Martins Mascarenhas sobre a compra que se lhe encomendou de cinco mil cruzados de tabaco selecto p.a a frota de 1700. Pernambuco, 10 de Junho de 1699. IANTT, Junta do Tabaco, Maço 96-A; Caixa 83.

<sup>48</sup> Richardson. “Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700-1810,” *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>49</sup> Actually, Goulart suggested an import figure between 80,000 and 100,000 enslaved persons, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>50</sup> Curtin, *op. cit.*, p. 209-10.

1761-1778 (namely 7,600 slaves<sup>51</sup>) when the Pernambuco slave imports were carried out under a monopoly, amount to more than 70,000 slaves from *Costa da Mina* only for Pernambuco.

Although we do not know the import figures for Rio de Janeiro in the first three quarters of that century,<sup>52</sup> it seems that we are closer to Goulart's estimate than to Curtin's reduction.<sup>53</sup> The figures that I have calculated in this article provide rather a minimum than a maximum, because I did not examine the figures for smuggling of enslaved persons into Brazil and the levels of other captaincies' imports, for which there are other sources of evidence.<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, the contribution of such West African people<sup>55</sup> to the composition of colonial Brazil's subsequent populations of enslaved and free Africans may be much greater than has been previously stated<sup>56</sup> and, similarly, the preponderance of Bantu people<sup>57</sup> in colonial Brazil's northeast region was likely not as overwhelming as previously believed. I hope have drawn some attention to this segment of the transatlantic slave trade and the importance of the Costa da Mina region to the Pernambuco population and economy. Another main point that emerges from this study is the close relation between the Bahia or Pernambuco captaincies' slave trade and their tobacco economies. Access to low cost commodities was a very important condition for business interest in Bahia and Pernambuco to engage in slave trading and obtain profits. Gold

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<sup>51</sup> Ribeiro Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 131; Silva, *op. cit.*, p. 25, Appendix 8.

<sup>52</sup> That is, the direct import, excluding the slave import carried by Bahia and Pernambuco to Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>53</sup> Curtin's tendency to underestimate the specific slave trade carriers volume is emphasized in Inikori, Joseph. "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: a Rejoinder." *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, vol. 17, n. 4, 1976, 607-27. We do not intend, nevertheless, make any contribution to that controversy, if it remains yet.

<sup>54</sup> At least three other ports under Pernambuco government jurisdiction imported slaves straight from Costa da Mina: Paraíba, Goiana and Alagoas. For the smuggling of slaves in the region, see Palacios, Guillermo. *Cultivadores libres, Estado y crisis de la esclavitud em la época de la Revolución Industrial*. México, DF: Colegio de México; Fondo de Cultura, 1998, p. 65-7.

<sup>55</sup> Known as *Mina* in colonial Brazil.

<sup>56</sup> A historian in 1960s had already pointed out this question: Viana Filho, Luiz. *O Negro na Bahia*. 3<sup>th</sup> ed. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1988.

<sup>57</sup> Often referred to as *Angolans* by Luso-Brazilian settlers.

and tobacco were the main commodities that played this role during that time period. While gold was dug from the earth by the hands of enslaved persons (including *Minas* carried through the Pernambuco slave trade), Pernambuco's tobacco was raised by small-scale farmers. In this way, the slave trade from the Pernambuco captaincy created a chain of production and consumption which resulted in, on one hand, poor and exploited small growers and more African people toiling in Brazil's fields and gold mines, and, on the other hand, wealthy colonial merchants and a source of riches for western central economies.

**Appendix 1: Sources of Table I and II****Reckoning of slave imports of Recife port, several years: 1698-1745**

ANO	1 Ships	2 Slaves	3 Source
1698		419	A: tobacco exports <sup>a</sup>
1704		460	A
1706	3	382	C
1716		395	A
1717		247	A
1722	10	1.957	B: actual imports
1723	13	3.693	B
1724	10	2.505	B
1725	6	1.650	B
1726	11	2.733	B
1727	10	2.684	B
1728	10	2.803	B
1729	6	1.426	B
1730	8	1.910	B
1731	5	859	B
1732	5	1.250	C: number of ships
1733	8	2.000	C
1734	6	1.500	C
1735	8	2.000	C
1736	3	750	C
1737	7	1.750	C
1739	4	1.000	C

1742	2,1	550	D: TSTD2
1743	2,1	550	D
1744	2,1	550	D
1745	2,1	550	D
1746	4,2	1.080	D
1747	4,2	1.080	D
1748	4,2	1.080	D
1749	4,2	1.080	D
1750	4,2	1.080	D
1751	3,3	840	D
1752	3,3	840	D
1753	3,3	840	D
1754	3,3	840	D
1755	3,3	840	D
1756	3,6	940	D
1757	3,6	940	D
1758	3,6	940	D
1759	3,6	940	D
1760	3,6	940	D
<hr/>			
N=41			
<hr/>			

a. Gauged using the weight of tobacco rolls (1698: 2,6@; 1704: 2,8@; 1716-1717: 2,5@), ratio between rolls exported and slaves imported (1698, 1704, 1716-1717: 6,2) and amount exported yearly.

**Sources A:** *Ignacio de Moraes Sarm.<sup>to</sup> s.<sup>e</sup> arrecadação do tabaco*. Arrecife, 22 de Julho de 1698. Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais Torre do Tombo (IANTT), Junta do Tabaco (JT), Maço 96-A, Caixa 83. IANTT, JT, Maço 96 - Caixa 82; *Super.<sup>te</sup> do Tabaco de Pern.<sup>o</sup>*. Recife de Pernambuco, 20 de Março de 1704; *Carta do Superint.<sup>e</sup> do Tab.<sup>o</sup>*. Recife, Abril de 1704. IANTT, JT, Maço 96 - Caixa 82; *Superint.<sup>te</sup> dos Tabacos de Pernambuco*. Recife, 25 de julho de 1710. IANTT, JT, Maço 96 - Caixa 82; *Do*

*superintendente do tabaco de Pern.<sup>o</sup>*. Recife, 08 de julho de 1712. Do *Ouv.<sup>or</sup> Geral de Pern.<sup>co</sup> Superint.<sup>te</sup> dos tabacos*. Recife, 13 de Setembro de 1716. JT, Maço 97-A, Cx. 85; [Carta do] *Ouv.<sup>or</sup> Geral superint.<sup>te</sup> dos tabacos de Pernambuco* Recife, 18 de Setembro de 1717. IANTT, JT, Maço 98; *Do Superintend.<sup>te</sup> do Tabaco Manoel do Monte Fogaça*. Recife de Pernambuco, 20 de julho de 1729. IANTT, JT, Maço 100; *Do Ouv.<sup>or</sup> G.<sup>al</sup> Superintend.<sup>te</sup> dos Tabacos de Pern.<sup>co</sup>*. Recife de Pernambuco, 11 de Janeiro de 1731. IANTT, JT, Maço 100; *O Ouv.<sup>or</sup> e Superintend.<sup>te</sup> do Tab.<sup>o</sup> de Pernamb.<sup>o</sup>*. Recife, 13 de Setembro de 1734. IANTT, JT, Maço 100; *Do Ouv.<sup>or</sup> G.<sup>al</sup> Superintend.<sup>te</sup> dos tabacos Bento da Sylva Ramalho*. Pernambuco, 4 de maio de 1736. IANTT, JT, Maço 101; *O Superintend.<sup>e</sup> do Tabaco de Pern.<sup>o</sup>*. Pernambuco, 26 de Fevereiro de 1738. IANTT, JT, Maço 101; *O Superintend.<sup>e</sup> do Tabaco de Pern.<sup>o</sup>*. Pernambuco, 12 de março de 1738. IANTT, JT, Maço 101; *O Superintend.<sup>te</sup> do Tabaco de Pern.<sup>co</sup> [Antonio Rebello Leite]*. Pernambuco, 10 de Dezembro de 1739. IANTT, JT, Maço 101; *Sobre as Contas q nella deu o Ouv.<sup>or</sup> G.<sup>al</sup> e Superintend.<sup>te</sup> do mesmo gn.<sup>o</sup> de Pern.<sup>co</sup>*. Lisboa, 8 de Fevereiro de 1744. IANTT, Conselho da Fazenda, Livro 405, fl. 116v-118. *Do Superintend.<sup>e</sup> Francisco Correa Pimentel*. Santo Antonio do Recife, 1<sup>o</sup>. de Outubro de 1744. IANTT, Maço 102-A, caixa 94. Para os anos 1698-1745, NARDI, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

**Sources B:** CARTA do provedor da Fazenda Real da capitania de Pernambuco, João do Rego Barros, ao rei [D. João V], remetendo certidão dos editais que foram postos para a arrematação do contrato da Alfândega dos negros que vêm da Costa da Mina, e da relação dos seus rendimentos nos últimos dez anos. Recife, 16 de janeiro de 1732. AHU, Conselho Ultramarin, Documentos de Pernambuco. Cx. 42, D. 3786.

**Sources C:** 1732-1736, Pierre Verger. *Fluxo e Refluxo*, *op. cit.*, p. 66, n. 30; 1737: O SUPERINTEND.<sup>E</sup> do Tabaco de Pern.<sup>o</sup>. Vila de Santo Antonio do Recife, 6 de Fevereiro de 1738. IANTT, Junta do Tabaco, Maço 101, caixa 91; 1739: O SUPERINTEND.<sup>TE</sup> do Tabaco de Pern.<sup>co</sup> [Antonio Rebello Leite]. Pernambuco, 10 de Dezembro de 1739. IANTT, Junta do Tabaco, Maço 101, caixa 91.

**Sources D:** Data from *Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Database 2*. In: Daniel Domingues Barros da Silva. “O Tráfico Transatlântico de Escravos de Pernambuco (1576-1851): notas de pesquisa”, *op. cit.* The author used the total number of the Pernambuco slave trade with *Costa da Mina* in the period 1742-1760, but distributed that number in accordance with the five years proportion of voyages in that sea route registered in TSTD 2, given that the volume gauged through TSTD 2 was lower than the volume registered in coeval sources; the source for which total importation for the periods 1742-1760 and 1760-1778 is set out is: OFÍCIO do [governador da capitania de Pernambuco], José César de Meneses, ao [secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar], Martinho de Melo e Castro, sobre a Companhia Geral de Pernambuco e Paraíba [...], Anexo 2. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Documentos Avulsos da Capitania de Pernambuco, cx. 130, doc. 9823.

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