

## BLACK PEARLS IN LITTLE AFRICA: WOMEN OF COLOR IN TEJUCO VILLAGE, BRAZIL IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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### Abstract:

The village of Tejuco, now the town of Diamantina, was the center of the Diamond District in the Northeast of the captaincy of Minas Gerais. The aim of this article is to unveil, using a census and a map from around 1774, some of the layers of the feminine geography of the social life of the village. This reveals a more dynamic and plural configuration of Tejuco, where a significant number of people of color, mostly black African women, were heads of household. Their presence transformed Tejuco into a *Little Africa*.

### Keywords:

Women; gender; Tejuco; Brazil; cartography.

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(1) I would like to thank CNPq and Fapemig.

In 1774, by order of the Intendent of Diamonds, the most important local official, João da Rocha Dantas e Mendonça, produced a map of the village of Tejuco, the urban center of the diamond producing region located in the captaincy of Minas Gerais, entitled *Pequena Planta do Arraial do Tejuco* (Figures 1 and 2). This is a ground plan of Tejuco, whose center is colored in a light brown tone, in which seven churches are marked. The key explains that the urban mesh extends along the slope of the Santo Antonio hill, but the map does not give the street names. It also traces the streams that flow into the São Francisco River, located at the foot of the hill. Through an ingenious system of canals, some of them underground, and fountains, the town was supplied with drinking water (Furtado 2019: 52-58). It is also stated in the key that at the time Tejuco was composed of 567 houses, all drawn on the map in brownish tones and mostly located in the center of the village. It also explains that many residences «have patios», i.e., they had open internal spaces, sometimes adorned with gardens (Meneses 2015: 69-92), «some larger and some smaller, according to the convenience of each one», and that the lines that separate them «in the map, are the walls that divide the yards». This description suggests the importance of the locality which reflected that of its residents and highlighted the distinction of both.

On 15 February 1775, Rocha Dantas sent to Portugal a census of the *arraial* or village, called *Mapa dos moradores da cidade de Tejuco, de acordo com cada uma das ruas que compõem a cidade*<sup>(2)</sup>. This accompanied and clarified what had been drawn on the map. It lists the heads of all 521 households, grouped by the streets on which they lived. The discrepancy in house numbers between the map and the census can be in part explained by properties occupied by the Royal Diamond Company, which are not counted, such as the building of the Diamond Intendency, where the *Junta Diamantina* – the Crown institution responsible for diamond mining, holding a royal monopoly of this since around 1771 – met and the Intendent of the Diamonds lived (Furtado 1996). For the purposes of this article, I have added both this building and its distinguished resident, comprising a total of 522 households and 524 heads of households as there are two houses with two heads in each one.

In the *Census*, each of the head of the households is listed by their name, color, status (if they were *forro* or *forra*, i.e., former slaves who had

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(2) Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU), Manuscritos Avulsos de Minas Gerais (MAMG), caixa 108, doc. 9: 1-9.

been freed)<sup>(3)</sup>, profession, and civil status. Also stated is the total number of residents in each household, except slaves, specifying their relationship with the head of household (relative, *agregado*<sup>(4)</sup> or servant), and whether the property was rented or owned. From the names listed it is possible to know the gender of each person. In contrast to the map, what is striking about the census is that a significant number of people of color, mostly Black African women, were heads of household. In this sense, as I have been emphasizing in other articles, a «Little Africa» emerged in the heart of Minas Gerais, in which African freedwomen were in great number and played an important role (Furtado 2005: 143-159). I call these women «Black Pearls» (Furtado 2001a: 81-121).

The aim of this article is to demonstrate that gender relations, as a social and even cultural construction, were intrinsically related to the urban geography of the village of Tejuco. At first sight, the geography of the streets brought together people from different social statuses and colors, because the white and colored population cohabited the various blocks. However, a closer look reveals the geography of the blocks and of the types of properties (rented or owned), as well as another geography, which distinguished the central streets, the alleys, and the suburban streets also hierarchized the residents according to their gender and color. Furthermore, a more dynamic and plural configuration of the village can also be observed, where a significant number of people of color, mostly black African women, were heads of household, diminishing the social distances that separated them from the world of free white people. In this way, these black women insurged against the contingencies of gender and color that the colonial slaveholding society imposed on them.

Before continuing, it is necessary to clarify some of the terms used in the 1774 census to refer to the color of residents. These terms were used in the local documentation, which in the case of freed people refers to their former status as slaves and the place of origin of each one. Generically, *crioulo* or *crioula* referred to a slave born in the house of a slaveowner (Bluteau 1712: 1, 613), but in Minas Gerais it applied only to slaves born in Brazil both of whose parents were Africans and had the same skin

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(3) The status of being free is not stated, though the omission of the condition of *forro* evidences this. The same happens with whites whose color is not mentioned.

(4) *Agregado*, meaning farmhand or hand, is part of a relationship of subordination with the head of household, which implied not only cohabitation, but also work and political patronage.

color as them, i.e. black. Slaves coming from Africa were called blacks, i.e., *preto/pretas* or *negros/negras*. However, there is no information in the document about the place of origin of those born in Africa, thereby preventing the specification of the number brought from *Costa da Mina*, better known in the captaincy by the generic term of «*Mina*», or those from the Center-West (Angolans, *Congos*, *Benguelas*, etc.), or from the east coast (Mozambicans, amongst others), and their differentiation according to place of origin. Those who were racially mixed also received a color-based designation, such as *pardo* (of lighter skin) or *mulatto*, when they were descendants of whites and blacks and *cabra*, when at least one of the parents was an Indian. Whites did not have their color registered, a privilege which symbolized their free status, in opposition to freed people, which demarcated their social distancing in relation to people of color and distinguished them. It is important to note that being *free* was different from being *freed*. The first was a birth privilege, the second was a condition achieved during life, meaning that the person was born a slave, something that would never be forgotten.

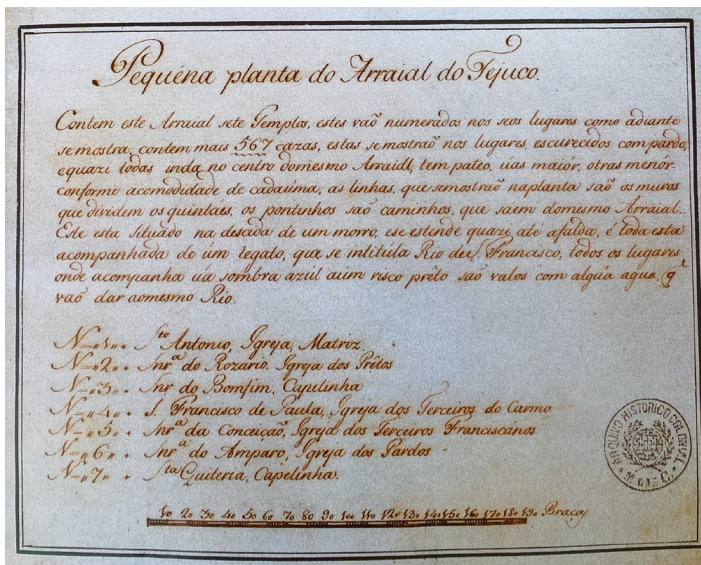


Figure 1 – Pequena Planta do Arraial do Tejuco.  
Fonte: Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. Brasil, Cartografia\_260/1167 (imagem cedida por Portugal, AHU).



Figure 2 – Legenda da Pequena Planta do Arraial do Tejuco.

Fonte: Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. Brasil, Cartografia\_260/1167 (imagem cedida por Portugal, AHU).

### **Geography of the streets**

Although the streets were not identified on the map, their names can be obtained from the census, which lists 15 streets and seven alleys, as well as the four suburban streets not included in the previous categories and not colored in light brown in the map, (Cavallhada Nova, Burgalhao, Campo, and Macau). These ran towards the peripheral areas, from where the three roads left, which are marked on the map along with their access points.

There is a clear hierarchy in this road geography. Streets (*ruas*) were located in the center, as were alleys (*becos*), though the movement of residents and vehicles along the latter was hindered by their reduced dimensions. Suburban streets ran towards the periphery, linking the urban and rural. This hierarchy is mirrored in the geography of the inhabitants according to their places of residence and, although there is a certain fluidity, it can be seen that the most distinguished heads of

households are the majority in the streets in the center of the village, in most of which the heads of households were white men, with black Africans being concentrated in the alleys. Moreover, the population of all shades of color, blacks, mulattos, and poor whites, were more abundant on the peripheral streets. Nonetheless, population of color was present everywhere, especially women of an African origin, including in the central streets. In this sense, the geography of the streets points to two apparently contradictory situations. One reveals the social fluidity that characterized the village due to the social ascension of colored freed people, especially women. This fluidity is revealed by the physical proximity of the households headed by the white and colored population, especially freedwomen, which are scattered throughout the village. All over the town, free and freed people, statuses that were very different from each other, lived side by side diluting the hierarchical frontiers according to which society should be governed. However, another geography, reinforces the social distinctions that separated these two large groups, as expected in a society based on the *Ancien Régime* (Fragoso et alli, 2001) and slavery, as their distribution was unequal: there is a spatial geography of color that was clearly hierarchical and mirrored the ordering of urban space. This distinction is revealed by a geography that distinguishes the center from the periphery and by the geography of the blocks that are mostly inhabited by the colored population as they move away from the center of the village. Both imposed a certain physical distance between whites and blacks.

It is important to provide some figures here. The census revealed surprising data about heads of household. Of the total of 524 heads of household who shared command over 522 houses (including respectively the Intendent and the Intendency house in which he lived), white men and women accounted for 238 individuals and those of color 286. From afar, Tejuco seemed white due to its whitewashed houses, as painted in several images of the time, but it was the colored freed people who, together with the slaves, constituted the majority of the population, comprising Little Africa. Blacks, *crioulos*, *pardos*, and *cabras* represented 54.6% of heads of household.

### **Geography of race and gender**

The geography of color was gendered. Among the 238 free people, white men formed an overwhelming majority of 202 individuals, with only

36 being white women, representing 84.9% and 15.1% of the whites and 38.6% and 6.9% of the total of heads of households, respectively. Among the 286 freed people the inverse occurred, 198 were colored women and 88 colored men, i.e., 84.6% and 15.4%; and 37.7% and 16.8% (Table 1). The numerical proximity between the 202 white men and 198 colored women is striking. It divided heads of household between two worlds cleaved by color and gender. Masculine hegemony was visible in the world of whites, with female heads of household being rare, and of these many were widows or single or abandoned mothers, the rare moments when they could exercise some autonomy (Pinto, 2002). Women dominated the world of freed colored people, which not rarely scandalized the authorities, and even though they were a minority among slaves, they had more access to manumission, becoming a majority among the freed.

	Men		Women		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>White</b>	202	38.6	36	6.9	238	45.5
<b>Color</b>	88	16.8	198	37.7	286	54.5
<b>Total</b>	290	55.4	234	44.6	524	100

	No.	%
<b>Black African</b>	111	56.1
<b>Brazilian Crioula</b>	32	16.2
<b>Brazilian Parda</b>	49	24.7
<b>Brazilian Cabra</b>	6	3.0
<b>Total</b>	198	100

It is interesting that among the freed women (Table 2), those with a darker complexion predominated – Black Africans and Brazilian *crioula* – which differed from the rest of the captaincy where *pardas* and mulatto women achieved manumission more easily (Paiva 1995; Higgins 1999; Faria 2001: 289-329; Dantas 2016; Faria and Reis 2021). Of the 198 colored

women, 111 were African and 32 *crioulas*, a total of 143 dark skinned women (72.2% of freed women, 61.1% of all women, and 27.3% of heads of household), while *pardas* (49) and *cabras* (6) amounted to 55 *mestiças* (respectively, 24.7%, 3.0%, and 27.7%). While the geography of freedom had gender, it also had matrices of color and origin, and this was as black as night and African, bringing into their homes the world from which they came. Africans were present throughout the *arraial*, notably in the alleys of Mandioca, where they were the only residents (11), and Tomás de Aquino (6). On Julião Antônio Street, they accounted for eight out of eleven colored women; on Padre Manoel da Costa, 12 out of 18; on Amparo, 12 out of 16; and on Buralhao, 10 out of 17.

The geography of color and gender divided Tejuco into two large groups. On the one hand, white men (202 or 38.6% of the total), the majority of Portuguese origin, on the other, African women (111 or 21.2% of the total). The geography of the types of properties accentuated contrasts and reinforced the hierarchical geography on streets and blocks. Among the former, 103 rented and 94 were property owners, while no information was available for five. Among the African women, 93 paid rent and 18 owned their houses. In other words, while 51% of white men rented the property in which they lived, among African women this rate rose to 83.8%. The women's disadvantage was even more significant because for them it was difficult to escape that place, contrasting with the many white men, such as officials from the administration, who were just passing through the village, or the still young clerks who were in the middle of a process of social ascension. In these cases, they were not interested or had not yet acquired the economic conditions to acquire a property. While some freed women managed to obtain some patrimony, the predominance of renters among them revealed the economic oppression they were subjected to when entering the world of freedom, resulting in the difficulties faced by Rosa Tibães, a black freedwoman. José da Silva de Oliveira, taking pity on her as a good Christian, allowed Tibães to build a hut on his property on Bonfim Street<sup>(5)</sup>.

I found this same disparity among the 24 women of color living in the Diamond District, who died between 1751 and 1815, and whose inventories or wills I analyzed in a previous article (Furtado 2001a: 81-121). Among these, Africans (62.5%) predominated in comparison to

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(5) Arquivo Público Mineiro, Seção Colonial, código 260: 3v-4.



those born in Brazil, since *crioulas* and black Africans accounted for 75% (Furtado 2001a: 91). Their profiles reveal «multiplicity and diversity, where the universe of slavery was abandoned and the free white world was approached», but their freed lives were not equal for all, as many faced difficulties along the way. While the census does not allow us to see how they achieved their freedom, the study of these 24 women revealed that purchasing their freedom was most common, especially the process known as *quartação* or *coartação*, as they insisted that their freedom was the result of «their own effort and work». *Quartação* was a process which allowed slaves to buy their freedom, specifying an amount of time to pay their owner, in money or services (Souza 1999: 151-174). In the Census, two *coartado* slaves were listed as head of one household, the Blacks Vitoriano and Anacleto, who shared the house they rented on Rosário Street, where they worked as shoemakers. The fact that they had been listed reinforces the idea it was an intermediary condition between slavery and freedom, and it was the most common way to achieve freedom.

The way Ana da Glória dos Santos summarized her life trajectory reveals these women's capacity for agency. In her will, «to describe her coming to Brazil, her conversion to Catholicism, and her marriage she used verbs in the passive voice, whereas upon remembering her freedom she used verbs in the active voice, showing, from this factor, her taking control over her life and destiny» (Furtado 2001a: 99).

## Street Geography

Not by chance, the residents on Direita Street, the most important central road axis, are listed first. Located there were 36 houses, mostly *sobrados*, two-story houses with balconies, where some of the most important inhabitants lived, amongst whom were those who held the principal administrative positions in Royal Diamond Company. The first address, located alongside the fountain which supplied water to the town center and facing the church square, was owned by Sergeant José da Silva de Oliveira, one of the administrators of *Junta Diamantina*, which ran the Diamond Royal Company<sup>(6)</sup>, who lived there with his wife,

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(6) The Royal Company was created to mine diamonds after the royal monopoly of extraction was imposed around 1771 (Furtado 1996).

Ana Joaquina Rosa, and their four children. One of them, José, the future Fr. Rolim, became known due to his participation in the 1789 *Inconfidência Mineira*, a conspiracy against the Portuguese king that sought to create an independent nation in Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro. Antônio Francisco dos Santos, single and employed by Oliveira, was also a tax collector (another business in which the administrator was involved), lived in an annex to the property.

Other residents on the street included Bento Joaquim de Siqueira Ayala, Treasurer and afterwards an Auditor for Diamond Royal Company until 1773, Colonel Luís de Mendonça Cabral, and Captain Acácio de Araújo, respectively an Auditor and a Notary for Royal Diamond Company. Among the neighbors, two were the priests Frutuoso Gomes da Costa and Manuel da Costa Dantas, the former the chaplain curate of the village and the latter the curate of Santa Quitéria Chapel. *Dona* Antônia Caetana, a married woman, lived with her husband, her sister, and a foundling, while *Dona* Maria Teresa de Jesus, a widow, lived with her four children. The designative *Dona* was normally a privilege of white women, a mark of high status and social distinction. In Tejuco, it was reserved for only five white women, three widows and two living in the *Arraial de Baixo* – on the banks of the São Francisco River. Various colored freedwomen also lived in Direita Street, such as the black women Maria Carvalha and Anna Gomes, the *parda* Mariana Pereira and the *cabra* Anna Maria, reflections of the social ascension which former slaves could achieve in Minas Gerais society (Paiva 1995).

However, although on Direita Street free white men and women cohabited with *mulattos* and blacks, sharing a certain physical proximity, two geographies separated them and hierarchized them according to their social rank: the geography of blocks and of the types of properties. The first block, located in front of Santo Antônio Church, had nine residences belonging to distinguished people, all owners of their properties. Only free whites lived in them: four officials from the Royal Diamond Company, two members of the clergy, a *Dona*, and to obfuscate their shine a little, a shoemaker. Three of them were married, the family legally constituted to give them respectability. It should be noted that the first five properties were the only ones written in the plural. These were ‘their own houses,’ in other words they formed of various dwellings, to indicate the opulence of their heads of household.

On the upper part of Direita Street, more distant from the church and consequently from the town center, were the less illustrious residents. As the streets moved away from the center, the hierarchical geography of the blocks revealed the progressive social declassification of residents performing a hierarchical geography of the blocks. Six colored freed people were neighbors there: Inês Maria de Azevedo and Mariana Pereira, both *pardas*, the surgeon Vitorino José Barbalho, also *pardo*, and the shoemaker Antônio de Freitas, a *crioulo*. They rented the houses in which they lived. Only the black Josefa Maria de Freitas and the *cabra* Anna Maria owned their properties. All were single, with the exception of the latter who was married. They all lived alone, as was common among the freed people in Tejuco. Despite the physical proximity among the whites and the colored residents and the very different conditions on the same street, the geography of the blocks and the types of property demarcated and made public the place each one really occupied!

When comparing Direita and Padre Manoel da Costa streets, both in the center of the village, it can be seen that their heads of household had quite discrepant profiles, revealing the hierarchical geography of the streets, where each person had to occupy their due place. In the former, the most important street in the *arraial*, 28 men and only eight women were heads of households in the 36 residences, of whom 23 were white – the majority – and 13 colored. Nineteen properties were owned by their occupants, two ceded to *agregados*, and 15 rented, while among the latter only six had colored heads of household. In the second and not so important street, there were 25 houses, only five of which were owned. In this case, 22 heads of household were colored and three were white. It is not surprising that among those who paid rent, there is only one white man, the tailor João Batista, a white manual worker, living from his hands, the other heads of household renting were colored. Eight of these were men and 16 women. Of the latter, 11 were African women, three were *crioulas*, and two were *pardas*, and with the exception of the latter two and Joaquim da Silva, a black from Costa da Mina, all were single and lived alone. In contrast on Direita Street, there were six married men, as well as others who lived with relatives, the case of Fr. Frutuoso, who was celibate. While Direita had a profile of predominantly married white men as heads of household, on Padre Manoel da Costa Street the majority of heads of household were freedwomen of color and single. The geography of the streets of the center had cleavages that distinguished one from each other.

The number of single women of color residing alone as heads of households throughout the village is striking. None of the 198 were married and only 36 people were found living in their homes as their relatives, friends, or *agregados*. Among them, the majority were their sons and daughters, but totaling only 20 people. Although the majority of the head of households in Tejuco lived alone and were single, the situation of the women of color contrasts with the men whether they were white or of color. In the houses of the 202 white men there lived 207 people, the majority being their sons and daughter (121) and 51 of them were married (25.2%). This is more striking when comparing the 88 men of color, 30 of whom were married, 80 people were living in their houses, 33 of whom were their sons and daughters. As their spouses were of color but not listed as heads of households, we can assume that out 228 freed women of color 198 (86.9) were single and 30 (13.1%) were married. Adding their mothers (4), *agregados* (2) and friends (3) living with them, the total of freed women reaches to 237, of whom 207 (87.3%) were single and 30 (12.7%) married.

The high rates of celibacy among women of color as heads of households can be credited to at least three reasons, which do not always point to the exclusions suffered by them due to their gender and color although it had an immense impact in their destinies. First, at the time, marriage was mainly motivated by economic reasons and family interests. In this case, due to the high costs of Catholic marriage, slaves and freedmen married in much smaller numbers than free people. Second, sometimes, to protect their patrimony, it was safer for these freed women to remain unmarried (Furtado 2001a). Finally, many of them did not legitimize their consensual relationships before the Catholic Church. This can be observed in the high rates of concubinage among them in Tejuco (Furtado 2003: 49). This could occur because many times their partners were free white men and had no interest in legalizing their interracial relationships, as legal marriages were supposed to be endogamic (Nazzari 1996: 107), but also because many African women resisted the acculturation imposed by colonization, insisting on mimicking African customs in terms of relationship.

The high number of colored women as heads of households living alone in their domiciles impacted the number of people per household (*fogos*), a figure which is very low. In Tejuco in 1774, there were 886 residents (not including slaves) among the 522 domiciles. In this way,

contradicting factors 4 and 5 as the average number of inhabitants per household which the demographic historiography has found for colonial Brazil (Furtado, Libby et al., 2015), the average of the *arraial* was 1.69 person per household.

I found the same profile among the 34 women of color who left wills or inventories. Fourteen of the women who left wills were single, representing 58.3% of the total, and ten were married (41.7%). This suggests a slight advantage for single women in comparison with married women. Among them, the majority, 16 or 66.6% died without leaving offspring, and only one left legitimate offspring, the others (7) had natural children, that is, it was not known who their fathers were. Maria Martins Castanheira, a Bengali black, and Bernardina Maria da Conceição, a mulatto, for example, were married but did not have offspring, so their surviving husbands were their legitimate heirs of half of their patrimony. However, they had long ago abandoned them and thus they wished to leave at least part of their properties in a different manner, as was permitted by law. The African black Maria Vaz da Conceição was married to the black carpenter (*carapina*) Antônio da Costa who appeared listed as a married head of their house in Rosário Street. Some years later, she declared that, besides having bought her freedom, she had acquired all the property she possessed prior to her marriage, all acquired «by her own efforts» or «work and agency». Marriage had not increased her assets, or her status (Furtado 2001a: 95, 94, 97). Maria Vaz da Conceição's concern was the consequence of Portuguese and Brazilian legislation which stipulated that married people were *meeiros*, in other words a couple's patrimony were shared between them (Furtado 2009b: 93-118). As a result, half of her goods would belong to her husband, even if he was absent.

## **Fluid geography**

The second street listed on the Census was called Opera Street, which began on the upper part of Direita Street and only had seven houses. It received this name because the Opera house was built there, where popular plays were staged. It was constructed in the 1750s, one of the oldest in Brazil, a reflection of the wealth and economic stability of Tejuco. Located here was the two-story residence of the famous freed

woman Chica da Silva (Furtado 2003, Furtado 2009a), on that occasion inhabited by only one of her 14 children, probably José, the youngest. At this time, her nine daughters were in Macaúbas Convent and three of her sons (Simão<sup>(7)</sup>, João, and Joaquim) had left for Lisbon with her partner, the former diamond contractor and appellant judge João Fernandes de Oliveira. Her son Antônio, who was married, lived in his own house on Quitanda Street with his wife, two sons and a daughter. Revealing of the contradictory social position that she occupied in the village, is that Chica da Silva's house was the last on the street, suggesting inferiority in relation to her neighbors. However, in the census her condition of freedwoman is not recorded, an omission which was the privilege of the free. Although she was not called *Dona*, as in other local documents<sup>(8)</sup>, her *parda* color is indicated and her name is registered as Francisca da Silva de Oliveira, with her final surname being an allusion to João Fernandes de Oliveira. Her wooden and adobe house was a solid construction, large and well aired, consisting of two stories and a garden, with the main part formed a square with wattle divisions. Painted in white, it was covered with roof tiles, with a wide balcony and windows in colored frames. Her importance in the town could be measured by the fact that her neighbors were the whites João Antônio Maria Versiani and João Machado Pena, respectively the bookkeeper and clerk of the Royal Diamond Company. Also living on the street were the *parda* Antônia Xavier, the black woman Ana Maria de Jesus, the *crioulo* tailor Vicente Ferreira, and the white carpenter Antônio Pinto Guimarães. Antônia Xavier was the mother of Plácido Pires Sardinha, half-brother of Cipriano Pires Sardinha, the son of Chica with her first owner Manoel Pires Sardinha. They had lived together in Sardinha's *senzala* (slave quarters), when they were slaves, and also through the children, both stayed in contact during their lives (Furtado 2001b: 355-386). With the exception of Chica da Silva, who being single lived with her son, and Versiani, who was married and lived with his wife and daughter, the others were single and lived alone.

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(7) Simão Pires Sardinha was her son with her first owner, Manoel Pires Sardinha. Her other children were from her relationship with the diamond contractor, *Desembargador* João Fernandes de Oliveira. Chica da Silva became famous for the relationship with the latter, with whom she had 13 children between 1754 and 1772.

(8) It should be noted that in other documents she was referred as being black. As can be noted the color reference could change depending on the desire to denigrate or exalt an individual (Ferreira 2019: 197-234).

As in the other streets, free and freed people, white and colored, lived side by side, diluting the hierarchical frontiers with which society sought to regulate itself. Opera Street is an example of how these differences could be inverted, blurring the geographic hierarchy which the blocks sought to order. Some of these inversions were visible, the case of Santa Quitéria Chapel, built at the entrance to Chica da Silva's house, a privilege of few and the public symbol of her social distinction. Apart from her, only Bernardo da Fonseca Lobo, who received from the Crown the title of 'discoverer of diamonds', and Maria de Sousa da Encarnação, a black from Costa da Mina, had oratories in their houses. Other inversions were more difficult to perceive, since while the bookkeeper Versiani rented his residence, even though he later left in his will two houses on Direita Street, the black woman Anna Maria de Jesus was the owner of the property in which she lived.

Luís Gomes Street, listed next, had 11 houses, where there lived four white men, including Captain José Gomes Ferreira, a surgeon in the Royal Diamond Company Hospital and Luís Gomes da Fonseca, attorney for the brotherhoods. Catarina Barcelos, a white widow, lived there with two grandchildren; two *crioulo* tailors, Filipe da Costa and Francisco Soares were neighbors of, in the case of the former, the *crioula* Rita da Silva, and in the case of the latter, the black barber Feliz da Cunha. At the far end of the street lived two *parda* women, Felipa Antônia, accompanied by her sister, and Josefa Maria, both paying rent. With the exception of the latter two, the others were the owners of their properties, while in addition to the widow, four were married and resided with members of their nuclear families, such as the white, Luís Antônio da Silva, who as well as his wife, had three sons and daughters in his house.

Heading towards the periphery, Burgalhao, despite not being designated as a street, was the first suburban street which climbed Santo Antônio hill from the valley where gold was initially discovered in the São Francisco River. It held 32 residences, of which the overwhelming majority (24) were rented and only eight owned. In relation to heads of household, 21 were women and 11 men, seven of whom were white, such as Caetano José da Cunha and Roberto Antônio, who lived in rented houses with their wives, the latter also accompanied by three sons and two daughters, and Raphael Pinto Vidal, living in his own house with his wife, two sons and his mother-in-law. Adding men and women together, there were 11 whites, while those of color amounted

to 21, ten of whom were African women, five were *crioulas*, five were *pardas*, and the one was the *cabra* Josefa. The fact that the 18 colored women, the majority black Africans, were single and lived alone calls attention, with the exception of the *crioula* Tereza Maria, who lived with her mother. Among them, eight rented their houses, such as Maria Fernandes, and only two owned their homes, differing little from the situation of the seven white men. A total of 24 houses were rented and only eight were owned, a symptom of the lower economic and social level of their residents. In a game of mirrors, the peripheral profile of the road reflected and was a reflection of its residents, mimicking the darker skin color of the majority.

### Geography of Power

The names of some streets and alleys reflect the hierarchy on which the administration was based, as they were a symbol of power. Contrato Street alluded to the form of diamond mining used from 1739 to 1771, as the *Casa do Contrato* (Contract House) was located there. In 1774, there were 17 heads of household on this street, ten men and seven women. While the former were mostly white (8) – there was just one black man and one *crioulo* –, among the women, those of color were the majority (5), with there being three black women, two *pardas*, and only two were white women. The most distinguished residents were Sergeant Antônio de Araújo Freitas, Dr. João Tomás Brum, Fr. João de Freitas, chaplain of the Royal Diamond Company Hospital, Sergeant Manoel Baptista Landim, Lieutenant Coronel Luís Lopes da Costa, the last two clerks in Royal Diamond Company. There is no indication of the type of the last two properties, with a possible explanation being the fact that each one occupied, without charge, one of the floors of the former *Casa do Contrato* still belonging to the administration. Again, although the most distinguished white citizens lived there, their houses were close to those of the colored householders, revealing the fluidity of the hierarchies that somehow blurred in the village.

The new Intendency building, which was constructed to house the *Junta Diamantina*, was located on the street which from then on came to be called *Intendência*, located beside the principal square, by the main church. Although the new construction was not included in the census,



the Intendent, João da Rocha Dantas e Mendonça, lived in it. Only seven properties were on the street, none of them headed by women of color, which is an exception. Five housed commercial establishments could be found there, with their owners living on the second floor. One house belonged to a clerk, Francisco Marques Viana, who lived alone but there is no mention of commerce being carried out here. Apart from this only the house belonging to the white man José Barbosa and his wife did not have a commercial establishment. The most important one belonged to Marechal de Campo Ignacio Correa Pamplona where his commercial partner and a clerk lived.

### **Alley Geography**

As is to be expected, the geography of the alleys stands out because these areas housed the lowest social layers of Tejuco, with the freedwomen of color being concentrated there, especially Africans, generally residing in rented houses. One evident example is Mandioca Alley, the longest and most extensive, where all eleven women who headed households were single black Africans, renting the properties where they lived alone. Among the six men, their neighbors, three were white, two were *crioulos*, and one was *pardo*.

In Cadeia (or Jail) Alley were three black African women and a *cabra*, named Rosa, but only the latter and one of the Africans rented their property, the others were landholders. In common, all were single and lived alone, with the exception of Rosa da Silva, who was black and lived with her son. In Fr. José Guedes Alley, as well as the priest who gave his name to the alley, parish priest of Chapel of Souls, the neighborhood was composed of two *pardos*, one of them José da Silva Lopes, 'teacher of boys,' two black African women, two *crioulas*, and a white woman, Isabel de Sousa Lima, who lived with a companion in a rented house. The African women Petrolina, Rita Correia, and Tereza Roiz, all single, rented properties where they lived alone, the same profile of the *crioula* Francisca Pacheca, who, however, was the owner of her house. In Thomás de Aquino Alley, black African women lived alone in rented houses in six of the seven houses. The exception was José da Silva, white and married, living with his wife in a rented house. In Intendência alley, the black African women, Lauriana Gomes and Joana Antunes, were neighbors

of Luis de S. Paio, a black African man. These were the only residents of this small alley and all were renting their houses.

While there existed a geography of power and order, also present was the geography of disorder. Cadeia Alley referred to the jail, a rather unedifying construction, which evoked the punishment of crimes. It was not very old, since until a short while previously all that existed was the trunk to which transgressors and slaves were sentenced to be tied, while prisoners had been sent to the jail in Vila do Príncipe. This signified that this alley had been recently opened or had been rebaptized after the construction of the prison. The geography of the alleys once again reflected a subaltern situation, also reflected in the residents, who were all colored and the majority black freed African women.

As can be seen in the sample, the geography of the alleys shaped a small world with a strong African imprint, in which one can see clearly Tejuco's Little Africa, where freedwomen of color were very common as heads of households. This reflected how the majority of manumissions were achieved in Minas Gerais, as it was something most accessible to women. However, as I have noted in previous works, in the Diamond District and in particular in Tejuco, African women benefitted the most from this, to the detriment of *parda* women, who formed the majority of the freedwomen in the gold region (Paiva 1995; Higgins 1999; Furtado 2001a).

### Geography of Silence

The geography of absence in Tejuco is interesting to examine. Although those silences are hidden in the census, they highlight the limits which these historical sources present. This is the case, for example, of Tejuco's geography of sin, which can be partially reconstructed by various pieces of data found in the census, since although the majority of unmarried people lived alone, they were not single, as many of them lived in concubinage. However, in order not to call the attention of the Church, always watching over the morality of its flock, they maintained appearances in public, living in separate houses from their partners. This custom became generalized in the captaincy, creating an original, plural, and dynamic structure called the «fractioned family» (Figueiredo 1997). Between 1750 and 1753, when the bishop visited Tejuco to investigate the sins of its residents, 58

people were denounced for living in concubinage. Although some lived 'indoors,' the majority inhabited separate houses (Furtado 2003: 49).

To meet one of these many fractioned families, hidden under the census data, we can return to Padre Manoel da Costa Street. Living there alone, in a rented house, was the black woman Maria Gomes, one of 18 colored women in this neighborhood. However, a more complex reality hides beneath this record. Her partner, the surgeon, José Gomes, lived on Luís Gomes Street, accompanied by one of the children of the couple, who would become a priest. The same occurred with Chica da Silva, whose single child registered in her residence was outweighed by the 13 illegitimate children born during her long 17 years relationship with João Fernandes.

This type of agreement created the appearance of children living in houses belonging to single heads of household. Seventeen single freed women had illegitimate offspring living with them, some with large numbers of children, pointing to successive or long-lasting relationships. In Campo Street, the *crioulas* Ana Pereira, with a son and daughter, and Maria Antunes with a son, were neighbors, both living in their own houses. On Macau Street, the *crioula* Maria Domingas had two children and the *parda* Josefa Maria, two sons and three daughters. The foundling who lived in the company of *Dona* Antônia Caetana, on Direita street, was an example of the abandonment of illegitimate children, an expedient used by the most distinguished families to maintain public appearances (Venâncio 1999; Franco 2014).

Illegitimate children were not a privilege of colored women. Six single white women also had children at home. The paradigmatic case is that of Ignácia Mendes [Ramos], who lived in her own house on Cavahada Nova Street, accompanied by three sons and three daughters. They were the fruit of her long relationship with the Auditor Bento Siqueira Ayala, who in turn lived alone on Direita Street.<sup>(9)</sup> The oldest girl was Luiza Victória, born in 1767, and another one was Maria Magdalena, both baptized only with the father's surname, even though the latter did not appear on the register, which was common in the case of illegitimate

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(9) AHU, MAMG, caixa 102, doc. 46. Removed from the position of auditor, Ayala petitioned the king for leave to return to Portugal, accompanied by his daughters. However, this journey did not happen, because Ayala died the same year. The girls continued to live in Tejuco, where they married and had children.

children, occurring with the children of Chica da Silva and Maria Gomes. Other white women were in the same situation: Rosa Maria lived with a daughter in a rented house, on Burgalhao Street, with her neighbor being Joana Gonçalves and her son. Living on Amparo Street was Jacinta de Souza, in a rented house with three children and a daughter.

Eight single men, only one of whom was colored, lived with their illegitimate children. The white stoneworker José de Souza lived with a son on Cavahada Velha Street, while the royal blacksmith, José da Silva Julião, a *pardo*, lived with two children. Manoel Caetano dos Santos lived on Vendas Street with his godson, both of whom were tailors. It was a common expedient for white men to become godfathers to their mulatto children born in illegitimate unions with their slaves, giving them manumission at the baptismal font. Was this the case of this child?

The geography of prostitution is another hidden facet of the *arrayal*, despite the efforts of the Catholic Church to govern the moral customs of Minas societies, imposing on them the precepts dictated by religious orthodoxy (Boschi 1986). In Cadeia Alley the black woman Maria do Amaral can be found, living in her own house. The brief register hides the fact that the African woman was a known local prostitute, called by the nickname of 'Lavadeira' (Washerwoman), whom her neighbors suspected was a witch. According to one of them, she admitted «to her house suspicious men and women [and...] I heard drumming in that house» (Figueiredo 1993: 92).

«In the communities in which they lived, prostitutes [...] were almost always accompanied by depreciative nicknames: *Sopinha* (Little Soup), *Cachoeira* (Waterfall), *Rabada* (Ass), *Lavadeira*, *Pisca* (Twinkle), *Comprimento* (Length), *Foguete* (Rocket), *A Mãe do Mundo* (The Mother of the World), and others» (Figueiredo 1993: 82) The black women Joana Brava (Angry), Josefa Pimenta (Pepper), Anna de Carvalhinho (Small Oak Tree), Josefa Granada (Grenade), Rosa Machada (Ax), and Ignes Pinta (Spot), and the *parda* Antônia Coitinha (Little Intercourse) had their nicknames making references to their performance or their sexual anatomy in the practice of their profession. Joana Brava lived in her house in Contrato street with her mulatto son, while Coitinha lived in Cavahada Velha with a son and a daughter, both mulattos, all of them public proof of their sins. From the name of Abugona Street, since *abugão* was a type of wasp or hornet, it can be inferred that one of its old or current women residents was wide-hipped. Of the seven residents, four were women, with two being white,

one *parda*, and one *crioula*. Was one of them the famous *abugona*? While she lived in its houses, in the first house on the street, watching over the behavior of these worldly women, resided Fr. José Joaquim de Moura, chaplain of Bonfim Church. The only street whose name had a female connotation was actually depreciative, which accentuated the masculine and patriarchal nature of the geography of memory of residents and the toponymy of the streets.

Another piece of information missing from the Census is who owned the huge amount of rental properties in Tejuco. The geography of renters points to a predominance of houses rented by colored women (137), followed by white men (107). Among the latter are the royal officials, passing temporarily through the village, as well as a majority of working and poor men. Among the tenants who were women of color, 93 were African (83.8% of the 111). When the *crioula* women are added to them, this total reaches 115 (81% of the total of 142). The geography of the landlords, on the other hand, is silent, and not all of them were free white. It is known, for example, that Chica da Silva owned and rented a property located in front of the house of the black Sipriano Antunes in Rosário street<sup>(10)</sup>. While the significant number of black female tenants points to their financial precariousness, Chica's rented property reveals that some of them were able to rise economically.

## Geography of slavery

Although the majority of heads of household in Tejuco were freed (286 or 54.6% out of total), the geography of the memory of captivity is another silence underlying the data obtained from the census. This silence is only broken by the reference to the condition of freed and to the color of the skin of the colored people in addition to the listing as households of the two *coartado* black men, the shoemakers Victoriano and Anacleto. Another reminiscence is the reference to the Manoel da Fonseca Milanês, a *parda*, living on Rosário Street, who was the village's *capitão do mato* (a slave hunter, literally meaning captain of the bush). The world of slavery is remembered this time from the perspective

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(10) Acervo Particular (AP), Livro de Testamentos da Vila do Príncipe (LTVP), Testamento de Francisca da Silva de Oliveira.

of repression, since it was necessary for the administration to keep a watchful eye over the slaves who by fleeing sought freedom outside the few existing legal means. Manoel da Fonseca Milanês' profession reveals that the geography of color did not necessarily produce ties of solidarity with other colored slaves.

But there are other ways to trace the slave past of these women when one analyzes the census in the light of other period documents. *Malungo* was the name given to Africans brought to Brazil on the same slave ship, establishing important ties of solidarity that started on the Middle Passage which were prolonged during the life of a slave. But more generically, the term signified companionship, friendship, and a shared destiny, ties which could also be created in the slave quarters, principally among those born in Brazil, and many freed brought to the world of freedom their *malunga* experience (Carvalho 2017: 71-87).

Let us return to the black woman Maria Gomes, living at Padre Manoel da Costa Street, who serves as a reference for the *malunga* geography of Tejuco. With her companion, the surgeon José Gomes, Maria had three other offspring, as well as her future cleric son who still lived with his father. The oldest daughter was called Rosa, followed by Matilde, whose godfather was the Appellant Judge João Fernandes de Oliveira, and the next was Francisca, whose name was in honor of her godmother, Chica da Silva. The approximation of these people preceded the formation of the two couples. Their friendship began in the slave quarters, when they still belonged to the group of slaves owned by Doctor Manuel Pires Sardinha. The two *malungas* perpetuated and deepened their friendship in the godparent ties they established between themselves. On Opera Street, Chica was the neighbor of Antônia Xavier, another *malunga* from the slave quarters of Manoel Pires Sardinha, with whom she also had had a son, Plácido. When his half-brother on the part of his father, Cipriano, son of the *parda* woman Francisca Pires, also a *malunga* from the same slave quarters, became a cleric, Plácido gave him a deed of ownership of six slaves to pay part of the costs of his entrance. The favors exchanged and the protection spent in the world of freedom revealed the *malunga* geography which expressed the memory of captivity.

Importantly, the friendship which extended to the time of freedom between Chica da Silva, Maria Gomes, Francisca Pires, and Maria Xavier does not seem to be the only example of *malunga* geography. This appears

to have been manifested also in the sharing of the same property by the former slaves. On Macau Road, the *parda* Isabel had a companion in her rented house, while the *crioula* Anna de Freitas had two. In the first block, the *parda* shoemaker Manoel de S. Paio had as an *agregado* the *parda* musician José Enrique, while in the next house lived another *parda* musician, Enrique José. Did they form a band? On Padre Manoel da Costa Street, the *parda* Maria Angélica had an *agregado* and Juliana Francisca was head of a household whose ties among its members, all *pardos*, were complex. As well as a sister and a son, it also included an *agregado*, mixing the geography of familial freedom with *malunga* geography.

The notion of labor in a society based on *Ancien Régime* values and slavery as well such as Brazil at that time was very different from today. The so-called service of the king, performed by administrative officials and the military, was the basis of honor. Manual labor was dishonorable, particularly when performed by slaves. Labor and slavery were intrinsic to each other. However, there is an intriguing characteristic when the geography of professions is examined in light of the geography of gender. With two rare exceptions, women, even those of color, neither served nor worked. Among whites, only the Widow Leão, on Quitanda Street, had a dry goods store (but at that time the big merchants – *homens de negócio* - were no longer seen as manual laborers, the so-called wholesale trade had become a factor of honor), and among those of color, only the *parda* woman Joana Gertrudes had an inn on Amparo Street. In contrast, among white men, 43, or 21.3% exercised some manual work and among 88 men of color, the majority, 56, in other words 67.4%, had some sort of manual trade: there were tailors (14), shoemakers (11), blacksmiths (6), hairdressers (3), barbers (3), carpenters (2), a painter, among others.

What allowed women of color's removal from the world of labor was their ownership of slaves, whose paid work supported them. Slave ownership could be ascertained for 21 of the 24 women whose wills and inventories were studied. One noteworthy case is that of Josefa Dias, a black woman from the Costa da Mina, on the northwest coast of Africa. Although her two daughters were still captives, instead of freeing at least one of them, she used her savings to buy a slave. An example of among the heads of households is the *crioula* Rita Paes de Gouvea, who had her own house on Rosário Street. On her death she had two young mulatto girls and two adult slaves, one of them was Francisco, a mulatto (Furtado 2001a: 95). At the time of his death, Chica da Silva stated that

most of his estate consisted of slaves (Furtado 2003)<sup>(11)</sup>. We could find data for various freed African women heads of households who hired out their slaves for diamond mining, such as Ana Maria de Jesus, Maria do Ó, Rosa da Silva, Maria Carvalha e Quitéria, to whom in 1785, the Royal Diamond Company clerk added the designation 'black' or 'freed black' to indicate their origin<sup>(12)</sup>.

The intersection of multiple geographies, even those which lay hidden under the data of *Pequena Planta do Arraial do Tejuco* and the 1774 *Mapa dos Moradores* reveal the heterogeneous local society and the impressive social ascension of a layer of former slaves to the condition of freed. In Tejuco, on the one hand, this rise made fluid the social hierarchies that separated them from the world of the free, for whom privileges and honors were intended to be reserved. This relative social permeability was mirrored in a significant number of colored heads of residence, most of whom were led by women, and among them, African women stood out. The geography of freedom (alforrias) in Tejuco had gender, color, and origin: it was women, black, and African. But if this may seem unthinkable for the time, on the other hand, the ascension of these women of color did not happen without mishaps and contradictions. This is what can be observed by the geography of the blocks, the center/periphery streets and the alleys, under which the urban organization of the village was also ruled. Whites lived closer to the center and in its most important streets, and the colored population was concentrated in the outskirts and in the alleys. In all senses, the ostensive presence of these freed African women throughout the village, created a *Little Africa* and turned black the white houses of Tejuco.

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