



João Fragoso

The Transatlantic Slave Trade,
Merchants and Rural Elites in
Eighteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro,
the Main Port of the South Atlantic

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Janeiro, the Main Port of the South Atlantic

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1. Introduction¹

According to international historiography Portuguese America became the main destination of the transatlantic slave trade during the eighteenth century. In that century, Brazilian ports received 1,989,017 slaves, that is, 35.5% of the 5,602,123 slaves sent to the New World. At the end of the eighteenth century, Rio de Janeiro became the major slave port of Portuguese America. In the 1730s, more than 5,000 captives arrived there every year, surpassing Salvador by at least 4,000 African slaves a year.² In light of this data, the aim of this text is to analyze the relationship between the trade in souls and the agrarian system of the local elites, the *nobreza da terra*,³ in the captaincy (administrative division) of Rio de Janeiro between 1700 and 1750, for two simple reasons:

The first one is that, after the thousands of men, women and children disembarked, they had to travel long distances over land before they reached the precious metals producing regions in the central west of Portuguese America.⁴ This road was known as *Caminho Novo* (literally, “New Trail”). It had two branches, called the Couto and the Inhomirim, and ran along the interior of Guanabara Bay, in which Rio de Janeiro and its port are located. The aforementioned slave caravans traveled along these roads to many regional markets throughout Portuguese America, enabling the production of foodstuffs.

¹ Translated into English by Carolina Perpétuo Corrêa. The research was funded by Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico do Brasil – CNPq. I am grateful for the careful work of Imogen Herrad (BCDSS) in editing the manuscript

² Manolo Florentino, “Aspectos do tráfico negreiro na África Ocidental (c. 1500–c. 1800),” in *O Brasil Colonial*, vol. 1, ed. João Fragoso and Fátima Gouvêa (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2014): 236; Alexandre V. Ribeiro, “O Tráfico Atlântico de escravos e a praça mercantil de Salvador (c. 1680–c. 1830)” (master’s thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2005): 128.

³ *Nobreza da terra* can be translated literally as the “aristocracy of the land.” The expression refers to an informal, locally born elite that did not necessarily hold titles of nobility. The term originated in Portugal, where the *nobreza da terra* occupied positions on the municipal councils. Over time, a similar class developed in Brazil. [Added by translator.]

⁴ Gold began to be extracted in the current regions of Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso (Cuiabá) and Goiás in c. 1697, c. 1718 and c. 1725 respectively.

The second reason is that the roads, which also led to the mining districts where great gold reserves were discovered, passed through the areas dominated by the *nobreza da terra* of the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro. These roads crossed the bottom of Guanabara Bay. In other words, they traversed territories – with their villages and towns – on which the social and political domination of the *nobreza da terra* had been based since the second half of the sixteenth century, when the city was founded.

At this point, we must emphasize the lack of empirically-based research on how the African captives who disembarked in Salvador and in Rio de Janeiro, the two major slave ports of the South Atlantic in the first half of the eighteenth century, were distributed among regional markets.⁵ While there is research on slaving in African societies and the slave trade to Portuguese America,⁶ we are confronted with a notable lack of scholarship about the distribution of the captives once they reached Bra-

⁵ I highlight among the works that studied this subject: Denise Vieira Demétrio, “Senhores governadores: Artur de Sá e Menezes e Martim Correia Vasques. Rio de Janeiro, c. 1697–c. 1702” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2014); Raphael Straforini, “Tramas que brilham: sistema de circulação e produção do território brasileiro no século XVIII” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2007): 175 [published by Editora CRV in 2022]; João V. Pollig, “Apropriação de terras no Caminho Novo” (master’s thesis, Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2012). Regarding Salvador, see Cândido E.D. de Souza, “O tráfico negreiro da Bahia: agentes, investimentos e redistribuição (1690–1817)” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2023) and especially Iasmim O. Cezar, “A última rota atlântica: o comércio interno de escravizados rumando os sertões da Bahia setecentista (c. 1759–c. 1798)” (master’s thesis, Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2020).

⁶ For slaving in African societies to supply Portuguese America see, among others, Paul Lovejoy, *Transformation in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Joseph Miller, *Way of Death. Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1988); John Thornton, *A África e os africanos na formação do Mundo Atlântico*, trans. Maria Rocha Mota (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 2004); John Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500–1800* (London: University College of London Press; Routledge, 1999); Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil during the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Mariana Candido, *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World. Benguela and its Hinterland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Even works about the trade in slaves to Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and Recife in the eighteenth century are scarce. In addition to the ones already mentioned, I highlight: Pierre Verger, *Fluxo e refluxo do tráfico de escravos entre o Golfo de Benin e a Bahia de Todos os Santos*, trans. Tasso Gadzans (São Paulo: Corrupio, 1987); Daniele Santos de Souza, “Tráfico, escravidão e liberdade na

zilian ports. We know little or nothing about the economic mechanisms (traders, credit networks, transportations systems, etc.) that brought the slaves from those ports to their main buyers in markets located primarily in the gold-producing areas in the central west, particularly the region of Minas Gerais. Therefore there is no scholarly debate about this subject, as there is not enough research.

Even less attention has been paid to the relations of politics and land ownership in the territories through which the caravans of slaves passed on their way from the Atlantic. From the point of view of historiography, which has not recognized their importance, they appear like “no man’s land.” However, even a quick look at the primary sources reveals that the areas that through which the *Caminho Novo das Minas* and those caravans of souls and trade goods passed, had owners. Unlike historiography, those owners knew the importance of their territories to the operation of the Brazilian economy of the time. The families of the *nobreza da terra*, who were the owners of these regions, were aware of the vital economic importance of those roads. Consequently, these powerful elites took advantage of their land ownership to improve their political and social authority over the municipality of Rio de Janeiro and its surroundings.

In other words, the interests of these land owners or, more precisely, the logistics of their agrarian system, were actively involved in the rhythm of the Atlantic slave trade. I include, in theory, the logistics of the agrarian system, taking into account the struggles between the different factions of the *nobreza da terra* of the *república*.⁷ Therefore, just as the conflicts in the slave-producing African societies affected the Atlantic trade, in theory the struggles between powerful elites in America were also capable of impacting the Atlantic slave businesses.

Thus, this essay also intends to analyze the relationship between the transoceanic trade and the societies located at the so-called periphery of the European-centered world economy of the eighteenth century. By

Bahia nos ‘anos de ouro’ do comércio negreiro (c. 1680–c. 1790)” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2018).

⁷ In the colonial period, municipalities were understood as self-governing political communities which were referred to as “republics.”

doing so, it will also investigate the interactions between the dynamics of local societies and the so-called European world-economy, or, if one prefers, the world capitalist system.⁸ These stories will be told primarily through the actions of the Correia Vasques, Azeredo Coutinho, and Amaral Gurgel families.⁹ All of these families belonged to the *nobreza da terra*. However, as *fidalgos da casa real*,¹⁰ some of them also belonged to the higher nobility and occupied key positions in the royal administration at Rio de Janeiro. Through these families we will be able to learn a little more about the distribution of the captives who arrived in the port of Rio de Janeiro. In this way, I hope to contribute to the subject and, consequently, to the historiographical debate.

⁸ For a definition of the world economy and the world capitalist system see, respectively: Fernand Braudel, *Civilização Material e Capitalismo – O Tempo do Mundo*, 3 vols. (Lisbon: Edições Cosmos, 1985), and Immanuel Wallerstein, *O Sistema Mundial Moderno*, vol. 1, trans. Carlos Leite, Fatima Martins and Joel Lisboa (Porto: Afrontamento, undated) [published in English in 1974]; Dale W. Tomich, *Circuit Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar, 1830–1848* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2016). I shall return to this subject below.

⁹ The genealogies of these families have been reconstructed from parish records, especially baptisms, in the Arquivo Geral da Cúria do Rio de Janeiro (AGCRJ). I have also used sources in the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino. Most of this information may be found in Carlos Rheingantz, *Primeiras famílias do Rio de Janeiro (séculos XVI–XVII)* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Editora Brasileira, 1965). One of the difficulties in studying the society under consideration is their practice of naming children after their ancestors. This practice aimed to perpetuate the identity of the kinship group in a social order that viewed itself as *natural*, that is, whose social relations were understood as fixed forever. This practice can make it difficult to identify individuals with certainty. On the other hand, this habit informs us that actions were taken by kinship groups, and not by single individuals.

¹⁰ *Fidalgos da casa real* (literally, “nobles of the royal house”) and *cavaleiros das ordens militares* (knights of the military orders) formed the high aristocracy. These titles enabled their holders to be counted among the formal nobility, which was recognized as such by the crown. Nobles by right, their names were inscribed in the chancellery of the Royal House. [Added by translator in collaboration with the author.]

2. The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the *republica* of Rio de Janeiro in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century

It is estimated that between 4,000 and 6,000 captives from Guinea landed in Salvador every year between 1700 and 1709, while during the same time period 2,400 enslaved persons arrived annually at Rio de Janeiro. For the port of Recife, the number of slaves arriving from the Gold Coast between 1722 and 1725 has been estimated at between 1,650 and 3,693. The majority of the people from these large enslaved groups were later redirected inland through the *sertões* (backlands) until they reached the territories where at that time *most of the world's gold* was found: Minas Gerais, from c. 1697, the mines of Cuiabá, from c. 1718, and Goiás, from c. 1715. In the 1720s, it is estimated that 5,000 and 4,500 slaves disembarked annually at Salvador and at Rio de Janeiro respectively.¹¹

These large, multicultural groups of slaves came into towns that rarely had a population of over 30,000. In 1706, when 6,124 Africans arrived at Salvador, the city's population over the age of seven years (i.e. churchgoers who took part in communion) was approximately 21,600.¹² At that time, Rio de Janeiro had a population of 12,000. Although they were bound by iron chains, their human condition was not taken away; after all, they were beings capable of reasoning.

It is not difficult to imagine these cities and their outlying areas becoming like the Tower of Babel, if we compare the number of captives and the size of the resident populations, bearing in mind especially that masters and slaves lived side by side. The biblical reference is pertinent. People were unable to understand each other because they spoke differ-

¹¹ Alexandre V. Ribeiro, "O Tráfico Atlântico de escravos e a praça mercantil de Salvador (c. 1680–c. 1830)" (master's thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2005): 127; Gabriel Parente Nogueira, "*Às margens do império: a pecuária das carnes salgadas e o comércio nos portos da porção oriental da costa leste oeste da América portuguesa*" (PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Ceará, 2021): 185.

¹² Gabriel Parente Nogueira, "*Às margens do império: a pecuária das carnes salgadas e o comércio nos portos da porção oriental da costa leste oeste da América portuguesa*" (PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Ceará, 2021): 159.

ent languages. It is also not difficult to imagine that they lived on the edge of despair. However, these ports did not succumb to disorder, nor did they disappear. On the contrary, the continuous flow of captives from Africa throughout the eighteenth century and into the first two decades of the nineteenth, was fruitful and multiplied.

The society of the ancien régime of the tropics was not thrown into chaos by the arrival of thousands of enslaved foreigners. On the contrary, it became even more mature. This is evidenced by the fact that many grandchildren and great-grandchildren of captives brought in during the 1710s had become freed men and women (*forros*) and slave-owners themselves.¹³ Faced with that fact, we may ask how such a phenomenon should be understood? We should recall that the main features of that society were already established by the beginning of the eighteenth century. There was a prevailing social discipline capable of explaining and justifying to both residents and new arrivals that slavery was a natural phenomenon meant to last forever. I refer to the system of representation set up by the Catholic church: the network of parishes (curates, chapels, oratories, etc.) with its clergy and lay brotherhoods spread to the farthest reaches of South America.¹⁴ The captives arrived in a society whose political and administrative base, created by the Portuguese Monarchy – municipalities, the crown administration overseas (governors, courts, other civil and military offices) –, had been at work for many decades. We must also bear in mind that the societies from which those men and women who crossed the Atlantic originated had known slavery for a very long time.

¹³ The idea that the population of freed individuals (*forros*) multiplied in the eighteenth century and that these individuals became themselves the owners of black slaves, recreating slave society and giving it an extra impulse was conceived by Roberto Ferreira Guedes. Cf. Roberto Ferreira Guedes, *As mil e uma desigualdades da escravidão – Rio de Janeiro, 1700–1850* (Rio de Janeiro: Edital FAPERJ, 2022).

¹⁴ On this subject see, among others, Antônio M. Hespanha, “Os Poderes, os modelos e os instrumentos de controle – A. Monarquia – legislação e agentes,” in *História da Vida Privada em Portugal: a Idade Moderna*, ed. Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 2011): 12–31; Joaquim R. Carvalho and José P. de M. Paiva, “Reportório das Visitas Pastorais da Diocese de Coimbra, séculos XVII, XVIII e XIX,” *Boletim do Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra* 2 (1985): 11–121.

The slaves were taken to the interior, to the newly set up mining villages which, however, were controlled by the elites, their relatives, servants and slaves. All of them were, to one degree or another, fearful of God and therefore, of His Majesty. The areas of the central west in particular were opened up by people who had thoroughly absorbed Catholic thinking into their bodies and souls.

Let me here briefly outline some of the features of this Portuguese ancien régime society, a subject that has already been dealt with in many other works.¹⁵ We, therefore, ask the reader to be patient.

In the late 1980s, a critique was formulated of the idea that absolute monarchy was a synonym for the modern state (between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries), and of the idea that the so-called colonies were economically exploited by their metropolises. At the time, Antonio Manuel Hespanha developed the seminal hypothesis that the king should be understood as the head of the monarchy without, however, being confused with it, since there were other, competing powers: from the aristocracy to the municipal communes.¹⁶

The king was the “thinking head,” capable of articulating the jurisdictions of the many parts that made up the whole of the social body, whether in the home kingdom (Portugal) or overseas. This brings us to the idea of a Catholic-based polysynodal and corporate monarchy. Three years later, J.H. Elliott elaborated the concept of a “composite monarchy.” According to him, one example was the Spanish monarchy, which was composed of many pre-existing kingdoms which, to a large extent, preserved the characteristics of their previous institutional existences: bodies of laws and legal rights.¹⁷

¹⁵ Cf. João Fragoso, Maria Fernanda Bicalho and Fátima Gouvêa eds., *O Antigo Regime nos trópicos: a dinâmica imperial portuguesa, séculos XVI–XVIII* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001); João Fragoso and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, “Introdução,” in *Um Reino e suas repúblicas no Atlântico: comunicações políticas entre Portugal, Brasil e Angola nos séculos XVII e XVIII*, ed. João Fragoso and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2017): 49–99.

¹⁶ Antônio M. Hespanha, *Às vésperas do Leviathan – Instituições e poder político, Portugal – século XVII* (Lisbon: Almedina, 1989).

¹⁷ John H. Elliott, “A Europe of Composite Monarchies,” *Past and Present* 137 (1992): 48–71. See also: Robert von Friedeburg and John Morril, eds., *Monarchy Transformed. Princes and Their Elites in Early Modern Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge Uni-

Unlike the Spanish Habsburg monarchy, in the Portuguese lands of Avis and then Bragança, there was only one kingdom, with several conquests spread across America, Africa and Asia. However, just as in the Spanish monarchy, there was competition and bargaining between the powers in the Portuguese monarchy as well. Early modern society understood itself as a body. Social units (such as families, lordships, municipalities, etc.) were seen as the organs of the body, each of which had a function. Their existence presupposed a great capacity for self-regulation.

The social units were understood as public communities, and their concord and harmony – that is, the “common good” of society – were guaranteed by the king as the head of that body. The function of the crown was not to destroy the autonomy of the individual units, but to guarantee coordination between them, especially through justice and the major laws. This whole process means we are talking about a polycentric or polysynodal system, i.e. a system in which the political direction of society derived from competition between powers. In this dynamic, the king appeared as the center.

In the Kingdom of Portugal, the competing powers were manorial power and municipal power. In the colonized territories, manorial power in the form of *donatarias*¹⁸ was progressively eliminated by the incorporation of *donatarias* into the royal patrimony. Thus, political management overseas was the result of negotiations between the municipalities and the king (supported by royal councils) with the active involvement of the local crown administration.

versity Press, 2017); John H. Elliott, “La crisis general en retrospectiva: um debate interminável,” in *España, Europa y el Mundo de Ultramar, 1500–1800*, ed. John H. Elliott (Madrid: Taurus, 2009): 95–96; Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, “Absolutism in Theory and Practice,” in *Early Modern Europe, 1450–1789*, ed. Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 318–19; Ronald G. Asch, “Monarchy in Western and Central Europe,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350–1750*, vol. 2, ed. Hamish Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 227–97; Pedro Cardim, Antonio Feros and Gaetano Sabatini, “The Political Constitution of the Iberian Monarchies,” in *The Iberian World 1450–1820*, ed. Fernando Bouza, Pedro Cardim and Antonio Feros (New York: Routledge, 2020): 36–37.

¹⁸ The *Donatarias* or *Capitanias Hereditárias* were territories under the legal and political authority of nobility families and/or crown officials. *Donatarias* were granted by the king as payment for services rendered to the Monarchy.

In the kingdom and overseas, the population was organized into municipalities understood as *republicas*, in the sense that they were political communities with the right of self-government guaranteed by custom and legislation and, as such, defended by the king. In a dictionary from the end of the eighteenth century, a municipality was defined as “a city governed by its own laws.”¹⁹

The autonomy of the municipalities from the crown can be seen, for example, in sensitive matters such as taxation. In principle, military defense was the responsibility of the king. However, on various occasions during the seventeenth century, he requested fiscal donations from municipalities in Portuguese America. The municipal council was composed of councilors and *juízes ordinários* (justices of the peace) elected by residents with citizenship rights, the so-called *homens bons* (literally, “good men”). They functioned as courts of first instance, were responsible for the administration of the local market and represented the municipality before the king and his officials. The *juízes ordinários*, for example, settled disputes according to customary law and were originally not university graduates. It was only in the thirteenth century that the crown, in response to requests from municipal populations, among other reasons, began to appoint royal officials who held a bachelor’s degree in law to the largest and most important cities. In the American territories, this practice began in the late seventeenth century for cities such as Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. The councilors were also responsible for intervening in the local market by controlling, for example, the quality of meat or the weights (*peso público*), in order to safeguard the common good of the population.²⁰

It is worth stressing that these practices occurred within the framework of the so-called Colonial Pact or Commercial Exclusive, through

¹⁹ According to the general laws of the monarchy that came in effect in 1603: “The councilors will apply the municipal rules (*posturas*), the *vereações* and old customs of the city [...] the *corregedor* [crown official] will not be able to revoke them, nor will any Official or our Appeal Judge [from the king] before they are put into effect.” [adapted by author] *Ordenações Filipinas*, Livro I, título 66. Edição organizada e comentada por Candido Mendes (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1870).

²⁰ Cf. Avanete Pereira Sousa, *A Bahia no Século XVIII: poder político local e atividades econômicas* (São Paulo: Alameda, 2012).

which the Kingdom of Portugal and its merchants had a monopoly on the imports and exports of the conquered overseas territories, enforced through the Kingdom's fleet system.²¹ In turn, once these fleets were in the jurisdiction of the port cities, their captains and traders had to deal with the councilors. Around the end of the seventeenth century, the setting of sugar and freight rates, for example, was the result of negotiations in the municipal council between the fleets and local producers. This practice was abolished by the crown in the early 1750s despite protests from different port cities in Portuguese America.²²

Having mentioned the Colonial Pact and the Commercial Exclusive exercised by Portugal over its transatlantic trade, a brief excursus is necessary. This excursus becomes even more important as we defend the hypothesis that the societies in the overseas conquered territories had their own logics, and that their dynamics cannot not be understood as a mere response to European economic interests. Their local elites were able to negotiate with the Kingdom. These negotiations took place through the actions of municipal councils based on the political treaties of the time. This hypothesis is possible because of the critique of the thesis of absolutism, the revision of dependency theories and the rejection of the idea of a capitalist world economy since the sixteenth century. I once again ask the reader for patience, since he or she may be already familiar with this theme.

In the same revisionist scenario that challenged the absolutism thesis as an explanation of modern Europe there is, on the other side of the Atlantic, the critique of the relations of authority exerted by European metropolises over their American colonies between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. In his critique of the thesis of authority, J. Greene

²¹ On this subject, see, among others, Caio Prado Jr., *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1977); Fernando A. Novais, *Portugal e Brasil na crise do antigo sistema colonial, 1777–1808* (São Paulo: HUCITEC, 1983).

²² AHU, CU, BA AV. cx. 115, doc. 8992. May 30, 1753. Letter of the deputies of the *Mesa de Inspeção* (Trade Inspection Board) of the city of Bahia; AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 66, doc. 15512–15513, March 4, 1752, inquiry to the Overseas Council about the following representation against the setting of the price of sugar; AHU, CU, RJ CA, cx. 75, doc. 17492–17495, November 28, 1754, letter to the officials of the Rio de Janeiro City Council.

developed the hypothesis of *negotiated authority* as the axis of relations between metropolises and colonies, thus breaking with the traditional conception of an inexorable political subordination of the so-called colonies and their local elites in the Americas.²³ In this process in international historiography, other concepts were added to the already existing critique of the thesis of the absolutist state for European societies and their overseas conquests: the theories of dependency, and, within those, the theories that postulated the emergence of capitalism in western Europe as the result of the exploitation of colonies by metropolises since the sixteenth century.²⁴

Immanuel Wallerstein was among the authors who subscribed to this latter thesis. In 1974, he explained capitalism as the result of a world system based on the transformations that took place in sixteenth-century Europe.²⁵ According to him, north-western Europe – especially Antwerp, Amsterdam and London – led the way in the establishment of

²³ Jack Greene, *Negotiated Authorities. Essays in Colonial Political and Constitutional History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994).

²⁴ Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this paper to make a genealogy of the ideas of the authors who took the lead in the construction of dependency theories, such as P. Baran, P. Gunder Frank, Samir Amim, Immanuel Wallerstein, D. Tomich, and to relate them to their basis in Marxism and in the Third International of the beginning of the twentieth century: Paul Baran, *A economia Política do Desenvolvimento*, trans. S. Ferreira da Cunha (São Paulo: Abril Cultural, 1984 [English publication, 1956]); Immanuel Wallerstein, *O Sistema Mundial Moderno*, vol. 1, trans. Carlos Leite, Fatima Martins and Joel Lisboa (Porto: Afrontamento, undated) [published in English in 1974]; Dale W. Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar, 1830–1848*, 2nd ed. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2016); André Gunder Frank, *Sociología del desarrollo y subdesarrollo de la sociología, El desarrollo del subdesarrollo*, trans. José R. Llobera (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1971): 38–40 and 102; André Gunder Frank, *World Accumulation, 1492–1789* (New York: Algora Publishing, 1978): passim; Samir Amim, *O Desenvolvimento desigual: ensaio sobre as formações do capitalismo periférico*, trans. Francisco Rego Chaves Fernandes (Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1973); Arghiri Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972). Ciro Flamarion Cardoso published a study in 1980 about the intellectual genealogy of the idea of a world capitalist system, Ciro Flamarion Cardoso, “As concepções acerca do ‘sistema econômico mundial’ e do ‘antigo sistema colonial’: a preocupação obsessiva com a ‘extração do excedente’,” in *Modos de produção e realidade brasileira*, ed. José do Amaral Lapa (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1980).

²⁵ Immanuel Wallerstein, *O Sistema Mundial Moderno*, vol. 1, trans. Carlos Leite, Fatima Martins and Joel Lisboa (Porto: Afrontamento, undated) [published in English in 1974]. Among classical authors, see specially, Eric Williams, *Capitalismo & escravidão*, trans. Carlos Nayfeld (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Americana, 1975).

an international division of labor and, with it, a market on a global scale. One result of this process was a world capitalist system which had its beating heart in north-western Europe and was capable of coordinating, according to its interests, *semi-peripheries* and *peripheries* spread all over the planet. As part of the same process, merchant capital created and/or recreated economies in the *periphery* of the world system that were based on compulsory work, including indigenous and African slavery in Brazil and the second serfdom in Poland. These peripheral economies transferred their resources to Europe via international trade and other mechanisms, enabling the accumulation of capital, and therefore wage labor and capitalist manufacture.²⁶

One of the critics of the thesis described above was Patrick O'Brien. In his 1982 article, "European Economic Development: The Contribution of the Periphery," the contribution of the periphery to the formation of English capitalism was peripheral, at least in terms of its consumer market, until the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The beginning of the establishment of English manufacture and its industrial revolution had to rely on domestic and European consumption.²⁷

²⁶ Immanuel Wallerstein, *O Sistema Mundial Moderno*, vol. 1, trans. Carlos Leite, Fatima Martins and Joel Lisboa (Porto: Afrontamento, undated) [published in English in 1974]. In Brazilian historiography, authors who defend the preeminence of European merchant capital over colonial slave economy and its dependency on the world market include Celso Furtado, *Formação econômica do Brasil* (São Paulo: Cia Editora Nacional, 1976 [1st ed. 1954]); Caio Prado Jr., *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* (São Paulo Brasiliense, 1977 [1st ed. 1942]). After 1970, these authors were joined by Fernando A. Novais, *Portugal e Brasil na crise do antigo sistema colonial, 1777–1808* (São Paulo: HUCITEC, 1983 [1st ed. 1979]); Laura de Mello e Souza, *O sol e a Sombra: política e administração na América portuguesa no século XVIII* (São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 2006); Rafael Marquese, "As desventuras de um conceito: capitalismo histórico e historiografia sobre a escravidão brasileira," *Revista de História* 169 (2013): 223–53, especially 251; Gustavo Acioli Lopes, "Negócio da Costa da Mina e Comércio Atlântico: da Mina e Comércio Atlântico: Tabaco, Açúcar, Tabaco, Açúcar, Ouro e Tráfico de escravos: Pernambuco, 1654–1760" (PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2008): 11; Gustavo Acioli Lopes and Maximiliano M.M. Menz, "Resgate e mercadorias: uma análise comparada do tráfico luso brasileiro de escravos em Angola e na Costa da Mina (século XVIII)," *Afro-Ásia* 37 (2008): 43–73; Wolfgang Lenk, "Guerra e pacto colonial: exército, fiscalidade e administração colonial da Bahia (1624–1654)" (PhD diss., Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2009) [published by Editora Alameda in 2013].

²⁷ Patrick O'Brien, "European Economic Development: The Contribution of the Periphery," *Economic History Review* 35 (1982): 1–18. Among others, see also Robert Brenner, "The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism," *New*

In 2005 and then in 2010, Patrick O'Brien highlighted that the supremacy given by international historiography to Europe, in the 16th to 18th centuries, over other parts of the planet is due, as Braudel will already warn, to a reason:

Europe invented historians and made good use of them Her own history is well lit and can be called as evidence or used as claim. The history of non-Europe is still being written.²⁸

In a 2019 publication, Bartolomé Yun Casalilla highlights:

The history of Europe was, and has been in many occasions, the history of the Rise of the West. From Wallerstein to Braudel and recently Hoffman [adapted by JF].²⁹

Left Review 104 (1977): 25–92; Elizabeth Genovese and Eugene Genovese, “The Janus of Merchant Capital,” in *Fruits of Merchant Capital. Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism*, ed. Elizabeth Genovese and Eugene Genovese (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983): 3–25; Steve J. Stern, “Feudalism, Capitalism and the World-System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean,” *American Historical Review* 88, no. 43 (1988): 829–72. On the importance of regional markets for European industrialization see Franklin Mendels, “Proto-Industrialization: Theory and Reality,” in *Eighth International Economic History Congress, Budapest 1982* (Budapest: Akademiai iado, 1982): 69–107. For a critique of the idea of commercial capitalism see Horácio Cifardini, “Capital, comercio y capitalismo: a propósito del llamado capitalismo comercial,” *Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente* 40 (1973): 111–34. On the small contributions made by the populations of Spanish America to reversing the difficulties of European manufactures in the modern era see Bartolomé Yun Casilla, “Entre Mina y Mercado,” in *La Historia sin Complejos. La Nueva Vision del Imperio Español*, ed. Garcia Hernán David (Madrid: Actas, 2010): 210 and 213.

²⁸ Patrick O'Brien, “Ten Years of Debate on the Origins of the Great Divergence. Review of *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, by Kenneth Pomeranz,” *Reviews in History*, 30.11.2010, <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1008> [accessed 12.03.2024]; Patrick O'Brien, “Historical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History,” *Journal of Global History* 1 (2006): 3–39, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/26471/> [accessed 05.03.2024].

²⁹ “la historia de Europa ha sido y sigue siendo en muchas ocasiones, la historia del The Rise of the West [...] desde Wallerstein e incluso a Braudel y el reciente Hoffman” [adapted by JF]. Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, *História global, história transnacional e história dos impérios, o atlântico, America y Europa, siglos XVI–XVIII* (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el católico, 2019): 44. See: Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011 [1974]); Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme: XVe–XVIIIe siècle* (París: Arman Collin, 1979); P.T.

However, Yun warns that, at the end of the 2010s, the historiographical debate began to go beyond Rise of the West:

On the one hand, they have created a much more complex and controversial panorama of the supposed uniqueness of Europe during the modern era. Today, for example, it is not clear to what extent the Old World's dominance over other areas has been key to its own economic evolution between the 15th and 18th centuries.³⁰

Starting in 1988, Dale Tomich developed Wallerstein's ideas, but with an essayistic approach and therefore without a strong empirical basis. According to Tomich, wage labor and modern slavery should be understood as part of a dynamic that was constituted, from the sixteenth century onwards, by the world market and the social division of labor. There was no integrated duality between these two forms of work, but a contradictory unity. Tomich argued that both wage labor in Europe and slavery in the New World retained their specificity and conditioned their respective societies. This approach, the author emphasizes, considers wage labor and other non-capitalist or pre-industrial forms of production as the result of a global process or a totality, in this case, the capitalist world economy.³¹

Let me finally emphasize that, in Tomich's interpretation, American slavery was still subordinated to the interests of European capital, being created by it and transferring its profits to it. After all, the capitalist world economy was the basis of the Old World. One of the consequences of this approach was to deprive the slaves of their human condition, i.e.

Hoffman, *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

³⁰ Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, *História global, história transnacional e história dos impérios, o atlântico, America y Europa (siglos XVI–XVIII)* (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el católico, 2019): 94.

³¹ Dale W Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar, 1830–1848* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2016): 5, 6 and 7; Dale W. Tomich, *Pelo Prisma da Escravidão* (São Paulo: Edusp, 2011): 45, 48, 49 and 50; Dale W Tomich, “A escravidão no capitalismo histórico: rumo a uma história teórica da segunda escravidão,” in *Escravidão e capitalismo histórico no século XIX*, ed. Rafael Marquese and Ricardo Salles (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2016): 55–98.

their ability to think and act, as slaves were reduced to the condition of tools (simple investments in fixed amounts of capital). The most a slave could be was an animated tool, or perhaps something like an animal with speech. This last phenomenon, in turn, prevented the creation of an economic theory of slavery. Thus, according to this approach, the captive was not conceived as the subject of his or her economic relations, but as their mere result or object.³² To this must be added the precarious empirical basis that supports this theoretical explanation.³³ I believe that the study of the economic relations between European kingdoms and their overseas conquests between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries is extremely important; it is, however, still under construction. What there currently is are essayistic frameworks based on insufficient empirical research. Perhaps that is why some of these frameworks are so simplistic and easily accepted. We certainly need more research into the relations in societies located on different continents and linked by international trade. However, this research must be conducted with a strong empirical basis, and, in order to be able to do so, we need refined methodologies. Only then will we have theories that overcome simple analyses.

One way or another, once we have discussed the colonial pact within the ambit of the historiographical debates about a supposed capitalist world system, we can return to the subject of our text, especially to the local elites in colonized societies.

³² Dale W. Tomich, *Pelo Prisma da Escravidão* (São Paulo: Edusp, 2011): 45, 48, 49 and 50; Dale W. Tomich, “A escravidão no capitalismo histórico: rumo a uma história teórica da segunda escravidão,” in *Escravidão e capitalismo histórico no século XIX*, ed. Rafael Marquese and Ricardo Salles (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2016): 55–98; 74–78.

³³ Tomich’s main work, in which he presents his thesis of the capitalist world economy, consists of a study about the sugar slave economy in Martinique between 1830 and 1848. On page 135 and the following pages, the author correctly describes the great difficulty in finding sources for his research. Dale W. Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2016). View the works of Eugene Genovese, *A Terra Prometida* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1988) [English: *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, 1974] and Herbert Guttmann. *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976). As is well known, one of the merits of both authors was to give back to the slaves their human condition and their role as subjects of their own history.

It was not uncommon for the families who had sat on the municipal councils for successive generations to refer to themselves as *nobreza principal da terra* (literally, “principal nobility of the land”).³⁴ They were usually descended from the conquerors of the region, i.e. those who, at the expense of their assets, relatives, servants and slaves, had subjected the original populations of the area, thereby enabling domination by the crown and the setting up of the municipality. As a reward for these services, these families were granted immense tracts of land (*sesmarias*), access to indigenous labor through the so-called *guerras justas* (literally, “just wars”), and offices of the crown as a property or as a right (*serventia*). In short, authority exercised by these families over conquered territory – i.e. authority over its former and future residents, especially in the rural parishes – was recognized by the crown.

In addition to the municipal administration, there was the administration of the crown: this included, among others, governors, military officials, judicial officials, and officials from the royal treasury or customs office, each with their own letters patent. After all, Rio de Janeiro was a royal captaincy. It was the responsibility of those officials to look after the interests of the crown, such as military defense, tax collection, the exercise of justice, etc.

We can now ask which political and administrative categories were employed by the elite of the kingdom (the aristocracy and the literati) to classify Portuguese America, and how these who resided in the conquered territories saw themselves within that European monarchy. These days, scholars tend to mistrust the concept of “colony” to answer this question. Historians, or at least some historians, are increasingly convinced that the tropics between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries cannot

³⁴ Cf. Evaldo Cabral de Mello, *Olinda restaurada: guerra e açúcar no Nordeste, 1630–1654* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2007 [1st ed. 1975]); João Fragoso, “À Espera das frotas terra micro-história tapuia e a nobreza principal da (Rio de Janeiro, c. 1600–c. 1750),” inaugural lecture held at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2005; Thiago Nascimento Krause, “A Formação de uma Nobreza Ultramarina: Coroa e elites locais na Bahia seiscentista” (PhD diss., UFRJ Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2015); Ana Lunara Morais, “Em Busca da perpetuação. Reprodução social e poder econômico da nobreza da terra nas captaincies do Norte, séculos XVI–XVIII” (PhD diss., Universidade de Évora, 2021).

be defined as one large sugarcane plantation, populated only by masters and slaves whose lives depended on the mood of the European markets. Maybe the label of “colony” still survives for the period between the sixteenth and mid-eighteenth centuries as an atavism or due to historiographic laziness, rather than being based on empirical investigations.³⁵

In any case, the following text seeks to contribute to a better understanding of Portuguese America, situated between the Portuguese monarchy and the so-called world-economy centered in Europe.

The discovery of the mines in modern-day Minas Gerais and the establishment of royal authority in the region provide another opportunity to visualize some of the operating mechanisms of the pluricontinental Portuguese monarchy, in this case as the result of negotiations between center and periphery in the dynamics of this monarchy.³⁶ In other words, the discovery of gold confirms the idea that we are dealing with a pluricontinental monarchy made political communities (municípios or *repúblicas*) spread throughout different geographical areas of the planet, negotiating with the crown and, therefore, actively involved in its historical process.

In 1674, the secretariat of the Overseas Council (*Conselho Ultramarino*) drew up a document entitled “Information regarding the residents of the *vila*³⁷ of São Paulo.” The text was produced as part of the efforts – mediated by the governor-general, the Count of Athouguia – to settle the conflict between two elite families: the Pires and the Camargo families,

³⁵ For a discussion of the literary culture of that time, especially in Portugal, see Pedro Cardim, “Conquista, Província, Colônia e Reino,” in *Cultura Política e Artes de Governar na Época Moderna. Séculos XVI–XVIII*, ed. Ana Paula Megiani (Porto: Cravo, 2022): 45–102.

³⁶ About the discovery of the mines see: Maria Verônica Campos, “*Governo de mineiros: de como meter as minas numa moenda e beber-lhe o caldo dourado, 1693 a 1737*” (PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2002); Adriana Romero, *Paulistas e emboabas no coração das Minas: ideias, práticas e imaginário político no século XVIII* (Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 2008); Carla Maria Carvalho de Almeida and Mônica Ribeiro de Oliveira, “A Conquista do centro-sul: a fundação da Colônia de Sacramento e ‘achamento’ das Minas,” in *O Brasil Colonial*, vol. 2, ed. João Fragoso and Fátima Gouvêa (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2014): 267–336.

³⁷ A *vila* was a town, bigger than a village and smaller than a city, that had its own government institutions, such as a municipal council and a judge. [Added by translator]

whose disputes over the municipal council marked the area of Piratininga in the eighteenth century.

In this context, the royal court ordered an analysis of the captaincy and its position in Portuguese America. According to the information contained in the document, there were more than seven *vilas* in São Paulo with a total of twenty thousand inhabitants. The captaincy had been annexed to the captaincy of São Vicente, there was previously a *capitão-mor* and an *ouvidor de capa e espada* (superior judge)³⁸, both subordinate to the Marquis of Cascaes. Like the other municipalities of the kingdom, the government of São Paulo was composed of councilors and *juízes ordinários* (justices of the peace). The supervision of the judiciary was the responsibility of the *ouvidoria* (judicial district) of Rio de Janeiro. One of the conclusions highlighted by the document was the willingness of the elites of Piratininga to undertake incursions into the interior on behalf of the crown.³⁹

Decades later, however, the picture was very different. In 1693, Antonio Paes Sande, then governor-general of Brazil, in a letter explained the reasons for the failure of Dom Rodrigo de Castelbranco, the man who had been in charge of locating the mines. The Paulistas, who were very skilled in opening up the interior, would make trouble for anyone who attempted to do the same, as they wanted the royal offices and other privileges promised and granted by the crown to those it had charged with that mission. In other words, Antonio Paes Sande believed that the local elites knew where the mines were or how to find them, but that they waited for Lisbon to formulate a pact as make sure that all the honors of the conquest would come to them,⁴⁰ including the government of the territory of the mines:

³⁸ *Capitão – mor* of a *Capitania Hereditária* or *Donataria* was the political and administrative representative of the *Donatário* (Lord of Lands) in the *Capitania Hereditária*. The captaincy's *Ouvidor de capa e espada* was responsible for the exercise of justice in the region.

³⁹ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 7, doc. 1216–1218, Lisbon, May 22, 1674. Information of the Secretary of the Overseas Council about the residents of the *vila* of S. Paulo.

⁴⁰ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 10, doc. 1836–1869, Lisbon, January 1, 1693, Inquiry to the Overseas Council about the suggestion of Governor Antônio Paes Sande.

Enabled by these promises of honors and values, the Paulistas could marry their daughters to highly honored but poor nobles (*fidalgos*). By means of such marriages, their descendants would be related to the noble houses of Portugal. Similarly, the *Vila* of São Paulo, as a flowering republic in its qualities and wealth, could become the head of Brazil. It is clear that the Paulistas who are ambitious for these glories, instead of hiding the treasures that lie in the earth, will make efforts to humbly offer them to [text adapted by author].⁴¹

The governor of Brazil concluded that the crown should commit itself to the Paulistas and promise them the same “privileges” (*mercês*), honors, interests, His Majesty titles (*foros*), commendations, habits⁴², offices and salaries previously guaranteed to Rodrigo de Castelbranco.

Once the Paulistas had discovered the mines and so ended the controversy, another chapter – and another conflict – between the crown and the same *nobreza da terra* began, this time over the territory of Minas. It belonged to the crown, but how should it be governed? To make things more complex, the elites of the captaincies near the mines of São Paulo also intervened, claiming rights and imposing their interests.

The mining area was under the jurisdiction of the governor of Rio de Janeiro. On May 19, 1702, the Paulista Garcia Rodrigues Paes was appointed by a royal decree to the position of *guarda-mor* of Minas.⁴³ He was responsible for the administration of justice, the control of the entry of people and goods into the region, the prevention of gold smuggling

⁴¹ “Os paulistas poderão, habilitados com essas promessas de honras e cabedais, casar suas filhas com os fidalgos muito honrados e pobres do Reino. Através desses matrimônios, seus descendentes ficaram aparentados com as casas de Portugal. Da mesma forma, a Vila de São Paulo, como republica florente nas qualidades e nas riquezas, poderá vir a ser a cabeça do Brasil. Claro está que os paulistas ambiciosos dessas glórias, ao invés de ocultarem os tesouros depositado naquelas terras, se empenharam em oferece-las humildemente a S. Majestade.” [texto adaptado, JF]. AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 10, doc. 1836–1869, Lisboa 08.01.1693. Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino sobre o alvitre proposto pelo Governador Antônio Paes Sande

⁴² The *habits* consisted of entry into Military Orders headed by the King. Military Order and titles (*fidalgo da casa real*) implied entering of the nobility of the Kingdom

⁴³ *Guarda Mor das Minas* official of the crown responsible for maintaining the king’s authority over the territory of the precious metal mines.

and the settling of miners and slaves in the mining claims, which were called *datas*.

Around the turn of the eighteenth century, Arthur Sá de Menezes, governor of Rio de Janeiro, commissioned Garcia Rodrigues Paes with the task of cutting a new road, to be called Caminho Novo, to the mines of São Paulo. This new road was to make communications between Rio de Janeiro and the gold mines faster and safer; gold would travel out of the region on it, and the caravans bringing African slaves and trade goods imported via the Atlantic Ocean to the port Rio de Janeiro into it. More precisely, from the viewpoint of Rio de Janeiro the road would form an overland section of the transatlantic slave trade, not only to the mines of the central west of Portuguese America, but also to the various regional markets spread throughout Portuguese America.

For these services, the *capitão-mor* requested habits of the Order of Christ and titles of nobility for himself and his relatives, and these were promised to him. In addition, he asked for permission to build a *vila* and for the grant of rights over its territory (*donataria*). Lisbon granted the titles and habits and promised the grant of *donataria*. But in the middle of the eighteenth century, Pedro Dias, the son of the *capitão-mor*, was still trying to have this promise fulfilled.⁴⁴

In 1702, Lisbon created the office of *superintendente das Minas* (territory of metal precious e currf ent reigon of Minas Gerais), to which José Vaz Pinto was initially appointed, who was at the time the *ouvidor-geral* of Rio de Janeiro⁴⁵. The creation of this post led to a reduction in the authority of the Paulistas in the region. As the result of the elites' displeasure, José Vaz Pinto was forced to leave Minas and take refuge in Rio de

⁴⁴ AHU, CU – Códice 232, sheet 223 e 224. Lisbon, December 15, 1703. In this document, the governor of Rio de Janeiro appoints Garcia Rodrigues Paes to the position of *guarda-mor* and asks for information about the state of the road leading to the sea; see also AHU, RJ, CA, cx. 13, doc. 2434–2500, 1700; the request of *Capitão-Mor* Garcia Rodrigues Paes for the title of *fidalgo da casa real* and for habits of the Order of Christ both for himself and for his two sons, in acknowledgement of their services in the discovery of the mines; AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 27, doc. 6180–6186, 1729. The act which grants Garcia Rodrigues Paes the *vila* he intends to build by the river Paraíba do Sul. Lisbon, April 20, 1703.

⁴⁵ *Ouvidor-geral do Rio de Janeiro* (general ombudsman), royal superior official responsible for the royal justice of the *Capitania do Rio de Janeiro* and annexed territories.

Janeiro, fearing for his life. The episode of the royal *ouvidor's* flight from Minas, that is, a flight by the royal justice from the newly opened lands imposed by the Paulistas, was the subject of a discussion in the Overseas Council in 1705. Although the court felt that the Paulistas should be punished, it chose to take a more pragmatic attitude. Upon realizing the ineffectiveness of sending a royal officer to administer justice, the council recommended that the king

appoint one of those Paulistas to the government: the most powerful among them, making him responsible for collecting the taxes (*quintos*) according to Your Majesty's tax regime (*regimento*). This decision is the best one for the defense of the markets of Brazil. [text adapted by author]⁴⁶

In fact, in its pragmatism, the Overseas Council did not always make coherent decisions. Some years earlier, that same court had concluded that the mines of São Paulo belonged to the Monarchy and therefore any vassal could go to the region.

In 1707, Dom Fernando Martins de Lencastre, the governor of Rio de Janeiro, suggested to Lisbon that one of the best ways to control the royal taxes (*quintos*) was through cattle especially brought from the interior of Bahia: it would be a "cattle tax." After all, the rapid growth of the population of Minas required the expansion of the food market, including the market for meat. Therefore the governor came up with the idea that taxes should be collected in cattle and that butcheries should play a key role in the crown's control over the income from mineral extraction. In his letter he also mentioned the services to the monarchy rendered by the *Capitão-Mor* Francisco do Amaral Gurgel who, according

⁴⁶ "nomear para o governo um daqueles paulistas: o mais poderoso, encarregando-o da arrecadação dos quintos na forma do regimento de V.Magde. Essa decisão é a melhor para a defesa das praças do Brasil," [texto adaptado, JF]. AHU, CU – Códice 232, sheet 223 e 224. Lisbon, February 17, 1705. *desembargador* (judge) José Vaz Pinto, *superintendente das minas de São Paulo*, and the reasons that made him leave this position and retire to Rio de Janeiro. AHU, CU- Códice 232, sheet 230, Lisbon, June 22, 1706. Response from the governor of Rio de Janeiro to the order that he should organize the collection of the royal taxes (*quintos reais*).

to Lancastre, was a one of the leading men of Rio de Janeiro, who lived in the mining district of Ouro Preto.⁴⁷

We may infer from this correspondence that not only elites from São Paulo, but also from Rio de Janeiro were present in Minas. And with them, their extensive networks of clients.

The same correspondence mentions *Capitão-Mor* Francisco do Amaral Gurgel and thereby provides an opportunity to introduce one of the many families of the *nobreza da terra* whose actions, and choices, will serve as a guiding thread to this history of the slave trade and the agrarian system in Rio de Janeiro in the first half of the eighteenth century. Another family that will have the same function in this paper is the Correia Vasques family. They belonged to the *nobreza da terra*, but were also *fidalgos da casa real* (nobles of the royal house) and officials in the royal administration.

The residents of Rio de Janeiro had been travelling to the São Paulo mines for a long time. In a letter to the crown dated 1702, the municipal council of São Paulo complained about the migrations from Rio de Janeiro in search of gold.

The officials of the municipal council of São Paulo make representation to Your Majesty that the residents of Rio de Janeiro are asking for mining claims (*datas*) in the mines of Cataguases, without being their conquerors nor their discoverers. Because the residents of the *vila* of São Paulo and of other neighboring towns, at the cost of their lives and property, discovered and conquered them, they ask Your Majesty that the said lands only be given to the Paulistas. [text adapted by author]⁴⁸

⁴⁷ AHU, CU - Códice 232, sheets 238 and 239, February 28, 1707. The governor of Rio de Janeiro, Dom Fernando de Martins Mascarenhas Lencastre, renders account of the gold that entered the captaincy mint.

⁴⁸ “Os oficiais da câmara de São Paulo representaram a VMgde que os moradores do Rio de Janeiro pedem datas de terras das Minas de Cataguases, sem serem conquistadores, nem descobridores delas. Em razão dos moradores da vila de São e das demais anexas, às custas de suas vidas e fazendas, à descobrirem e conquistaram, pedem à sua Magde. as ditas terras sejam só dados aos paulistas.” [adaptado por JF]. AHU, CU – Códice 232, sheet 179, Lisbon, March 2, 1702. Account by the officials of the municipal council of São Paulo about role of the Paulistas as discoverers and conquerors of lands of Campos Gerais de Cataguases.

The governor of Rio de Janeiro, the procurator of the royal treasury, and the Overseas Council favored denying these privileges to the Paulistas, arguing that the territory was vast and needed to be populated and have its economy activated. So the crown ministers were pragmatic. They played by the rules they knew: those of the ancien régime. Moreover, the time when the Paulistas' expertise in exploring the interior of Minas was essential for the crown had long passed. After all, its *vilas* and small towns were already controlled by the monarchy.

In addition to the Amaral Gurgel, there were other families belonging to the elites of Rio de Janeiro (known as *nobreza da terra fluminense*) in Minas, who proposed alternative roads to Garcia Rodrigues's Caminho Novo. As one would expect, they followed ancien régime culture by asking for privileges similar to those requested by the Paulistas: titles of nobility and *donatarias*. That was the case with Captain Feliz Madeira e Gusmão. In 1704, he asked the governor of Rio de Janeiro, Dom Álvaro da Silveira e Albuquerque, for permission to cut a road between the *vila* of Santo Antônio, in Guanabara Bay, and Minas, and his request was not granted. The governor, claiming to be unsure whether Garcia Rodrigues's works had been completed, authorized the project. The construction of the alternative road was suspended due to the royal privilege previously conceded to Rodrigues Paes for establishing the connection between Minas and Rio.

In any case, the attempt shows the tensions between families from Rio de Janeiro and from São Paulo over Minas, which until then was dominated by the latter. Captain Feliz Gusmão had lived in Rio de Janeiro since at least the middle of the seventeenth century. He owned a sugarcane mill there; more importantly, he was connected by marriage to one of the families that had conquered the district. For his road project, the captain mobilized his son Felix Gusmão de Mendonça, who lives in the gold-production areas and has a commanding position there.

In 1704, the family Madeira e Gusmão, following the example of the the Paulistas families and Amaral Gurgel family from the Rio de Janeiro, asked the crown for the title of *fidalgo da casa real*, the position of *tenente de mestre de campo general* (lieutenant field commander) and

the permission to build and control a *vila*.⁴⁹ At the time, Minas appeared as a territory disputed by the *nobreza da terra* the different regions of the Portuguese America. We can therefore add the elites of Bahia to those of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In addition, people from different parts of the pluricontinental monarchy flocked to Minas with their slaves; others came with their commerce. All of them completed the political and institutional landscape of the early eighteenth century.

The crown was far from having the power to mediate social relations in Minas. Therefore that territory, known as the mines of São Paulo, became the scene of the struggles made inevitable by the social architecture of the period. Regional elites with their networks of clients played the game of the *ancien régime*. They fought for the control of royal privileges (positions and royal contracts) through the traditional armed struggles.

It is worth remembering that mining was a labor-intensive activity, which did not demand large investments. It required large numbers of human beings as a workforce, armed dependents, and people employed in the supply chain logistics. In other words: slaves, archers, and a geographically articulated network of clients that guaranteed the supply of men and materials. These resources were available to the Paulista elites, but also to the *nobreza da terra* from Rio and Bahia. In fact, the ability to manage these resources was one of the defining features of the *nobreza da terra*.

It is not surprising that the Paulista Rodrigues Paes, the *fluminense* Amaral Gurgel and the *baiana*⁵⁰ Guedes Brito, among other nobles, were among those most able to penetrate into the interior of the gold-producing areas and make a fortune. It is not an exaggeration to say that they were better able to do so than the agents of mercantile capital or the companies that figure in the historiography about world capitalism. Historians should take a closer look at the phenomenon of the *nobreza*

⁴⁹ AHU, CU, RJ, AV, cx. 14, doc. 2919–2925. Year of 1704. Request by Captain Felix Madeira e Gusmão for title of *fidalgão da casa real*, position of *tenente de mestre de campo general* and a license to establish a *vila* in the place called Paraíba.

⁵⁰ *Baiano*, and its female form *baiana*: (noun) a native or inhabitant of Bahia; (adj.) of, relating to, or characteristic of Bahia. [Added by translator]

da terra investing their precious metals and services in the attempt to acquire *donatarias*, i.e. land ownership. It is interesting to note that these nobles sought to obtain the approval of the crown in order to obtain political and judicial domination over *vilas*, just like their counterparts in the kingdom of Portugal.

At the end of the 1710s, the crown made its presence felt by creating the captaincies of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, separating the latter from Rio de Janeiro. One of the first actions of Governor Antônio de Albuquerque Coelho de Carvalho was to negotiate with conflicting groups from the *nobreza da terra* to bring order to local society. At the same time, he divided the territory of Minas into districts called *comarcas*, installed *ouvidorias* (local courts), and created *vilas*. This latter activity, for instance, suggests that the crown recognized the power of the local elites to issue orders. Moreover, the municipal councils functioned as means of communication between the population and the center of the monarchy. An example of this role is an event that took place in 1714. The *ouvidor* (judge) of Sabará, in Minas, wrote to Lisbon requesting clemency for Manuel Nunes Viana, a rural potentate from Bahia who was one of the participants in the War of the Emboabas. Without the presence of this man, he explained, it would be difficult to guarantee the execution of royal orders, fight indigenous hostilities, and maintain peace and order on behalf of the crown. Viana had also played a key role in the supply of cattle brought from the interior. In 1728, Manuel Viana appeared as *acaide-mor* (military chief of the village)⁵¹ in the parish of São Bartolomeu of the *vila* of Maragogipe in Bahia, a position granted by the monarch.⁵²

The actions of the Amaral Gurgel family in Minas help us understand the complexities behind the incorporation of the region into the ancien régime. In the first decade of the eighteenth century, *Capitão-Mor* Francisco do Amaral Coutinho and his relatives were involved in the business

⁵¹ Alcaide mor was Crown official responsible for the military defense of a village.

⁵² Maria Verônica Campos, “*Governo de mineiros: de como meter as minas numa moenda e beber-lhe o caldo dourado, 1693 a 1737*” (PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2002): 131–33; AHU, CU, BA, CA, News about the parish of S. Bartolomeu in the *vila* of Maragogipe, attached to doc. 2666 no page number. 1757.

of procuring contracts for the collection of taxes on meat and tobacco. The tobacco contracts in particular were connected to the transatlantic slave trade, as tobacco was used to acquire captives in African societies. The actions of these elite families provide insights into the functioning of the economy of Minas, which, in turn, fed the internal growth cycles of Portuguese America. Moreover, they allow us to observe the link between rural elites and Atlantic merchants located in Rio de Janeiro and Salvador.

In Rio de Janeiro, the Amaral Gurgel family made alliances with traders such as Salvador Viana da Rocha, who in 1702 married Antônia Correia do Amaral, who belonged to one of the branches of the Amaral Gurgel family. Viana held the position of *escrivão* (scribe) of the *Casa da Moeda*, that is, a registrar at the mint, and he was also involved in the meat and tobacco businesses.⁵³

In this context, the conflicts between the Amaral Gurgel family and the elites from São Paulo were not limited to trade in Minas. They had a much wider scope, both geographically and politically. That can be inferred from a letter sent by Garcia Rodrigues to the Count of Alvor in 1706. He requested that the count intervene in order to prevent the demands of the priest Antônio de Santa Clara – who was a brother of Bento and Francisco do Amaral – regarding the collection of taxes on gold (*quintos do ouro*). For Garcia Rodrigues, granting any official position in the royal treasury to one of the brothers would cause serious harm to the king's service.⁵⁴

Pedro Taques de Almeida, a local noble and procurator of the royal treasury in the *vila* of São Paulo, acted in a similar fashion. In 1707, he requested the Overseas Council to prevent Bento Amaral da Silva (who was also a member of the Amaral Gurgel family) from occupying the

⁵³ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 12, doc. 2419–2423, Rio de Janeiro, December 15, 1700. Inquiry to the Overseas Council, regarding the tobacco contract acquired by Salvador Viana da Rocha; AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 14, doc. 2894, Rio de Janeiro, March 16, 1705. Certificate regarding the quantity of powdered gold sent by the *escrivão* Salvador Viana da Rocha; Adriana Romeiro, *Paulistas e emboabas no coração das Minas: ideias, práticas e imaginário político no século XVIII* (Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG, 2008): 135.

⁵⁴ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 12, doc. 2968, Rio de Janeiro, August 8, 1706. Letter from Garcia Rodrigues Paes to Count Alvor.

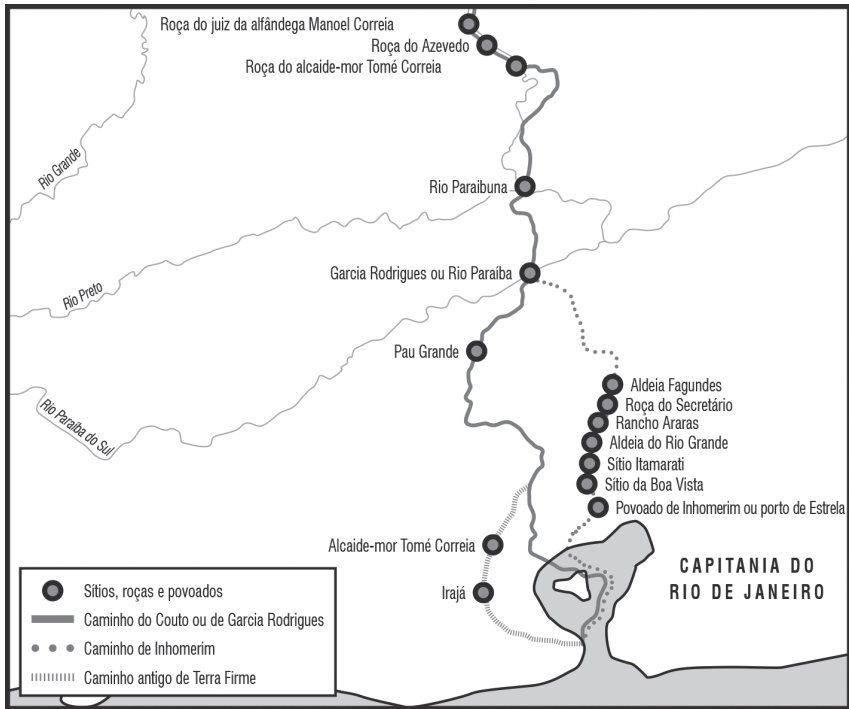
position of *ouvidor-geral* in that captaincy in the absence of the official who held that position. The alleged reason was that Silva was an escaped murderer who had been responsible, in 1687, for the death of Pedro de Souza Correia, *provedor* of the royal treasury (royal treasurer) in Rio de Janeiro and *fidalgo da casa real*.⁵⁵ It is worth digressing briefly about this crime and its significance in the context of the political conflicts of the time.

Pedro de Souza Correia was a member of the Correia Vasques family, which also belonged to the *nobreza da terra*. However, the Correia Vasques' had other resources in the social hierarchy of the Portuguese monarchy. In 1707, Manoel Correia Vasques, who was a cousin of the murdered *provedor* on both his mother's side, held the position of judge in the customs office (*juiz da alfândega*) of Rio de Janeiro. That port city was, therefore, under his jurisdiction. Tomé Correia Vasques other cousin of the late, who held the position of *alcaide* (constable), and was also the son-in-law of the *guarda-mor* of Minas, Garcia Rodrigues. As we have seen, Garcia Rodrigues supervised the construction of the Caminho Novo in Minas. This road passed through the lands belonging to Garcia Correia, and those belonging to his son-in-law Correia Vasques in Rio de Janeiro.

In short, the armed conflicts between these *nobreza da terra* families involved at least three captaincies and were caused by economic and political reasons.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ AHU, CU – Códice 232, sheet 249. Lisbon, February 18, 1709. The procurator of the Crown and treasurer of the *vila* of São Paulo renders account to the *ouvidor* of those captaincies leaving for Rio de Janeiro.

⁵⁶ AHU, RJ, CA, cx. 15, doc. 2988, Rio de Janeiro, September 14, 1706. Letter of Governor Dom Fernando Martins Mascarenhas Lencastre, in which he refers to the great number of crimes that were committed in the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro.



Map 1: Taken from João Fragoso, *A sociedade perfeita: as origens da desigualdade social no Brasil* (São Paulo: Contexto, 2024): 235 (based on Rafael Straforini, “Tramas que brilham: sistema de circulação e produção do território brasileiro no século XVIII” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2007): 262.

Map 1 provides an insight into the reasons for these struggles. They concerned control of one of the branches of the Caminho Novo leading to the gold mines, but were also increasingly linked of the control of routes between the port of Rio de Janeiro and the regional markets, which were being created at the time. One of these was the trade in slaves who had been transported across the Atlantic Ocean. Therefore the conflicts between different political networks and family groups served as a backdrop to the operation of the economies of Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. To make the picture complete, we must bear in mind that

the Amaral Gurgel family was acquiring more land and establishing connections through marriage with traders from the city of Rio de Janeiro.⁵⁷

In 1709, the Marquis of Cascaes requested a license from the crown to sell the *donataria* of São Vicente. Francisco do Amaral Gurgel made the highest offer, outbidding the Paulista José Gomes de Moraes. The matter was taken to the Overseas Council. The members of the Court considered it best to follow the instructions of the royal attorney and incorporate the *donataria* into the crown's patrimony. The minister wrote:

It was convenient that the crown did not have donataries in Brazil, especially with the abusive clauses contained in all the old donations of captaincies in that state, which were detrimental to good government and the common good of the kingdom.⁵⁸

Among the clauses defined as detrimental to the interests of the crown was the exercise of justice by the *donatário* over the region's residents. In other words, the *donataria* provided the *nobreza da terra* with what they most wanted: political power over the inhabitants of the region and, thus, the chance of becoming its political head.

In 1714, the relentless Francisco Amaral struck again with his requests for privileges from the crown. This time he offered the donation of three hundred thousand cruzados for the construction of a fortress at Ilha das Cobras. The amount was considered very high (“*de grossíssima fazenda*”) by Francisco de Távora, governor of Rio de Janeiro. In exchange for the donation, he requested the following privileges:

⁵⁷ AN, 1ON, 68, p. 79v, July 24, 1697. Deed of complete and general discharge given by captain Inácio da Silveira Vilalobos to sergeant major Félix Correia de Castro. AN, 2ON, 14, no page, February 28, 1711. Deed of sale of a sugarcane mill by Domingas do Amaral da Silva. AN, 1ON, 62, p. 42, May 2, 1698. Deed of dowry by Domingas de Amaral.

⁵⁸ “era conveniente à Coroa não ter Donatários no Brasil, principalmente com as exorbitantes clausulas que continham todas as doações antigas das capitánias daquele estado, que eram prejudicialíssimas ao bom governo, e bem comum do reino” AHU, RJ, CA cx. 15, doc. 3226–3227, Lisbon, August 12, 1709. Inquiry to the Overseas Council about the purchase of Santos and São Paulo, which were to be incorporated by the Crown.

1) a commendation from the Order of Christ worth 250\$000, 2) the title of *fidalgo*, which with higher honors than those usually granted, 3) the position of *alcaide-mor* of the *vila* of Santos, 4) a license to collect his debts as if they belonged to the Royal Treasury, 5) the post of governor of the said fortress of the Ilha das Cobras, with a salary of a *mestre de campo*, 6) to be given twenty-six Indians to work in the said fortress for daily wages.⁵⁹

Noteworthy points are the insistence on obtaining power over people through the position of *alcaide-mor*, and on entering the aristocracy of the kingdom by means of the title of *fidalgo*. It should also be noted that the background to all requests was the social and judicial hierarchy of the ancien régime. These phenomena alone demonstrate the petitioner's sense of belonging to the monarchy and, moreover, his recognition of the power of the king's justice. Much to his chagrin, his request was once again denied.

In short, Francisco do Amaral was no different than other local elite members we encountered previously, such as Garcia Rodrigues or Felix Gusmão, all of who were committed to the values of the ancien régime. In fact, what we have just written about the requests for *donatarias* illustrates the projects of the *nobreza da terra* to expand their family lands. However, the difference between the *donatarias* and other means of acquiring land, such as by *sesmaria* or purchase, was that the former enabled their holder to exert political power with the recognition of the king.

⁵⁹ “1) uma comenda de 250\$000 da ordem de Christo; 2) foro de fidalgo, que há de ser maior do que normalmente se dá;3) alcaide-mor da Vila de Santos; 4) alvará para cobrar suas dívidas como se foram da fazenda real;5) ser governador da dita fortaleza da ilha das cobras, com soldo de mestre de campo; 6) lhe dar 26 índios para trabalhar na dita fortaleza à jornal.” AHU, RJ, CA cx. 16, doc. 3317–3335, Lisbon, February 6, 1714. Inquiry to the Overseas Council, regarding the information that the governor of Rio de Janeiro sent about the offer made by Captain Francisco do Amaral Gurgel.

3. The Market of Rio de Janeiro: The Tensions between Commercial Networks and the Agrarian System

During the eighteenth century, at least five commercial markets stood out in the Portuguese South Atlantic: Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, São Luís and Belém. All of them functioned as regional centers for the redistribution of goods. Trade routes led from these markets to the remote interiors of the central west, the Amazon and the far south. For the three first-named markets, at least, we can gain a rough idea of the traffic in their ports. Even though they are problematic sources, the crown's contracts for collecting customs taxes allow us to estimate the traffic and dynamics of Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, and Recife. In the year 1724, Salvador da Bahia was both the political capital of Brazil and its main commercial center. In that year, the customs taxes collected at Salvador corresponded to 101:000\$000 (i.e. 101 *contos de réis*). Pernambuco (including Paraíba) and Rio de Janeiro together totaled 130:000\$000 (130 *contos de réis*).⁶⁰

In the years that followed, the economy of Portuguese America continued to grow, but the importance of the regional markets changed. In 1738, Rio de Janeiro by far exceeded the markets of Bahia and Recife in terms of trade volume. The customs taxes collected at the port of Rio amounted to 160:000\$000 (160 *contos de réis*), higher than the amounts from Bahia and in Pernambuco combined. At that time, both the output and the population of Rio de Janeiro were probably lower than those of the Bay of Bahia, where more than thirty thousand souls lived and sugar-

⁶⁰ AHU, CU, Códice 1279. List of all contracts and incomes in the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro. On the development of food production in Rio de Janeiro for domestic supply and the transatlantic slave trade see Antônio Carlos Jucá de Sampaio, *Na encruzilhada do Império: hierarquias sociais e conjunturas do econômicas no Rio de Janeiro, c. 1650 – c. 1750* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 2003): 125–33. The *real*, plural: *réis*, was the currency of Portuguese Brazil. It was not subdivided into smaller units, so that a system arose to express large amounts in *réis*. One thousand *réis* were called *mil-réis*. When written in figures, the currency sign (\$) functioned as a decimal point: 1\$000. One thousand *mil-réis* corresponded to one *conto de réis*, and when written in figures, a colon was inserted after the millions digit: 1:000\$000 [N.T].

cane, foodstuffs and tobacco, among other products, were grown. In fact, the increase in Rio de Janeiro's customs revenue reflected the role of that city as a redistribution hub for slaves and merchandise brought in from the Atlantic to various regional markets in the south-central region of Portuguese America, particularly Minas Gerais. Between 1727 and 1748, the contracts for roads from Rio, Bahia and Pernambuco to Minas Gerais increased tremendously, due to the growth in the volume of goods and slaves that passed along these roads. For example, the money raised from contracts based on the Caminho Novo and the Caminho Velho, both of which passed through Rio de Janeiro, went from 154:000\$000 (154 *contos de réis*) to 336:000\$000 (338 *contos de réis*). In the captaincies of the North, the movement with Minas increased from 126:000\$000 (126 *contos de réis*) to 227:000\$000 (227 *contos de réis*).⁶¹

As mentioned above, the distribution of mining claims (*datas*) multiplied business for the old *nobreza da terra* from Rio de Janeiro. Firstly, we should note that the roads between the port of Rio de Janeiro and Minas, and the caravans of trade goods and slaves that traveled on them, passed through the lands of those elites, under the watchful eyes of their archers and armed slaves.

During the governorship of Ayres Saldanha de Albuquerque (1719–1725), *Sargento-Mor* Bernardo Soares Proença and his wife's relatives – a branch of the Azeredo Coutinho family – offered their services to complete the Caminho Novo to Minas. To do so, they requested many *sesmarias* in the region. In the 1730s, *Capitão-Mor* Francisco Gomes Ribeiro, from the vila of Iguaçu, an area through which the road passed, warned the Overseas Council that in the face of the greed of the “Princes of Europe” and of “burglars,” the safety of Minas could only be achieved by two means: prohibiting the multiplication of roads, and using weapons.⁶²

⁶¹ Antônio Carlos Jucá de Sampaio, *Na encruzilhada do Império: hierarquias sociais e conjunturas do econômicas no Rio de Janeiro, c. 1650–c. 1750* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 2003): 149.

⁶² AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 45, doc. 10641–10658, Request of Antônio de Proença Coutinho about the Inhomirim road; Request of *Capitão-Mor* Francisco Gomes Ribeiro.

The *nobreza da terra* from Rio de Janeiro not only controlled the lands through which the roads passed, but also took advantage of the growth of commercial activity in the captaincy. The constant arrival of people from the kingdom, of slaves, and merchandise led to an increase in consumption in the city, and, thus, to an increase in the tax collection, such as tithes and taxes on whaling. Until 1727, the collection of these taxes required a guarantee in properties or domains (i.e. sugar mills, land, agricultural farms, urban buildings) located in Rio de Janeiro. Therefore, those who acquired the contracts for tax collection had to have members of the city's aristocracy, who possessed such goods, as guarantors.

The two kinds of businesses mentioned above help us comprehend why estimates of the number of sugarcane mills went from 140 in the period between 1681 and 1700 to 142 in the period between 1701 and 1720. The discovery of gold did not, therefore, lead to a reduction in the number of sugarcane mills in the environs of the city, as one would expect. On the contrary, during the first two decades of the eighteenth century, some elite families saw their wealth increase. That was possible because of the transformation of gold into sugarcane mills.

In the late 1720s, however, the tax situation shifted radically, when responsibility for managing the tax collection contracts was transferred from the municipal council to the royal treasury. The contracts were no longer auctioned in the American markets, but in the kingdom. This led to a greater economic centrality of the crown and of Portuguese businessmen in the American trade. In principle, traders from Portugal no longer needed to associate with merchants or plantation owners to gain access to contracts in Portuguese America.

Notwithstanding those changes, it was not easy to access to those businesses from the kingdom. In addition to being separated by the ocean, Portuguese merchants were trying to enter markets located in unknown territory and dominated by groups of members of the local elites. In these distant lands, they depended on their agents, who knew the tricks and social networks of the American markets. It is worth recalling that the ability to actually collect the taxes on the contracts acquired depended on the acquiescence of the local elites. In other words, the

men from the kingdom faced complex situations that were, at times, not favorable.

In this scenario, the trade in slaves multiplied, and so did production and domestic trade connected to the internal supply of Portuguese America. In 1701, around 7,200 captives arrived at the ports of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. In 1710, the number of captives who arrived at both ports totaled 10,000 souls. At that time, Salvador was the main slave market in Brazil and its principal commercial partner in Africa was the Gold Coast (*Costa da Mina*).

This situation, however, changed throughout the eighteenth century, especially in the 1730s. Rio de Janeiro slowly became the main slave market of the South Atlantic. Between the periods 1718 and 1737, the average number of enslaved persons who entered the port of Rio de Janeiro doubled from 4,200 to 8,400 a year. During the same period, the slave trade to Salvador fell from an annual average of 6,000 captives in 1718 to 2,900 in 1737. In the 1730s, Congo-Angola replaced the Gold Coast (*Costa da Mina*) as a slave-supplying region: 109,300 captives were exported from Congo-Angola, and 56,800 from the *Costa da Mina* in that decade. The increase in the slave trade was accompanied by an increase in slave prices. In Salvador, the price of a slave was \$60 in 1690; in 1710, it reached \$100 and, in 1723, \$200.⁶³

In the early eighteenth century, the Angolan slave trade was controlled by what came to be known as the “policy of the governors” of Angola. These governors oversaw an immense slave supply network that stretched from Pernambuco to Rio Janeiro.⁶⁴ One of the reasons for this dominance was that their ships (and the vessels their allied merchants) did not need licenses to leave Luanda, a privilege shared by religious institutions and lay brotherhoods. All others needed such licenses. Even though the ships connected to the governors were few in number compared to those of all the other merchants, they had the advantage of

⁶³ Alexandre V. Ribeiro, “O Tráfico Atlântico de escravos e a praça mercantil de Salvador, c. 1680 – c. 1830” (master’s thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2005): 23, 28 and 127.

⁶⁴ IHGB, Record of commercial letters written in Luanda in the years from 1697 to 1701, Lata 72, Pasta 8.

being able to leave without delay. During the government of Luís César de Menezes in Angola, it is estimated that he was responsible for about 20% of the total slave trade in Luanda. The rise of the governors of Angola took place mostly during the seventeenth century and lasted until 1720, when the crown prohibited the governors' involvement in commerce.⁶⁵

The privileges granted by the crown to Catholic instituições and to the governors reaffirm the pre-capitalist nature of the trade in human beings, for it was closer to the laws of God and of politics than to the laws of supply and demand. Until 1720, the governors exerted a strong influence over the transatlantic slave trade from Luanda. In their commercial and political networks there were financiers and merchants of the kingdom, governors of different captaincies in Brazil, merchants, royal officials and rural elites from different Brazilian regional markets.

The same is true for the network of Luís César de Menezes, governor and *capitão-mor* of Angola between 1697 and 1701, mentioned above. His commercial network also made use of family connections and friendships. His circle included his relative, João de Lencastre, the governor-general of Brazil; as well as the governor of Rio de Janeiro, the well-known Artur de Sá Meneses; and the *provedor* of the royal treasury in that city, Luís Lopes Pegado. In Lisbon, he had the support of the Count of Ericeira and his friend, the Viscount of Asseca. In Rio, families of the *nobreza da terra* were present through the Brotherhood of the Blessed Sacrament of Candelaria. His commercial network also included traders such as Captain Gonçalo Ferreira Souto in Rio, and João Lopes Fiuza in Bahia. His network extended to Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and also Pernambuco. The wide range of his businesses is impressive. He dealt in slaves, sugar, sweets, sugarcane spirits, English products and fabrics from India.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Cf. Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil during the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁶⁶ IHGB, Register of commercial letters written in Luanda, in the years 1697 to 1701, Lata 72, Pasta 8: Artur Sá de Meneses, Pasta 8, October 4, 1698, sheet 21; Luís Lopes Pegado, August 15, 1700, sheet 69, back side; Conde de Ericeira May 20, 1699, sheet 39, verso; Visconde de Asseca, December 20, 1698, sheet 26; letter about the Brotherhood of the Blessed Sacrament of Candelaria (*Confraria do Santíssimo do Sacramento*

In Rio de Janeiro, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, his network had the support of Luís Lopes Pegado, *provedor* of the royal treasury in Rio de Janeiro. He was responsible for overseeing the entrance of slaves into the port and their dispatch to south-central Portuguese America. Before Luís Lopes Pegado was appointed to the position, Luís César de Menezes had probably had the support of his predecessor: Francisco de Brito Meirelles, father-in-law of Captain Inácio da Silveira Vilasboas, a member of the *nobreza da terra* and an ally of the Correia Vasques group, who had family ties with the Viscount of Asseca.

In 1697, the *provedor* and the *escrivão* of the royal treasury were accused of irregularities over the city's whaling contract. The case was taken to Lisbon, and Francisco de Brito was replaced by Luís Lopes Pegado. Thus, one presumed ally of Luís Cesar de Menezes left and was replaced by another. If this hypothesis is correct, the governor must have made use of his influence with the king. As for the accused, we believe they were acquitted.

As mentioned above, it is likely that Luís César de Menezes' network of allies in Rio de Janeiro included the Correia Vasques family, headed by Martim Correia Vasques, one of the two *mestres de campo* of the regular troops. Vasques was related to Artur de Sá Meneses, governor of Rio de Janeiro (1699–1702), to whom he probably gave a sugarcane mill estate with slaves.⁶⁷ Sá de Menezes was one of Luís Cesar de Menezes' correspondents and commissioned Garcia Rodrigues Paes to construct the Caminho Novo.

Mention has already been made of the importance of the Correia Vasques family, and we must recall that the Caminho Novo to Minas passed through one of the estates belonging to the family, namely the Maxabomba sugarcane mill estate. Thus, at least in theory, the intervention of the Atlantic traders' network in the slave supply for Minas

da Candelária), August 15, 1700, sheet 69, verso; about sugarcane spirits January 3, 1698, sheet 5; about trade goods; trade goods from England, from India and the participation of Pernambuco, January 30, 1698, sheet 8, verso, e 9; about sweets and sugar, September 15, 1799, sheet 48 e 48, verso.

⁶⁷ Denise Vieira Demétrio, "Senhores governadores: Artur de Sá e Menezes e Martim Correia Vasques. Rio de Janeiro, c. 1697–c. 1702" (PhD diss., Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2014): 258.

Gerais was complete. As we have seen, the opening of the road was commissioned by Artur de Sá to *Capitão-Mor* Garcia Rodrigues. Finally, a hypothesis that deserves further investigation concerns the links between the transatlantic slave trade headed by Luís Cesar de Menezes and the Caminho Novo to Minas, which passed through lands owned by the families of the *nobreza da terra* in the capitania of Rio de Janeiro, including the Correia Vasques family.

3.1 The Transatlantic Slave Trade to Portuguese America in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century

As we have seen, the first decades of the eighteenth century witnessed an increase in the price of African slaves. This phenomenon was caused by the booming demand for labor in Brazil, but also by the turbulent panorama of the Atlantic market at the time. The situation was marked by the steep and continuous growth of the slave plantations in the English and French West Indies. In the seventeenth century, the total number of slaves taken to the West Indies overall was 349,162. In the eighteenth century, this figure rose to 2,808,456.⁶⁸ Therefore, from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, the number of slaves taken to the islands increased more than ninefold.

Meanwhile, the War of the Spanish Succession took place (1701–1714), along with confrontations in America that resulted from it. In addition, we must take into account the regional conflicts that happened on the Gold Coast since the end of the seventeenth century: the expansionist policy of the Kingdom of Dahomey against neighboring societies. The expansion of Dahomey culminated with the invasion and conquest of the port of Ouidah, which severely destabilized the European trade in slaves in the area.⁶⁹ In Angola, epidemics were occurring at this time.

⁶⁸ Manolo Florentino, “Aspectos do tráfico negreiro na África Ocidental (c. 1500–c. 1800),” in *O Brasil Colonial*, vol. 1, ed. João Fragoso and Fátima Gouvêa (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2014): 234 and 236.

⁶⁹ Alexandre V. Ribeiro, “O Tráfico Atlântico de escravos e a praça mercantil de Salvador, c. 1680–c. 1830” (master’s thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2005): 62–63

The combination of these factors contributed to an increase in the demand for captives on the Gold Coast. The problem, as far as the Portuguese were concerned, was that the Gold Coast, especially the Fortress of São Jorge, was under Dutch control. So, as well as having to deal with high slave prices, the Portuguese also had to face the risk of having their ships detained. On the Portuguese side, tensions rose due to competition between Portuguese merchants and residents in Brazil; in Bahia, there were rising tensions over control of the trade in slaves, which was becoming increasingly lucrative. Vasco Fernandes César de Menezes, viceroy of Brazil (1720–1735) and son the Luís César de Menezes, sided with the traders from Bahia. In 1721, the viceroy authorized the construction of the Fortress of Ouidah in the Gold Coast under the auspices of the *baianos*, which was later abandoned.

Given the impasse between Portugal and the Dutch, Lisbon temporarily banned the slave trade with the Gold Coast on May 25, 1731. Unsurprisingly, there was illegal trading in the region in the 1730s, followed by investigations into the smuggling of gold and slaves. The accusations were made by the governor of Rio de Janeiro, Luis Vahia Monteiro (1725–1732) and confirmed by his successor, Gomes Freire (1733–1763), the future Marquis of Bobadela. The charges reported the existence of a “trading society,” whose operative range was so vast it spread from Mato Grosso, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais to Angola, encompassing the Island of São Tomé and the Gold Coast. Among its members were the governor of Angola, Rodrigo César de Menezes, and the *ouvidor* (auditor) of the Island of São Tomé, João Coelho de Souza. In America, it included the Rio de Janeiro merchant Inácio de Almeida Jordão and his brother-in-law, Captain Paulo de Carvalho da Silva. In Portugal, the partnership involved at least João Mendes Jordão, a merchant in Lisbon who was Inácio’s brother. Its operations consisted largely in exchanging gold from Minas Gerais for slaves from the Gold Coast, which involved transactions with the Dutch. In a letter to the governor of Pernambuco dated March 6, 1735, Gomes Freire stated that forty thousand cruzados in gold were sent to the Dutch in one of these transactions. He also mentioned the participation of the English and the French in this

illicit trade. In another communication, the future Marquis of Bobadela stated that the scope of the trade in slaves extended as far as Benguela.⁷⁰

We are therefore definitely looking at a pluricontinental trade network, similar to the one headed by Luís César de Menezes, the governor of Angola (1697–1701). In both cases, different ancien régime agents mobilized social and political resources, including high-ranking Portuguese aristocrats who occupied leading positions in the monarchy’s administration, royal officials, important merchants from the kingdom, traders and members of the oldest families among the *nobreza da terra*. The hypothesis that there may be a continuity between the operation of the 1690s and the “society of 1735” may not be an exaggeration. If that hypothesis is proved correct, we would have a “trading society” that existed for more than thirty years.

The logistics of the trade routes of the South Atlantic markets at that time become clearer when we look at the practices adopted by merchants such as the Almeida Jordãos. The operation of the pre-capitalist market implied the imbrication of commerce and political practices which not infrequently were transformed into marriages between members of the trading community and the *nobreza da terra*. The pre-capitalist features are completed by the involvement of officials related to the royal treasury.

In 1709, Francisco de Almeida Jordão, father of Inácio and João de Almeida Jordão, died on his farm in Inhaúma, a parish in Rio de Janeiro. This royal merchant had made his fortune from loans to members of the *nobreza da terra*, from the resale of sugarcane mills in public auctions, and from royal and municipal contracts.

In 1692, the Almeida Jordão family and the Viscount of Asseca had disputes over the control of the municipal warehouse, which had been in the hands of the latter since the 1630s. However, in 1707 the two families made peace. At the time, the merchant’s eldest son, João Mendes de Almeida, defended the above-mentioned Manoel Correia Vasques, a

⁷⁰ AN – Correspondência dos Governadores e Vice-Reis, Códice 84, vol. 5, Cartas de Gomes Freire: Carta ao Governador de Pernambuco, March 6, 1735, 163 (verso)–169; Letter to the governor of Angola [Rodrigo César de Menezes], January 25, 1735, p. 148 (verso).

relative of the Assecas, in the city courts. Four years later, one of João de Almeida's cousins, Catarina Antunes, got married in the Viscount's chapel, which proves the good state of affairs between the two families.

By the end of the 1720s, the pacts between the Almeida Jordão, Soares de Andrade and Correia Vasques families were beginning to bear fruit. The first-named family was associated with some of the great tax contractors of the time, Pedro Dauvegner and Francisco Luís Sayão. In 1728, these men acquired the contracts for the "entry of slaves into Minas Gerais." Their procurators in Rio de Janeiro were Inácio de Almeida Jordão and João Martins de Brito. The company, therefore, had direct access to the supply of labor for the gold mines.

Before we proceed, it is important to emphasize the key role played by the procurators and agents of Portuguese merchants in the American markets. Procurators had better information about the American market than their employers in Lisbon. As we stated earlier, they frequented the social circles of the *nobreza da terra* and knew the inner workings of the local market. We should remember that the *nobreza da terra* was involved in commerce through their control of municipal councils and, furthermore, dominated the regions through which commercial flows passed. This advantage becomes even greater if we consider that fleet trips from Portugal often occurred regardless of the situation in the American market. Moreover, the procurators and agents did not need to invest large sums of their own capital in the business; much of the risk was taken by the merchants from the kingdom.⁷¹ The possibility of the active involvement by American agents in the mercantile accumulation of the large European trading companies should, at the very least, encourage us to reconsider the idea of Portuguese America as a mere creature of European mercantile capital.

In 1728, João Mendes de Almeida and Francisco Sayão acquired the contract for collecting the customs duty on the fleet (*dízima da alfândega em frotas*) in Rio de Janeiro; the guarantor was Vasco Lourenço

⁷¹ Cf. William Michael Donovan, "Commercial Enterprise and Luso-Brazilian Society During the Brazilian Gold Rush: The Mercantile House of Francisco Pinheiro and the Lisbon to Brazil Trade, 1695–1750" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1990).

Velloso.⁷² The acquisition of the contracts in the 1720s by Almeida Jordão and his allies from the kingdom took place under the watchful eye of Manoel Correia Vasques, the judge of the customs office, and amid disputes among the bidders, i.e interested parties. The judge knew the former customs office tithe contractors, José Ramos da Silva and José Rodrigues, and had had disputes with them in the periods 1721–23 and 1724–26.⁷³ For instance, his disagreements with one of the overseers of José Ramos da Silva reached the Overseas Council in 1724.⁷⁴ He also did not sympathize with another major Portuguese merchant called Jerônimo Lobo Guimarães, who acquired the contracts for the guard ship (1724–26; a tax levied to finance a vessel to patrol the Brazilian littoral), for supplying slaves into Minas and for the import duties on slaves from the Gold Coast and Cape Verde (1725–1727).⁷⁵ All three men had a long tradition of acquiring large overseas contracts, which Pedro Dauvegner and Francisco Luís Sayão therefore interrupted. That is why we assume that we are dealing with rival overseas networks. In the course of those disputes Manoel Correia Vasques, a member of the *nobreza da terra*, played a decisive role.

In this situation, the judge of the customs office insisted that the guarantors for those merchants must be in Rio de Janeiro and not in Lisbon. The merchants, in turn, complained to Lisbon about the difficulties imposed by the customs judge. They pointed out that the contracts did not require American guarantors, and that the judge knew this.

This situation again highlights the need for reconsidering the logic of relations between periphery and center in the European world-economy. These relations did not amount to a simple subordination of the so-called peripheral American economies to the wishes of Europe. They were much more complex, as they could be the result of clashes between

⁷² Cf. AHU, CU, RJ, Ca, cx 26, doc. 5882–5887, Request by Francisco de Luiz Sayão, acquirer of the [contract] of the customs office tithe of Rio de Janeiro. Year 1728.

⁷³ AHU, CU, RJ, Ca, cx. 24, doc. 5377, 04.02.1726. Request by José Rodrigues; AHU, CU, Códice 1279, a list of all contracts and incomes in the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro.

⁷⁴ AHU, CU, RJ, AV, cx. 14, doc. 1554, 15.09.1724. Letter from the judge of the customs office of Rio de Janeiro, Manoel Correia Vasques.

⁷⁵ Cf. AHU, CU, Códice 1279. List of all contracts and incomes in the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro.

mercantile and political networks made up of agents from both the center and the periphery of that economy.

In short, there are signs that the Rio de Janeiro market had become a real battleground between rival overseas commercial networks. At the same time, the picture observed at the time helps visualize the political engineering and firepower of the illicit “trading society” denounced by Gomes Freire in 1735.

In 1730, the governor of Rio de Janeiro, Luis Vahia Monterio, reported to the Overseas Council that the brothers João and Inácio Jordão de Almeida were involved in gold smuggling, and ordered the arrest of both men. The following year, the procurator of the royal treasury and the Overseas Council issued opinions censuring the governor. The Council believed that the governor’s attitude would entirely ruin trade and, consequently, the royal treasury.

The trade network probably had strong allies in the royal palace in Lisbon. In March 1735, Gomes Freire, Vahia Monteiro’s successor and, like him, faced with gold smuggling, wrote that he was investigating powerful men and was afraid about the future in case he was transferred to São Paulo, which he considered to be “the saddest place in the world.” Meanwhile, something must have happened. The Gomes Freire’s complaints were accepted by the Overseas Council. In May 1735, Inácio Almeida Jordão was arrested, his assets seized and his business activities between Brazil and the Gold Coast suspended. This change in the outcome of events deserves further investigation. It is likely that other pluricontinental networks with access to the crown had blocked the network of Almeida Jordão.

We can get an idea of the mood in the city by reading João Francisco Muzzi’s correspondence to his his employer, Francisco Pinheiro, an important merchant in Lisbon. For Muzzi, the arrests made by Vahia Monteiro created a general atmosphere of fear and chaos in the city’s commerce.⁷⁶ In fact, relations between the governor Vahia Monteiro and the Correia Vasques and Asseca families had not been very good

⁷⁶ Luís Lisanti Filho, *Negócios Coloniais*, vol. 3 (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Fazenda, 1973): 378 and 479–80.

since 1729. In that year, Custódio Barcelos Machado, a member of the *nobreza da terra*, was arrested for by an “ally of Martim Correia de Sá e Benevides, with whom the governor is annoyed.”⁷⁷

The actions of Vahia Monteiro and other governors, in turn, were facilitated by disputes between different groups among the *nobreza da terra*. Governors Vahia Monteiro and Aires Saldanha had the help of officers of the *ordenanças*, such as João de Abreu Pereira, in case of the gold smuggling carried out by Inácio de Almeida Jordão. It is worth noting here that the Almeida Jordão family was allied with the Correia Vasques group. The latter were long-standing enemies of the Azeredo Coutinho, who counted many officers among their number, such as João de Abreu Pereira. Therefore, we repeat, the governors must have used the disputes between the Correia Vasques’ and the Azeredo Coutinho in their actions against the Almeida Jordão family.

For instance, at that time, the Azeredo Coutinho and the Correia Vasques families were fighting over control of the road to Minas. Bernardo Soares Proença, a colonel of the *auxiliares* (the citizen militia), was among those involved in the disputes on the Azeredo Coutinho side. He had become colonel in 1733, during the tensions over the accusations made by the captaincy’s governors against Almeida Jordão and others.

In 1738, Proença was succeeded by Antônio Dias Delgado, a *mestre de campo dos auxiliares*⁷⁸ and a knight of the Order of Christ, whose wife was a member of the Azeredo Coutinho family. Delgado was suggested for the position together with three others, and the nomination was accepted by the Overseas Council and by the king. Antônio Dias Delgado also married to Luisa Grinalda, a cousin of João de Abreu Pereira, who was mentioned before as one of those responsible for repressing

⁷⁷ AHU, RJ, Ca., cx. 27, doc. 6152, Chart (*Regimento*) of Caetano Barcellos Machado. [Before] December 15, 1729.

⁷⁸ The *Auxiliares* and *Ordenanças* troops were military contingents of residents who acted, respectively, in the *Vilas* and *Capitanias*. These troops were not paid by the royal treasury, despite their commanders being appointed by the king. Once chosen by the Crown, these officers received a document (Carta Patente) that gave them political authority over the local population. Thus, such command posts were coveted by the *Nobreza da Terra* (Gentry), as they signified the Crown’s recognition of its authority over the region. Commander-in-chief of the auxiliaries was the *Coronel* (colonel) of the *Auxiliares* later renamed *Mestre de Campo dos Auxiliares*

the “society of 1735.”⁷⁹ Thus, the actions of Vahia Monteiro and Gomes Freire were backed by one of the most important groups of the *nobreza da terra*, who were opponents of Correia Vasques.

As can be seen from the plot above, the clashes between the transatlantic trade networks and the disagreements between merchants and governors took place before a background marked by differences between groups of the *nobreza da terra*. After all, Rio de Janeiro and the other captaincies were more than secondary political stages, they were societies in their own right, whose various groupings were far from being mere supporting actors. From this point of view, the position of colonel of the *ordenanças* and later of *mestre de campo dos auxiliares* played key roles. In the absence of the state, the holders of these offices personified authority over the residents of numerous parishes. It was their responsibility to keep the people peaceful and quiet. The men who occupied these posts belonged to families of the *nobreza da terra* who had been in charge of the population for generations.

For this reason, it made sense for the posts to remain in the hands of one family. For example, from the end of the seventeenth to the middle of the eighteenth centuries, the position of colonel of the *ordenanças* (reserve troops) in São Gonçalo practically passed from father to son (or son-in-law): Baltazar de Abreu Cardozo, João de Abreu Pereira, and Jorge de Lemos Paradis. All had close ties to the Azeredo Coutinho family. It is also understandable why the *mestres de campo dos auxiliares* and/or their sons would ask the crown for the title of a *fidalgo da casa real* and/or membership in a military order as payment for their services to the monarchy. It was only fair – according to the principles of the time – that they should join the aristocracy of the kingdom.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ AHU-CU, RJ, Ca., cx. 41, doc. 9802–9803, April 21, 1738. Inquiry to the Overseas Council about who to appoint to the position of *mestre de campo* of one of the *terços de infantaria auxiliar*.

⁸⁰ Cf. AHU-CU, RJ, AV., cx. 154, doc. 11709, before November, 8, 1756. Request of Belchior Dias Delgado de Carvalho.

3.2 Local Societies in Portuguese America and the World Economy: The Dynamics of the Agrarian System of the *nobreza da terra* and the Transatlantic Slave Trade (Rio de Janeiro, 1700–1750)

We have already mentioned that the thousands of African slaves, once they had disembarked at the port of Rio de Janeiro, traveled long distances overland to the gold mines and to areas dedicated to domestic supply in south-central Portuguese America. These roads ran along the bottom of Guanabara Bay through the rural parishes of Jacutinga (now part of the city of Nova Iguaçu), Magé and São Gonçalo. These parishes were in the hands of the *nobreza da terra* of Rio de Janeiro. As we have seen, these elites played a fundamental role in the slave trade. It is therefore necessary to inquire about the agrarian system through which these roads passed.

First, it is important to emphasize that the agrarian system was characterized by slavery and land concentration, and based on a set of customary norms for access to land (land distribution and use). Next, we will reassess some of the ideas presented at the beginning of this text about the political organization of the municipalities and the *nobreza da terra*.

At the beginning of this study, we suggested that the rural parishes were the basis of the political authority exerted by the *nobreza da terra* over the municipalities. These elite families were descended from the conquerors of the territory, i.e. those who had waged war on behalf of the crown and had defeated the feared Tamoios (members of the Tupí people). As a reward for these services the crown granted them privileges, which included lands and effective domination of the indigenous population. In addition, Lisbon made those families responsible for the organization of the *república* in the locality, that is, the organization of the institutions (town council and royal offices) necessary for setting up a municipality in the region.

At the end of the sixteenth century, Rio de Janeiro was still a small, sparsely populated town. In the 1580s, the town was home to 150 households, or around 600 people and many enslaved indigenous people or

“slaves from the land.” There were two *aldeamentos* (mission villages) in the region supervised by clergy, called São Lourenço and São Barnabé, each with around three thousand Christian indigenous people.⁸¹ The low demographic density of the region until the end of the eighteenth century affected the constitution and the existence of the agrarian system of the *nobreza da terra*. At the same time, the strategic location of Rio de Janeiro in the South Atlantic, between the River Plate region (with the silver mines of Potosi) and Angola, quickly made it a commercial market connected to the transatlantic slave trade.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the local *nobreza da terra*, like that of Bahia and Pernambuco, settled around the indigenous villages set up by the crown.⁸² These villages provided them with access to archers for their defense and labor for their fields. This was the origin of some of the rural parishes through which, in the eighteenth century, the above-mentioned roads and rivers to south-central Portuguese America would pass.

At the same time, the conquerors established alliances between themselves through marriage. This practice allowed, in some cases, control over the local crown offices (*ofícios da coroa*).⁸³ The creation of the Correia Vasques or Correia Alvarenga families resulted from this practice, or, more precisely, from the marriage of Maria de Alvarenga Mariz and Captain Manoel Correia in around 1615. The bride was a granddaughter of Captain Antônio de Mariz, one of the first men to hold the royal office of *juiz de órfãos*⁸⁴ in the town, and the groom was a brother of Salvador Correia de Sá (1569–1572), governor of the captaincy of Rio

⁸¹ Fernão Cardim, *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* (Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia, Editora da USP, 1980): 170

⁸² Cf. Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida, *Metamorfoses Indígenas. Identidade e Cultura nas aldeias coloniais do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 2003); Elisa F. Garcia, “Trocias, guerras e alianças na formação da sociedade colonial,” in *O Brasil Colonial*, vol. 1, ed. João Fragoso and Fátima Gouvêa (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2014): 317–18.

⁸³ A crown office was a privilege (*mercê*) granted by the crown to a vassal for the services rendered to the monarchy. The person granted the office could exercise it for three years (in which case it was called a *serventia*) or hold it for life and bequeath it to an heir. [Added by translator in collaboration with the author].

⁸⁴ Judge of orphans (*Juiz dos Órfãos*) was a crown office responsible for overseeing the inheritance of orphans. For example, part of the orphans’ assets were converted into

de Janeiro; both were related to the governor-general of Brazil, Mem de Sá (1558–1572).

The marriage practices of the early conquering families also involved marriages between neighbors from the same parish. In this way peace was maintained among the rural elites in the district and, with it, the domination of the *nobreza da terra* over the slaves and the peasants in the parish. That was the experience, for instance, of the Mariz and the Azevedo Coutinho families.

To the residents of the parishes, the elites appeared as those who were in charge of local government, i.e. of making everyday life possible. In their eyes, the exercise of justice, social welfare and repression were responsibilities of the landowners. For a member of *nobreza da terra*, in turn, control over their parishioners guaranteed a seat on the municipal council. We must emphasize again the absence of a state in the seventeenth century. In Portugal and in other parts of rural Europe, the local power of the aristocracy prevailed. The absence of a central power was felt even more strongly in the overseas.

Among neighboring rural elites that engineering of matrimonies generated estates that I will call “kinship lands” (*terras da parentela*), that is, a *continuum* of lands formed by kinship ties and, consequently, by land tenure. The judicial power over this territory was, to varying degrees, in the hands of members of the same kinship group. “Kinship lands,” therefore, testify to the appearance of a customary system of access to land, which was transmitted between successive generations of the *nobreza da terra*.

In Portuguese America, inheritance was generally distributed equally among heirs. However, a sugarcane mill estate was rarely split up among the descendants. The entire property usually went to one sole heir, be it the foreign son-in-law (whether he was a noble from the kingdom or not) or the brother.

It is estimated that there were 130 sugarcane mill estates in Rio de Janeiro at the end of the seventeenth century. Based on this data, we

currency and deposited in a safe whose responsibility was the judge’s responsibility. In practice, this allowed this judge to control part of the village’s social wealth.

were able to track sixty-eight cases of inheritance of different sugarcane mill estates, i.e. more than half that number. In only seven cases out of those sixty-eight was the inheritance split up. In all other cases the estate went to one single heir, whether through a transfer made by his or her parents or parents-in-law (by means of a dowry, donation, sale, will etc.) or through purchases made to the other heirs. In many cases the purchases were fictitious and the heirs who sold their shares remained on the buyers' lands. Land access was organized according to customary rural rights, which were often hidden between the lines of public deeds. Such agreements, of course, had their fissures and the successors could contest them.

In 1650, the widow Barbara Pinta sold her late husband's sugarcane mill estate in Guaxandiba to her son-in-law – who was also her brother – João Castilho Pinto. In the deed, the buyer committed himself to respecting the rights of the other heirs.⁸⁵

There are, however, more complex situations, such as the one experienced in 1757 by Carlos Soares Teles de Andrade. After the division of his father's assets, he inherited a field of sugarcane and eleven slaves on his father's sugarcane mill estate named Taquara, while the estate went to his brother Francisco Teles Barreto.⁸⁶ Carlos Soares lived on the Taquara sugarcane mill estate for the rest of his life.

The complexity of these practices, fixed by their repetition over time, can also be illustrated by the case of Inês Moreira da Costa. In her will dated May 19, 1732, she declared that she had an inheritance left by her parents worth 126\$000 in the estate of Engenho Novo de N. Senhora da Piedade, which, at the time, belonged to José de Andrade Soutomaior. In other words, the sugarcane mill estate no longer belonged to the family of the testatrix. However, Inês was still the owner of part of the estate, because it formed a part of the inheritance left her by her parents, which was recognized by the new owner of the property.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ AGRJ Cod 42-3-55. 10, Deed of Composition – Barbra Pinta, 1650, p. 172–75; ACRJ, Freguesia da Sé, LOL, Will of Miguel Aires Maldonado, February 10, 1732.

⁸⁶ ACRJ, Freguesia de Jacarepaguá, LOL, Will of Carlos Soares Teles de Andrade, May 1776.

⁸⁷ ACRJ, Freguesia de Irajá, LOL, Will of Inês Moreira da Costa, May 5, 1732.

These customary rural rights provided for different forms of access to land, creating overlapping social relationships. For example, one person might have a legal title to the land, while another had access through possession of arable fields and other added value in the area.

It is worth mentioning that “Kinship land” could result from a rural landscape in which members of the same family, each with their own sugar mill or agricultural farm, were neighbors. Thus, “Kinship land” appeared as the sum of several neighboring rural properties, each belonging to owners with kinship ties between them

The social dynamics of “kinship lands” coincided with the interest of the family group. These dynamics had the following characteristics: a) help in case of difficulties. A member of the family could buy the lands of those who were experiencing financial difficulties and thus maintain the integrity of the “kinship lands”; b) a policy of expanding the area of “kinship land,” especially through the acquisition of neighboring estates. This practice had the goal of providing land for new generations of the family and for clients (free and freed peasant families); c) concern for the political stability of the region in relation to other kinship groups. This intention could be translated into active involvement in the family matters of other regional elites.

Needless to say, such “kinship land” clusters could produce tensions between different elite families. These tensions materialized in disputes over land or over the political domination of inhabitants of a region, or even clashes over the political domination of the municipality.

We now come to one of the core themes of this text: the impact of the conflicts between elite families in that part of the transatlantic slave trade that was carried out over land in Portuguese America. We will focus mainly on the tensions between the Correia Vasques family and its allies, and the Azeredo Coutinho and Gurgel do Amaral families. The first-named family dominated the Couto branch, which originally was the main route of Caminho Novo. The last-named family controlled the other branch, which ran along the river Inhomirim.

3.3 The Impact of the Agrarian System of the *nobreza da terra* on the Operation of the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the Central West of Portuguese America

In 1655, the “kinship lands” of the Correia Vasques comprised the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, and extended to the territory that today belongs to the cities of São João de Meriti, Duque de Caxias, Magé, Guapemirim and Nova Iguaçu. This vast territory corresponded to the western shore of Guanabara Bay, known in the seventeenth century as *Banda do Aquém* (literally, “This Shore”). The eastern bank of the bay, *Banda do Além* (literally, “Over Yonder Shore”), included the territory of the present cities of Niterói, São Gonçalo and Itaboraí; in the seventeenth century it was controlled by families such as the Azeredo Coutinho.

We will focus on the lands of the Correia Vasques in the mid-seventeenth century. They comprised the plantations of Captain Tomé Correia Alvarenga (governor of the captaincy between 1657 and 1659) and the sugarcane mill owned by his sister, Maria Correia, and her husband Pedro de Souza Pereira, who was *provedor* of the royal treasury in the city.⁸⁸ Their son, Pedro de Souza Correia, was the *provedor* who was murdered by the Amaral Gurgel in 1687.⁸⁹ The siblings Tomé and Maria Correia were the children of Captain Manoel Correia and Maria de Alvarenga Mariz, also mentioned above (p. 50).

The “kinship land” of the Correia Vasques’ finally included the farm belonging to a niece, Maria Barboza de Alvarenga, whose husband, Francisco Frazão de Souza, was the brother of the previously mentioned *provedor* of the royal treasury in the city.

Thus, several generations of one kinship group coexisted in the same area: brothers, sons-in-law, cousins etc. Each one of these relatives had their own residence: a small property, farm or sugarcane mill estate. To complete the picture of overlapping of neighborhood connections and family ties, the same “kinship land” also included the arable fields of Manoel Correia’s brothers-in-law: Francisco and Antônio de Alvarenga.

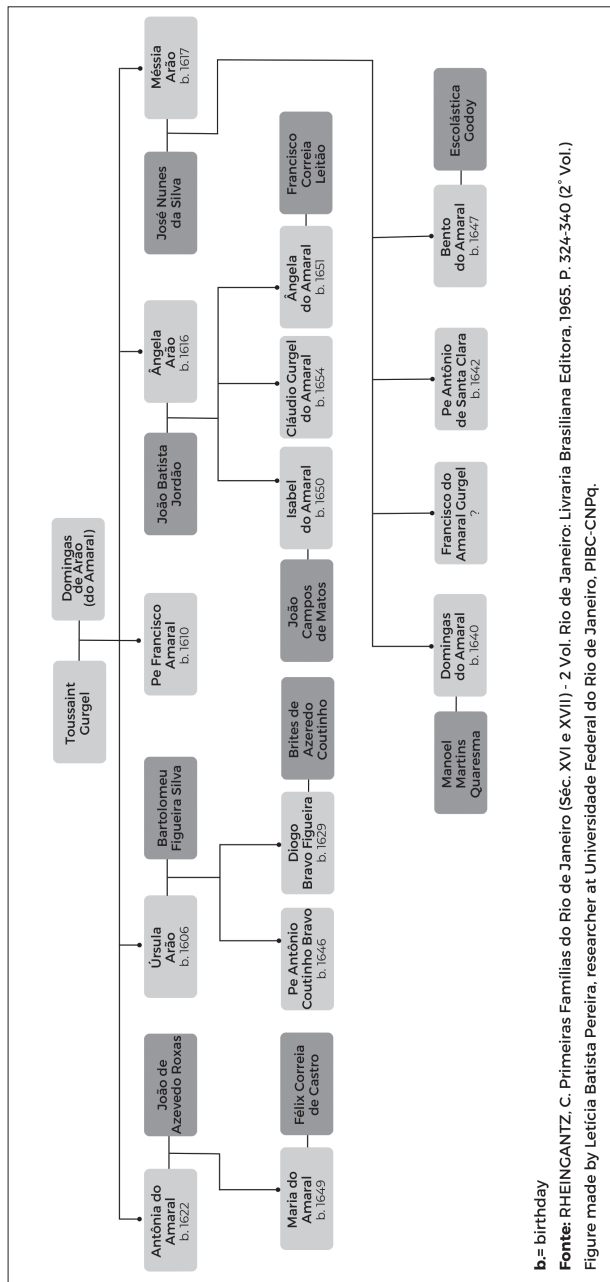
⁸⁸ AN, 1ON, Livro 34, p. 69. Dowry deed issued by Manoel Correia, November 10, 1636.

⁸⁹ The case was discussed above on p. 31.

In that same year, 1655, the “kinship lands” of the Amaral Gurgel were located in the vicinity of the Correia Vasques lands. The Amaral Gurgel lands were home to Francisco do Amaral Gurgel, a priest; his niece Ângela Arão and her husband, João Batista Jordão, who also had sugarcane fields there; other family members may have lived there as well. In a public deed dating from 1662, another nephew of Father Francisco de Amaral appeared on the same lands, one Captain Manoel Jordão da Silva.⁹⁰ In the 1680s and 1690s, public deeds give us a clearer picture of these “kinship lands”: they also contained a sugarcane field of José Nunes da Silva (brother-in-law of Father Amaral Gurgel) and the sugarcane mill of São Bernardo, which belonged to his son-in-law, Colonel Manoel Martins Quaresma (see fig. 1).⁹¹

⁹⁰ AGCRJ, Códice 42-3-56, p. 9. Deed of sale by Capitain João Batista Jordão and his wife, June 29, 1662.

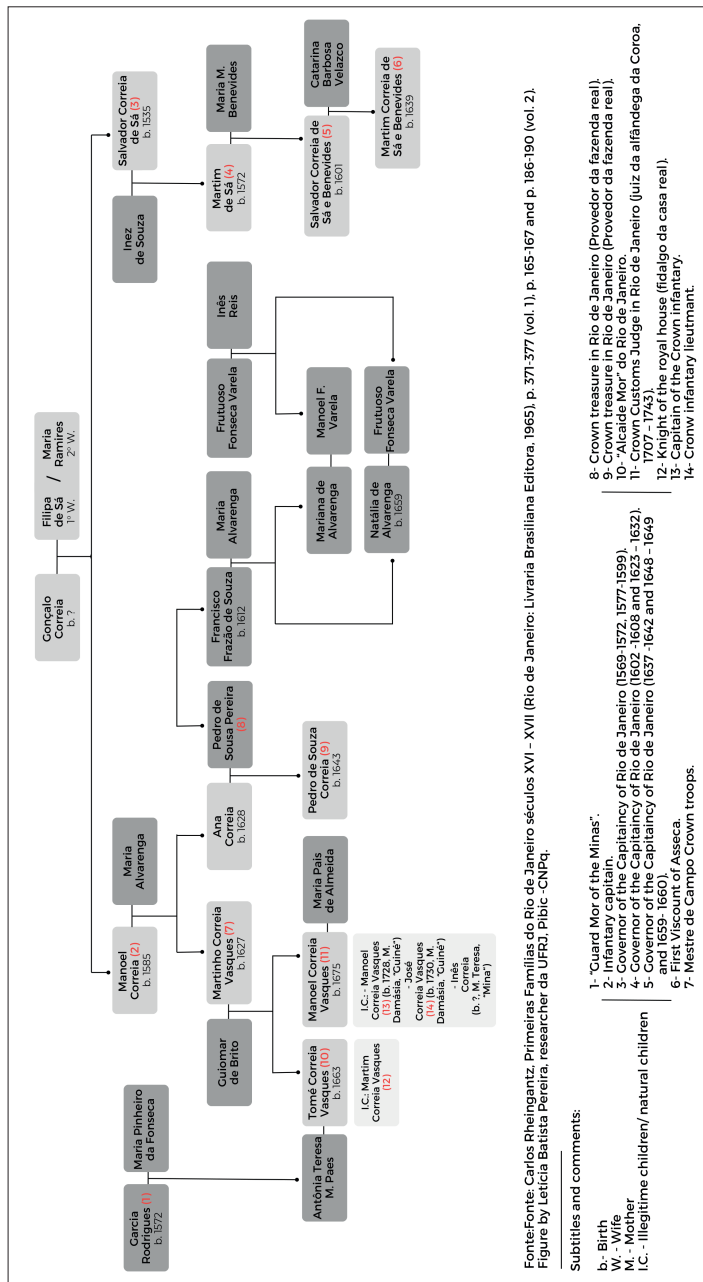
⁹¹ AN, 1ON, Livro 55, p. 125v, Deed of discharge given by the priest Francisco do Amaral Grugel to his brother-in-law José Nunes da Silva, December 10, 1682; AN, 1ON, Livro 62, p. 42v. Dowry deed by Domingas do Amaral, May 2, 1698.



b.= birthday

Fonte: RHEINGANTZ, C. Primeiras Famílias do Rio de Janeiro (Séc. XVI e XVII) - 2 Vol. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Brasileira Editora, 1965, P. 324-340 (2° Vol.)
 Figure made by Letícia Batista Pereira, researcher at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, PIBIC-CNPq.

Fig. 1: The Amaral Gurgel family in the seventeenth century. From Carlos Rheingantz, *Primeiras Famílias do Rio de Janeiro, Séc. XVI e XVII*, 2 vols. (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Brasileira Editora, 1965): vol. 2, 324-40. Figure made by Letícia Batista Pereira, researcher at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, PIBIC-CNPq.



Fonte: Carlos Rheingantz, *Primeiras Famílias do Rio de Janeiro séculos XVI - XVII* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Brasileira Editora, 1965), p. 371-377 (vol. 1), p. 165-167 and p. 186-190 (vol. 2).
 Figure by Letícia Batista Pereira, pesquisador da UFRRJ. PIBIC - CNPq.

Fig. 2: The Correia Vasques family and ally in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From Carlos Rheingantz, *Primeiras Famílias do Rio de Janeiro, Séc. XVI e XVII*, 2 vols. (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Brasileira Editora, 1965): vol. 1, 371–77; vol. 2, 165–67 and 186 – 190, Figure made by Letícia Batista Pereira, researcher at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, PIBIC-CNPq.

In the 1680s, differences arose between the two neighbors, the Correia Vasques and the Amaral Gurgel. Captain Francisco Gurgel do Amaral, son of Colonel Manuel Martins Quaresma, murdered Manoel Fonseca Varela, son of Captain Frutuoso da Fonseca Varela. Manoel was married to one of the daughters of Francisco de Souza Frazão and cousin of Pedro de Souza Correia, who died in 1687 (see fig. 1 and 2). In 1685, Captain Frutuoso da Fonseca Varela and his sons and daughters-in-law issued a pardon deed to the murderer, Francisco do Amaral. The other signatories of this deed were Dona Mariana de Alvarenga and Natália Barbosa de Jesus, respectively, widow and sister-in-law of Manoel Fonseca Varela.⁹²

However, this did not settle matters, and worse was to follow in 1687, with the murder of Pedro de Souza Correia, *provedor* of the Royal Treasury, a crime we have already mentioned several times. Amaral Gurgel and his allies, including João Velho Barreto, were accused of the crime – almost all of them have been alluded to in the first part of this text. The sons of José Nunes da Silva, Bento and Francisco do Amaral, who had probably masterminded the crime, fled to São Paulo. The brother-in-law, Manoel Martins Quaresma, could not escape and was arrested. So were Francisco Correia Leitão, son-in-law of João Batista Leitão, and Manoel da Silva Jordão. Claudio Gurgel do Amaral, the son of João Batista, was not imprisoned because he was a priest and counted on the protection of the episcopal clergy (Deão da Sé).⁹³ At the end of the seventeenth century, the Amaral Gurgels denied all charges and asked the king for compensation.⁹⁴

One way or another, the investigations into the murder emphasized that the motive lay in the disputes over the office of *provedor* of the royal treasury and differences over the awarding of royal contracts. The back-

⁹² AN, 1ON, Deed of forgiveness of Captain Frutuoso da Fonseca Varela and relatives to Francisco Gurgel do Amaral. Year of 1685.

⁹³ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 9, doc 1621–1622, October 29, 1689. Inquiry to the Overseas Council about the investigation conducted by *Desembargador* (Judge) Belchior da Cunha Brochado; AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 9, doc.1670–1678, October 15, 1688. Investigation of the murder of Pedro de Souza Pereira.

⁹⁴ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 11, doc. 2096–2097, January 29, 1698. Inquiry to the Overseas Council regarding the petition by Claudio Gurgel do Amaral, João Velho Barreto, Antônio de Abreu e Lima, João de Campos e Mattos and João Batista do Amaral .

ground to the clashes was therefore the political control of the *republica*. To this must be added land disputes between the two families, as we shall see.

After the death of Pedro de Souza Correia, his sugarcane mill estates of Meriti, Cachoeira and Maxobomba, in Jacutinga, went to *Sargento-Mor* Martim Correia Vasques, in accordance with the dead man's will.⁹⁵ After the discovery of the gold mines in 1697 and the opening of the Caminho Novo to Minas Gerais, the estates of Cachoeira and Maxobomba, belonging to the Correia Vasques', were located along its route. The Caminho Novo was built because Lisbon saw the need to protect the flow of gold to the port of Rio de Janeiro, as mentioned above (p. 24).

It is important, at this point to recall some significant details. Arthur de Sá was related to Martim Correia Vasques, *mestre de campo das tropas regulares*⁹⁶ of the crown and one of the owners of the above-mentioned estates of Cachoeira and Maxobomba.⁹⁷ His son, Tomé Correia Vasques, married Antônia Maria Tereza, the daughter of Garcia Rodrigues, in around 1709.

Thus, key points of the road between Rio de Janeiro and the gold mines became a family business: of the Correia Vasques' and of the Rodrigues Pais'. It is worth noting that these families controlled not only the caravans of trade goods and slaves coming from the Atlantic, but also the distribution of this merchandise throughout the numerous regional markets across south-central Portuguese America. Consequently, these kinship groups had decisive influence on the arteries of the region under analysis. It should suffice to remember that the caravans of slaves and trade goods were supplied and rested in the fields of Cachoeira and

⁹⁵ BN, 40N, Mss. 12, 3, 16, p. 87v, Deed of transaction and friendly composition (*Composição Amigável*) between the priests of São Bento and *Sargento-Mor* Martim Correia Vasques, October 26, 1687.

⁹⁶ *Mestre de Campo das Tropas Regulares* was the Commander in Chief of the Crown's troops, in the captaincy he was only subordinate to the Governor and received pay from the royal treasury; thus the *Mestre de Campo das Tropas Regulares* was different from the *Mestre de Campo das Tropas Auxiliares*; the second position did not receive pay from the royal treasury and its remuneration was basically political.

⁹⁷ Denise Vieira Demétrio, "Senhores governadores: Artur de Sá e Menezes e Martim Correia Vasques. Rio de Janeiro, c. 1697–c. 1702" (PhD diss., Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2014): 258.

Maxobomba (see map 1). The map indicates that in Minas Gerais, along the same road, Garcia Rodrigues owned a farm with one hundred slaves who had the task of receiving and supplying the caravans.⁹⁸

The involvement of the families of the *nobreza da terra* in these businesses grows in proportion if we recollect that Manoel Correia Vasques had been the proprietor of the royal office responsible for the customs office since 1705.

Thus, some of the assumptions that still haunt historiography have been somewhat weakened, at least. One concerns the mechanical identification of the social and rural elites (*nobreza da terra*) of Portuguese America with the owners of sugar cane mills (*senhores de engenho*). The elites we have looked at not only owned sugarcane mills, but were also involved in the production of foodstuffs such as manioc flour, for domestic supply. In a similar fashion, it is possible to challenge the thesis that the economy of Portuguese America was a creature of the world capitalist system. The information provided in this manuscript makes this thesis seem reductionist, to say the least. Moreover, we are beginning to realize the importance of understanding the so-called peripheral economies as parts of societies with their own logics. These local societies could even intervene in the operation of the world-economy centered in Europe in the world capitalist system.

The society under analysis was based on commerce, but also on a slave and an ancien-régime agrarian system. In this system, social dynamics were informed by conflicts between families belonging to the *nobreza da terra*. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the “kinship lands” of the neighboring families we have analyzed and those of other families were fruitful and multiplied, and so did the tensions.

At that time, for example, the sugarcane mill estate of São Bernardo, which belonged to the heirs of Colonel Martins Quaresma, bordered the estates of Inhomucu and of Jesus, Maria, José.⁹⁹ These last two belonged

⁹⁸ Rafael Straforini, “Tramas que brilham: sistema de circulação e produção do território brasileiro no século XVIII” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2007): 266.

⁹⁹ AN, 2ON. Livro 14, page unknown. Sale deed of a sugarcane mill estate by Domingas do Amaral [da Silva], February 28, 1711.

to persons we have not yet introduced: the first to Captain Francisco Vaz Garcez, new husband of the widowed Natalia Barbosa de Jesus and ally of the deceased Pedro de Souza Correia; the second estate was in the hands of the Manoel de Melo family, allies of the Correia Vasques’.

In the seventeenth century, the Correia Vasques and the Amaral Gurgel families began to occupy areas on the eastern shore of Guanabara Bay, the so-called *Banda do Além*. To do so, they took advantage of difficulties that other elite families were experiencing over their “kinship lands.” The Amaral Gurgel family was probably at the forefront of this movement.

Around 1669, the Lobo Pereira family were not having the best moment of their history. This family had been in the city of Rio de Janeiro since at least 1613, the year when Manuel Reis (father-in-law of the elder Sebastião Pereira Lobo) appeared in a deed of guarantee as *juiz dos defuntos e ausentes* (a judge in charge of administering the property of deceased persons).¹⁰⁰ The “kinship lands” of the family were located on the *Banda do Além*, in the modern city of Itaboraí, and, like the lands of other elite families, were composed of adjoining sugarcane mills estates, farms and arable fields. One of the estates was one called Santíssima Trindade; it belonged to captain Diogo Lobo Pereira who owed taxes to the crown. Captain Sebastião Pereira Lobo junior, the debtor’s brother, tried to solve the situation, but without success. In 1669, Santíssima Trindade was put up for sale and acquired by João de Campos de Matos,¹⁰¹ son-in-law of João Batista Jordão and one of the men accused of the murder of Pedro de Souza Correia.

This episode opened up a new chapter in the dynamics of the agrarian system of the *nobreza da terra*. The Amaral Gurgels established themselves on the northeast of Guanabara Bay, making pacts with the Azeredo Coutinho and the Pais Ferreira families. We should remember that this part of the Bay would become strategic for the economy of south-central Portuguese America with the discovery of gold in 1697.

¹⁰⁰ AN, 1ON, Livro 4, p. 182. Deed of guarantee by Simão Dias, June 25, 1613.

¹⁰¹ AN, 1ON, 49, p. 48v. Deed of sale for a sugarcane mill estate by Sebastião Pereira Lobo 01.09.1669; AN, 1ON, 49, p. 48v. Deed of debt and obligation by João de Campos de Matos with Bento da Rocha Gondim. October 9, 1669.

In 1718, the Amaral Gurgels bought land that had been part of the “kinship land” of the Pereira Lobo family.¹⁰² The buyer was Captain André de Souza e Cunha, who had been married to a daughter of Colonel Martins Quaresma and, as a widower, remained in the same kinship group by marrying Maria Antônia do Amaral in 1707. With the acquisition of the land in 1718, the Amaral Gurgels became neighbors of *Sargento-Mor* Bernardo Soares Proença, a member of the Azevedo Coutinho family, and, therefore, in a way, neighbours of the Inhomirim branch of the Caminho Novo to Minas.¹⁰³ With this acquisition, the overland portion of the transatlantic slave trade became a part of the logic of the *nobreza da terra’s* agrarian system, since the Azevedo Coutinho and the Gurgel do Amaral families began to acquire land through which the slaves traveled along the road from the Atlantic.

The opening of the Inhomirim branch of the Caminho Novo competed with the Couto route, which was controlled by the Rodrigues Paes and the Correia Vasques families. This clearly emerges from a complaint to the crown made by Pedro Dias, the son of Garcia Rodrigues, in 1739. In it, he complained about the injustice and the losses the new route caused to his family.¹⁰⁴ The residents of Inhomirim took the opposite view. They pointed out that this route was faster and not as costly as the old one.¹⁰⁵

In 1739, João Rodrigues dos Santos made the accusation that both the Couto and the Inhomirim branches were controlled by the elites of the respective regions, and that this caused great harm to commerce and to the royal treasury. As a solution, he proposed a new contract for shipping along the river Pilar to the Couto branch, and the closing of the

¹⁰² AN, 1ON, 86, p. 130v. Deed of the sale of lands by Roque de Mendonça Brochado, October 25, 1718.

¹⁰³ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 45, doc. 10641–10658, [Before 1739, July 2] Application by Antonio de Proença Coutinho against a part of the petition by João Rodrigues dos Santos that refers to the prohibition of passage along the Inhomirim road.

¹⁰⁴ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 45, doc. 10656, July 2, 1739. Request of Pedro Dias, in which he asks for the prohibition of passage and communication through the road of Inhomirim to Minas.

¹⁰⁵ Rafael Straforini, “Tramas que brilham: sistema de circulação e produção do território brasileiro no século XVIII” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2007): 186–91

Inhomerim branch.¹⁰⁶ Discussion continued until at least 1746. At that time, the Overseas Council even discussed the possibility of transferring travel on both the Couto and the Inhomerim roads to registers controlled by the crown by auctioning the contracts. This proposal implied a significant reduction of the *nobreza da terra*'s control over those routes, i.e. the overland part of the transatlantic slave trade and other trade to south-central Portuguese America. The accusation was vehemently denied by the governor of the captaincy, Gomes Freire, by the *provedor* of the royal treasury, and, above all, by the different factions of the *nobreza da terra*.¹⁰⁷ This dispute gives us a glimpse into the ability of a local social elite to intervene in the dynamics of one of the most important businesses of the world-economy at the time. We will come back to this subject later on.

If we return to the end of the seventeenth century and the Amaral Gurgel family, we find that another family member driving expansion on the eastern shore, the *Banda do Além*, was Diogo Brabo de Figueira. In 1685, he asked the religious brotherhood of the *Santa Casa de Misericórdia* for credit, offering his lands in that part of the city as a guarantee. The lands were in Pendotiba, far from Itaboraí, that is, far from the domains of André de Souza e Cunha.¹⁰⁸ Diogo Brabo was married to Brites do Azeredo Coutinho, which made him, like Bernardo Proença Soares, a connection of the Azeredo Coutinho family.

In 1703, some of the Diogo Bravo and Brites do Azeredo Coutinho couples had settled in the locality with their spouses. In that year, his son-in-law, *Sargento-Mor* Gaspar Brito Soares, also asked the *Santa Casa de Misericórdia* for credit, offering as guarantee a sugarcane field located on the estate of Captain Bento Correia Coutinho. In this credit operation, the guarantor was the priest Antônio Figueira Brabo, one of the sons of the couple mentioned above, and, therefore, a brother-in-law of the

¹⁰⁶ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 45, doc. 10641. Year of 1739. Request of João Rodrigues dos Santos.

¹⁰⁷ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 45, doc. 12724–1729, May 23, 1743. Inquiry to the Overseas Council about the auction of the crossing of the rivers Inhomerim and Couto, in the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro.

¹⁰⁸ BN, 4ON, Mss. 12,3,14, p. 7. June 18, 1685, Deed of money lent on interest to Diogo Brabo Figueira.

debtor (fig. 1). Father Antônio Figueira Brabo mortgaged his sugarcane mill estate São Sebastião, located in Itaipú, a region bordering Pendo-tiba, as collateral. At the time of the loan, the *provedor* of the *Santa Casa de Misericórdia* was Father Claudio Gurgel do Amaral, cousin of the guarantor and mentioned above as one of the murderers of Pedro de Souza Correia in 1687.¹⁰⁹

Antônio Figueira Brabo bought the São Sebastião estate due to the bankruptcy of its former owners, using resources he had acquired with the gold extracted in Minas Gerais. We can now link the business of the Amaral Gurgel family in the mining region, discussed at the beginning of this text, with the logics of the agrarian system in Rio de Janeiro. In other words, it seems that the earnings of the family from trade and gold extraction in Minas Gerais were invested in expanding their lands in the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro. More precisely, part of the profits from gold extraction were converted into expanding the “kinship lands” of that family of the *nobreza da terra* and, therefore, into expanding their political authority over the *república*. One of the results of this decision was the increase in the political rivalries between elite families in the captaincy. I refer specifically to the Correia Vasques family and their allies.

The São Sebastião sugarcane mill estate was located near the territory of the Gagos da Câmara, an old elite family from Itaipu and longtime allies of the Correia Vasques family. Between 1704 and 1710, the quarrels between the Amaral Gurgel and Gago da Câmara families reached a climax. When Father Antônio de Figueira was murdered, his nephews, accompanied by Indian archers, left Minas and set fire to Pedro Gago da Câmara’s sugarcane mill.¹¹⁰ During the following decade, the confrontations reached the eastern shore, where both the Amaral Gurgel and the

¹⁰⁹ AN, ION, 68, p. 166, October 26, 1703. Deed of money lent on interest by the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* to *Sargento-Mor* Gaspar de Brito Soares.

¹¹⁰ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 15, doc. 2988, Rio de Janeiro, September 14, 1706, Letter by Governor D. Fernando Martins Mascarenhas Lencastre, which mentions the great number of crimes that were committed in the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro. AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 15, doc. 3206. March 30, 1709. Inquiry to the Overseas Council about the sale of property held by the *provedor* of the treasury; AHU, CU, RJ, AV, caixa 017, doc. 03523. [Before] October 1716. Request by Colonel Francisco do Amaral Gurgel, holder of the office of *provedor* of the treasury of Rio de Janeiro.

Correia Vasques families lived with their respective allies. João Manuel de Mello of the sugarcane mill estate Jesus, Maria, José was killed, and Father Claudio Amaral Gurgel was accused of being behind the crime.¹¹¹ The latter was then also killed by the rival faction.

In São Gonçalo, part of the lands of the deceased Father Antônio de Figueira Coutinho passed to his relative and neighbor, whom we already know well, Captain Francisco Correia Leitão. The priest's brothers and nephews, who were in financial difficulties, started selling their rural assets in 1706 to Captain Francisco Correia Leitão (see fig. 1). The captain put into practice one of the principles of the *nobreza da terra*: mutual assistance among relatives in order to keep the “kinship lands.”

Captain Francisco developed his sugarcane mill estate, called Nossa Senhora da Conceição e São Francisco, through the purchase of lands that belonged to relatives and to other persons. The estate was located in the area sold by João de Campos Matos in 1696. In 1727, Francisco Correia Matos and his adult children passed on the domains of São Sebastião, including those they had acquired from the Figueira Coutinho family, to the captain's son-in-law, Sebastião Gurgel do Amaral.¹¹² Sebastião's father is someone we know well: Salvador Viana da Rocha, the great merchant from Rio de Janeiro and business partner of the brothers Francisco and Bento do Amaral Gurgel during the first decade of the eighteenth century (see p. 30 and fig. 1). Once again the businesses of mining and transatlantic slave trading converged through the choice of an heir to the Amaral Gurgel “kinship lands” on the *Banda do Além*, the eastern bank. In other words, Captain Francisco Correia Leitão equipped and enlarged his sugarcane mill of Nossa Senhora da Conceição e São Francisco by acquiring the assets of indebted relatives and, at the end of his life, handed them on to a son-in-law who was involved in commerce in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

¹¹¹ AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 16, doc. 3376–3379, November 3, 1714. Inquiry to the Overseas Council about the procedures against Father Claudio Gurgel do Amaral and his son, José Gurgel do Amaral. Investigative process (*Auto da Devassa*) conducted by the *juiz de fora* and the *ouvidor-geral*.

¹¹² AN, 1ON, Livro 93, p. 64, January 1, 1727. Deed of sale of a sugarcane mill estate by Captain Francisco Correia Leitão and his children to Sebastião Gurgel do Amaral.

Thus for the *nobreza da terra* families the combination of gold extraction and commerce (for both domestic supply and Atlantic trade) could lead to the accumulation of large estates (the “kinship lands”) and, through them, to political power over local society. This phenomenon, in turn, intensified the political and military confrontations between those elite families.

In short, the dynamics of the lands belonging to the Correia Vasques and Amaral Gurgel families since the 1660s were directed towards the regions (Iguaçu, Inhomirim and Itaboraí) where land routes between the port of Rio de Janeiro were opened at the beginning of the 18th century. and precious metal mines. With the establishment of Caminho Novo, the Amaral Gurgel increased their land purchases in this region, at the same time as they strengthened their alliances with the Azeredo Coutinho, residents of that area. As a result, conflicts between the Amaral Gurgel and the Correia Vasques and their allies (Gago da Câmara) increased. Thus, the dynamics of the agrarian system in Rio de Janeiro, including rivalries between families of the local elite, precede gold exploration and are a variable that must be considered in the dynamics of the Atlantic slave trade to Minas Gerais and other markets supplied by him.

Another example of interaction between local society, or, more precisely, the agrarian system of the *nobreza da terra*’s section of the world-economy, can be seen in the confrontation between the Correia Vasques and Velho Barreto families. In this case, the dispute was over control of sections of the Couto branch of the Caminho Novo.

After the death of the *alcaide* (constable) Tomé Correia Vasques, his widow Ana Teresa Paes intended to marry José Velho Barreto. He was a member of a family allied to the Amaral Gurgel, and accused of the murder of Pedro de Souza Correia (see above p. 31 and p. 58). In addition, the lands of the Velho Barreto family bordered the Couto branch of the Caminho Novo. This marriage would therefore threaten the Correia Vasques’ control of the route traveled by the caravans of slaves and trade goods from Rio de Janeiro.

Map 1 shows that the late *alcaide* had facilities for supplying and sheltering the caravans at the Cachoeira sugarcane mill estate. The result of the wedding plans was as expected: Manoel Correia Vasques, Tomé’s

brother, invaded José Velho's sugarcane mill estate with his Indian archers and kidnapped the widow Ana Teresa, preventing the marriage (see fig. 2). Thus the assets the late *alcaide* Tomé remained in the hands of the Correia Vasques family. This situation was consolidated in 1724, when the widow sold the couple's sugarcane mill estate to Manoel Correia Vasques' son-in-law.¹¹³

All José Velho Barreto could do was to complain to the Overseas Council and to the king:

The said transgressors [do not respect] the laws of Your Majesty. They are people who occupy the highest positions in that city because they have many friends and relatives on whom most residents of that city depend.¹¹⁴

We already mentioned the accusations against the domination of the rural elites over the Couto and Inhomerim routes (see above p. 62). According to those accusations, the actions of the elites were contrary to the common good, as they charged excessive duties for passage through their domains. At the time, Lisbon discussed transferring those routes to the royal treasury. However, before taking a decision, the Overseas Council requested several opinions and even received a representation from the "population" of Rio de Janeiro in 1743. In this representation "the nobility of the land and the people" wrote a document emphasizing that the accusations were absurd:

There is no powerful person that usurps the rights of Your Majesty regarding this passage, nor rich subjects. The residents on the rivers Inhomerim and Couto use them for the transport of supplies and produce from this city, and they also transport passengers, without charg-

¹¹³ AN, 2ON, Livro 34, p. 197v, September 26, 1724. Deed of the sale of a sugarcane mill by Antônia Teresa Maria Pais to *Doutor* Manoel Correia Vasques.

¹¹⁴ "Os ditos transgressores [não respeitam] as leis de Vmgde. São pessoas que ocupam os lugares de melhor graduação daquela praça como porque tem vários amigos e parentes de que a maior parte dos moradores daquela cidade dependem." AHU, CU, RJ, AV. cx. 5, doc. 489, Post 1683. Request by José Velho Barreto to King Dom Pedro II.

ing for shipment or making any profit, with great advantage for the *mineiros*¹¹⁵ and travelers of those bays. [adapted by author]¹¹⁶

The capacity for unity that the accusations generated in the social and landowning elite stands out in the text of the representation. Among its signatories were different factions of the *nobreza da terra* and members of families from different regions of the captaincy. We draw attention, particularly, to the signature of *mestres de campo das tropas auxiliares*, that is, of elites whose power over the population was recognized by the crown. Such was the case with João Aires Aguirre, commander of the auxiliary troops of parishes on the *Banda de Aquém*, who was respected by the region's elites. Future *mestres de campo* had also signed the document, such as Alberto Gago Marins de Mello, who later would become responsible for public order in Inhomirim; and João Barbosa de Sá Freire (from the Paes Ferreira family). His sugarcane mills were located on the *Banda de Aquém* (in Inhaúma and Jacarepaguá), but he had strong political and family ties along the Couto and Inhomirim roads, that is, on the other side of the city, in Iguaçú and Itaboraá. The Paes Ferreira family, like other families of the *nobreza da terra*, had been making marriage alliances with other kinship groups established in other parts of the city for generations. Through these marriage practices, the family created a broad political network of relatives that surrounded the city.

This information refers to the circulation of brides and grooms belonging to the *nobreza da terra* around different parts of the captaincy as a mechanism for securing their families' control over land and politics in the captaincy. The repetition of this circulation created patterns and formed systems of property transmission between generations. At

¹¹⁵ *Mineiro*: (*noun*) a native or inhabitant of Minas Gerais; (*adj.*) of, relating to, or characteristic of the Minas Gerais. [Added by translator].

¹¹⁶ “Não há pessoa poderosa que usurpe direitos a V.Mag por esta passagem e nem sujeitos ricos. Os moradores dos rios de Inhomirim e Couto os conservam para a condução de seus mantimentos e frutos desta cidade, e levam ainda passageiros sem frete ou lucro algum, com grande interesse dos mineiros e viajantes daqueles recôncavos” [adaptado por JF]. AHU, CU, RJ, CA, cx. 45, doc. 12724–1729, May 23, 1743. Inquiry to the Overseas Council about the auction of fees for passage on the rivers Inhomirim and Couto.

the time, marriage implied a dowry, an advance payment of the bride's inheritance, to her husband and his family. This system was therefore about the circulation of brides, but also of land. Consequently the phenomenon had implications for land rights and for the reproduction mechanisms of the social body and the agrarian system under consideration. Land given as a dowry could include areas that connected the Atlantic to south-central Portuguese America.

When the *nobreza da terra* made the representation of 1743, they experiencing setbacks. In the 1720s, the crown made it more difficult for the *juízo de órfãos* to grant credit (see above note 81 on p. 50). This judge was the royal official who had until then been responsible for financing the market and especially the *nobreza da terra*. During the 1750s, they lost the privilege of discussing the price of sugar in the municipal council (see above p. 14).

In the second half of the eighteenth century, important resident merchants replaced the *nobreza da terra* in the running of the city. Some of the families of the *nobreza da terra* who had connections near the Caminho Novo were more fortunate. This was the case with the descendants of Bernardo Soares Proença. They lived in the vicinity of the Inhomirim road, were able to keep their lands in Itaboraí until at least 1800.

The ancien régime Gomes Ribeiro and Amaral Gurgel families, who resided in the vicinity of the Couto route, chose to diversify their mercantile businesses, thus establishing themselves as food suppliers for the city of Rio de Janeiro and in the transatlantic slave trade. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Count of Resende, governor of Rio de Janeiro, listed Antônio Ribeiro de Avelar and João Pereira de Almeida, great-nephews of Colonel Francisco Gomes Ribeiro, as members of the group of important merchants of Rio de Janeiro who had the capability of controlling the economy south-central Portuguese-America. Next to their names on the list is the name of Colonel Brás Carneiro Leão,¹¹⁷ who at that time was related by marriage to the Guarda Maciels, an elite family close to Alberto Gago Marins de Mello. Colonel Carneiro Leão

¹¹⁷ Cf. João Fragoso, *Homens de Grossa Aventura: acumulação e hierarquia na praça mercantil do Rio de Janeiro, 1790–1830* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 1992): 248–49.

administrator of the family's sugar cane mills. We suspect that the former judge's grandchildren and nephews continued to form families with slaves and to be godparents and freed families (*famílias forras*).¹²⁰ It is, therefore, likely that part of the Correia Vasques family was absorbed by the kinship networks of their slaves and, therefore, left the local elite. In fact, this situation was common among biracial members of noble families. This is another chapter in this story that deserves greater historiographical attention.

4. Conclusion

In our investigation of the actions of families belonging to the local elites of Rio de Janeiro, the *nobreza da terra*, we demonstrated that the transatlantic trade in slaves should not be seen as merely the actions of great European trading companies. The trade in souls was conducted by political and commercial networks that included the participation of persons from different social backgrounds of the time: the high aristocracy of Portugal, important transatlantic merchants, their overseas agents, and members of the *nobreza da terra*. We also emphasized that the so-called peripheral economies cannot be reduced to simple components of the European world-economy

It has also been argued that the agrarian systems in the so-called “colonial” rural societies were actively involved in the Atlantic businesses. In other words, the tensions and the life strategies of social groups in those societies could affect the operation of the Atlantic economy. In fact, our intention was to draw attention to issues that have not been sufficiently explored by international historiography, and to highlight

¹²⁰ For example: ACRJ, *Book of Baptisms of Slaves from the Parish of Santo Antonio de Jacutinga (1790–1800)*: 111, date 18.09.1797, child Beato, mother Francisca, slave of José Vasques e Souza, father unknow, godfather José Correia Vasques; ACRJ, *Book of Baptisms of Free and Freedmen of the Parish of Santo Antonio de Jacutinga (1764–1796)*: 84, date 11.01.1774, child Luís, mother Florencia, father unknow, godfather Martim Correia, son of Sergeant major Martim Correia de Sá, godmother Ines de Jesus Correia by proxy of her son Manoel Correia (see fig. 2).

their importance for a better comprehension of the South Atlantic in the eighteenth century.

This becomes clear when we note the lack of studies on the land routes of the Atlantic slave trade in Portuguese America. Particularly precarious is the investigation into the agrarian systems through which caravans of African slaves passed until they reached their final destination.

Perhaps the study of archives located in South Atlantic societies and the use of methodological suggestions from Italian microhistory could be useful in addressing the gaps we have highlighted.

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Observation:

The documentation of the Overseas Council (CU) in the National Library of Rio de Janeiro can be consulted online via <http://resgate.bn.br/docreader/docmulti.aspx?bib=resgate>. To do so, simply look for the collection (Rio de Janeiro, Coleção Castro Almeida or Rio de Janeiro, Coleção Avulsos) and fill in “pesquisar” with the number of the document you are looking for.

Most of the deeds in the Notary’s Offices can be consulted by clicking on the link in the “Banco de dados da Estrutura Fundiária do recôncavo da Guanabara” (“Land Registry Database for the Recôncavo da Guanabara”) created by Professor Maurício Abreu of UFRJ: <https://mauricioabreu.com.br/escrituras>. Search can be made by name, date and collection.

Most of the wills can be consulted via <https://ident.familysearch.org/>. To do so, pay attention in the city (Rio de Janeiro), parish (in Portuguese, “freguesia”), the year of the collection of the *livro de óbitos* and the name of the testator (“testador”).

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The thousands of African slaves and goods taken to the port of Rio de Janeiro in the eighteenth century had to further travel across vast territories, until they reached the numerous markets and agricultural areas of Portuguese America. These territories in the captaincy of Rio de Janeiro were controlled by colonial rural elites. The African slave trade depended not only on the dynamics of African societies and on general commercial fluctuations, but also on the particular social system of Portuguese Brazil, which was characterised by land concentration and political disputes between factions of the rural elites. In the first decades of the eighteenth century, the port of Rio de Janeiro was situated in the agrarian society of the slave-based Ancien Régime which, in turn, was one of the overseas conquests of the pluricontinental Portuguese monarchy. This essay analyzes the commerce of Rio de Janeiro and the features of the Atlantic trade, highlighting the importance of the dynamics of colonial society for understanding the Atlantic trade, including the slave trade.

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