

# CAPITALISM, SLAVERY AND THE MAKING OF BRAZILIAN SLAVEHOLDING CLASS: A THEORETICAL DEBATE ON WORLD-SYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

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 *Marcelo Rosanova Ferraro*<sup>1,2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the connections between slavery and capitalism in the making of the nineteenth-century Brazilian slaveholding class through a theoretical debate of global history and World System perspective. The expansion of the coffee frontier in Parahyba Valley was connected to the world market after the Industrial Revolution, and there planters emerged unifying national slaveholders interests through state institutions. Therefore, the making of the Brazilian slaveholding class in the 1830s and its crisis after the 1860s was as much a part of the *World System* dynamic as the rise and decline of other ruling classes in the nineteenth century, like the slaveholding classes of Cuba and the southern United States and the bourgeoisies of Europe and the northern United States.

## KEYWORDS

Slavery – Slaveholding Class – Parahyba Valley – Brazilian Empire – Coffee – World System – Second Slavery.

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1 Universidade de São Paulo. São Paulo – São Paulo – Brasil.

2 Bachelor in Law, History and Social Sciences, Master and a PhD Candidate in Social History by the University of São Paulo ([marcelo.rosanova.ferraro@usp.br](mailto:marcelo.rosanova.ferraro@usp.br))



# CAPITALISMO, ESCRAVIDÃO E A FORMAÇÃO DA CLASSE SENHORIAL BRASILEIRA: UM DEBATE TEÓRICO NA PERSPECTIVA DO SISTEMA-MUNDO

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## RESUMO

Esse artigo apresenta um debate teórico em perspectiva global e sistêmica sobre as relações entre escravidão e capitalismo no processo de formação da classe senhorial brasileira no século XIX, tomando-se o Vale do Paraíba como região central nesse processo. Tendo por base o conceito da Segunda Escravidão, a expansão das fazendas de café nessa região é compreendida como parte da expansão do capitalismo após a Revolução Industrial. Portanto, a formação de uma nova classe senhorial na década de 1830 e sua crise a partir da década de 1860 foram parte integrante da dinâmica do Sistema-Mundo oitocentista, tanto quanto outras classes dominantes em formação no mesmo período, como as classes senhoriais de Cuba e do Sul dos Estados Unidos e as burguesias da Europa e do norte dos Estados Unidos.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Escravidão – Vale do Paraíba – Império do Brasil – Café – Sistema-Mundo – Segunda Escravidão.

## Introduction

The nineteenth century has long been defined as *the century of the making of the bourgeoisie and of the bourgeoisie making* in reference to the role of this ruling class in capitalist countries.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, industrial economies based on wage labor were as much part of the capitalist world-economy as regions based on other forms of labor and ruled by other classes—such as the agricultural economies and slaveholders of Brazil and the southern United States. Therefore, despite their uneven global positions, the bourgeoisies and slaveholding classes formed a contradictory unit within the nineteenth-century World System.

This article reinforces the importance of the global history turn of recent decades—but vindicates a Latin American intellectual tradition that interprets peripheral historical experiences through their connections to the expansion of capitalism. Second, it acknowledges the contributions of scholarship focused on enslaved people's agency, while insisting on the economic and political dimensions of slave societies. Finally, by analyzing the making of ruling classes it reveals social struggles and power relations as processes rather than static positions. Hence, the history of the Brazilian slaveholding class can only be understood alongside the history of other nineteenth-century ruling classes, like the slaveholding classes of Cuba and the southern United States as well as the bourgeoisies of Western Europe and the northern United States.<sup>4</sup>

This article is divided into three sections. The first presents an overview of studies about capitalism and slavery. The second analy-

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3 This postulate is reinforced by BECKERT, Sven. *The monied metropolis : New York City and the consolidation of the American bourgeoisie, 1850-1896*. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2001.

4 This article is the result of a research developed in the University of São Paulo along with a fellowship in the *Weatherhead Initiative on Global History*, in Harvard University. It was presented in the Global History Network International Seminar *Scales of Global History*, in Universidade de São Paulo, 2016.

ses the uses of *social classes* as historical categories. The final section offers a critique on previous studies of elites and the ruling classes in Brazil. This section offers a new hypothesis based on the research findings from Parahyba Valley with a comparative and integrative theoretical framework.

### ***Capitalism and Slavery in Historiography: In the Defense of Systemic and Global Analysis***

In recent years, global histories have become a popular trend in universities and the academic book market, creating a significant historiographical turn and attendant problems. Some historians have tried to define global history and even produced manifestos. It has been postulated that “Global South” scholars were pioneers in producing global analysis, since their understanding of local realities was always based in a comparative (and integrative) perspective to the “Global North.” Therefore, Global History in Latin America draws on an intellectual tradition that originated during the 1930s and 1940s. Slavery studies have faced this methodological turn, and scholars have privileged enslaved people’s agency by writing a history from below. However this paper vindicates the systemic perspective of the Brazilian and Latin American intellectual traditions, connecting both slaves’ and planters’ agency to the structural scales of nineteenth-century politics and the world-economy.<sup>5</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century, abolitionists were among the first to write about slavery in the United States and Brazil. In the early twentieth century, a first generation of intellectuals produced the first historiographical analyses of slavery. For decades, the most influential historian of slavery in the United States was Ulrich B. Phillips. Son of a Georgia planter, Phillips sustained the benign and civilizing nature of slavery in the Old South. Through his eyes,

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5 PIMENTA, João Paulo. “Latin America and the Caribbean: Traditions of Global History.” In: Sven Beckert and Dominic Sachsenmaier, eds., *Global History, Globally* (forthcoming)

the plantation was not a business but a traditional way of life wherein the southern white man accomplished his paternal responsibilities to his family and his slaves. Though harshly criticized by black historians such as Carter Woodson, George Washington Williams, and W. E. B. Du Bois, racial discrimination limited their voices and, for decades, Phillips' interpretation remained the main reference for studies on slavery.<sup>6</sup>

In Brazil, a generation of intellectuals from the 1930s created paradigms for future studies of the formation of Brazilian society, the economy, and its political institutions. In the classical essays of Caio Prado Junior and Sergio Buarque de Holanda, slavery was an important issue, but it was Gilberto Freyre's "Casa Grande e Senzala" that created the first paradigm. Freyre was himself a descendent of a traditional landowner family from Pernambuco, but had his academic formation in the United States, where he was influenced by the cultural anthropology of Franz Boas. Freyre described the making of Brazilian society as the encounter of Indigenous, African, and European cultures. However, unlike the previous generation of intellectuals, Freyre refused to embrace whiteness discourse and instead defended African roots as a positive good of Brazilian culture. In his ambiguous view of slavery, violence and affection were two aspects of the relation between the big house and the slave cabins—a microcosm where Brazilian society was born. In this sense, there were important divergences between Phillips and Freyre, yet both focused on cultural and social dimensions of slavery as a way of life rather than an economic system.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Prado Junior's understanding of slavery was based on his assumption of the external orienta-

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6 FONER, Phillip. *History of black Americans: from the emergence of the cotton kingdom to the eve of the Compromise of 1850*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1968. PHILLIPS, Ulrich. *The slave economy of the Old South: selected essays in economic and social history*. Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 1968.

7 PRADO JUNIOR, Caio. *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1994., HOLANDA, Sergio Buarque de. *Raízes do Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995., FREYRE, Gilberto. *Casa Grande e Senzala: Introdução à história da sociedade patriarcal no Brasil*. São Paulo: Global, 2004.

tion of the colonial economy. His interpretation thus diverged from Freyre's, focusing on slave labor rather than the patriarchal family.<sup>8</sup> After the publication of *Capitalism and Slavery* by Eric Williams, a new paradigm was established based on the economic dimension of bondage.<sup>9</sup>

During the 1950s Phillips was harshly criticized and discredited to the point of being defined by Richard Hofstadter as a "latter-day phase of the proslavery argument." It was, however, Kenneth Stampp who postulated the major counterpoint in the American historiography of slavery. He refused most of Phillips' ideas, arguing that slavery was a profitable business sustained on physical violence. In Brazil, Florestan Fernandes and other intellectuals challenged Freyre's paradigm and the racial democracy myth. Under the influence of Prado Junior and Williams, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Emilia Viotti da Costa analyzed slavery in Brazil in relation to capitalism. Meanwhile, Fernando Novais created a new model to explain the Portuguese colonial system as an expression of primitive accumulation phase in South America. These three scholars shared Williams' assumption of a complementary and contradictory relation between slavery and capitalism that led to the Industrial Revolution, and later, to the abolitionist process and the prevalence of wage labor.<sup>10</sup>

The contributions of Williams and Latin American intellectuals influenced Immanuel Wallerstein and his *World System Theory*. According to Wallerstein, slavery and wage labor were described as expressions of the capitalist world-economy through space, within a global

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8 PRADO JUNIOR, Caio. *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1994.

9 WILLIAMS, Eric, *Capitalism and Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994

10 FONER, Phillip. "History of black Americans: from the emergence of the cotton kingdom to the eve of the Compromise of 1850" In *Library Journal*, April 15, 1983, Vol.108, p.821(1), STAMPP, Kenneth. *The peculiar institution: slavery in the ante-bellum South*. New York, Knopf, 1956. FERNANDES, Florestan. *A Revolução Burguesa no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Guanabara, 1987;. COSTA, Emília Viotti da. *Da Senzala à Colônia*. São Paulo: Fundação Editora da UNESP, 1998. NOVAIS, Fernando A. *Portugal e Brasil na crise do Antigo Sistema Colonial (1777- 1808)*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1979

division of labor.<sup>11</sup> A similar perspective was suggested by Florestan Fernandes and in Fernando Henricque Cardoso and Enzo Faletto's *Dependency Theory*. According to them, slavery was not external to the development of the European economy. It was the very expression of capitalism in the periphery. Maria Sylvia de Carvalho e Franco shared this common systemic perspective, but criticized previous authors who presented different systems of labor as an integrated duality, suggesting they rather formed one *contradictory unit*.<sup>12</sup>

In the United States, Stanley Elkins reinforced the critique of Phillips, focusing on the physical and psychological violence of slavery, comparing this institution to Nazi concentration camps. However, in his effort to criticize slavery, he reinforced stereotypes of enslaved people as docile as irresponsible.<sup>13</sup> On a different perspective, Eugene Genovese became the most influential historian of slavery after Phillips. Ironically, the Marxist historian revisited some of his discredited ideas, especially through the concept of paternalism. Yet, instead of reassuring the benign character of slavery, Genovese referred to slaveholders' hegemony and the control of enslaved people in the United States, where slave insurrections were not as common as in the Caribbean. At the same time, the economic dimension of slavery was central to Genovese, but his orthodox theoretical framework led him to see it as a new mode of production that was connected but external to capitalism. This alternative system was ruled by the strongest slaveholding class in the Americas, which resisted the economic

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11 WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel. *The Modern world-system*, vol. I, II, III. Baltimore, Maryland : Project Muse, 2014.

12 FERNANDES, Florestan. *A Revolução Burguesa no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Guanabara, 1987 CASTRO, Antonio Barros de Castro. "A Economia Política, o Capitalismo, e a Escravidão," in: José Roberto do Amaral Lapa (org.), *Modos de Produção e Realidade Brasileira*, Petrópolis, Editora Vozes, 1980, pp. 67- 107; FRANCO, Maria Sylvia Carvalho, "Organização de Trabalho Escravo no Período Colonial," in Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, ed., *Trabalho Escravo, Economia e Sociedade*, (Rio de Janeiro): 143-192, 1978, pp. 143-192; MARQUESE, Rafael; SALLES, Ricardo. *A escravidão no Brasil oitocentista: história e historiografia*. (Manuscript)

13 ELKINS, Stanley. *Slavery; a problem in American institutional and intellectual life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959.

model of the northern United States in a reactionary movement that led to the Civil War.<sup>14</sup> In Brazil, Ciro Flamarion Cardoso and Jacob Gorender criticized their predecessors, analyzing slavery as a different mode of production. Despite some differences, Genovese, Cardoso and Gorender shared a traditional definition of capitalism as a system based on wage labor, treating slavery as a parallel experience.<sup>15</sup>

The rise of the New Economic History affected the historiography of slavery after Stanley L. Engerman and Robert W. Fogel published *Time on the Cross*. Highly technical methodology and neo-classical economic concepts reinforced Stamp's thesis and described the Antebellum South as an efficient capitalist economy. Engerman and Fogel refused Philips' paradigm, but also Williams' and Genovese's assumption that industrial capitalism led to the abolition of slavery. Their findings sustained the arguments of Seymour Drescher and David Eltis, who saw British abolitionism as an *econocide*, since the slave Caribbean remained profitable even after the Industrial Revolution. In Brazil, Robert Slenes followed a similar path, analyzing the demographic and economic aspects of slavery. Their methodology produced major contributions, but it presented slave societies as abstract data, and a new generation of historians refocused their studies of slavery with a focus on the individual experiences of enslaved people, their families, and communities.<sup>16</sup>

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14 GENOVESE, Eugene. *The world the slaveholders made: two essays in interpretation*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969.; *The political economy of slavery: studies in the economy & society of the slave South*. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.

15 TOMICH, Dale. *Through the prism of slavery: labor, capital, and world economy*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004, CARDOSO, Ciro F. S. "O modo de produção escravista colonial na América." In: SANTIAGO, Theo (org.). *América colonial*. Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 1975; GORENDER, Jacob. *O escravismo colonial*. São Paulo: Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2011 (1ª edição 1978). MARQUESE, Rafael; SALLES, Ricard. *A escravidão no Brasil oitocentista: história e historiografia*. (Manuscript)

16 ENGERMAN, Stanley; FOGEL, Robert. *Time on the cross; the economics of American Negro slavery*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1974; DRESCHER, Seymour. *Abolition: a history of slavery and antislavery*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.; ELTIS, David. *Economic growth and the ending of the transatlantic slave trade*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. Slenes, Robert. *The Demography and Economics of Brazilian Slavery, 1850-1888*, PhD Dissertation University of Stanford, 1976.

In the United States, the opposition to Elkins' assumptions of infantilized slaves began with Genovese's "Roll, Jordan Roll" and his description of the world slaves built themselves. During the 1970s and 1980s, the studies of John Blassingame and Herbert Gutman focused on slave families and communities, while George Rawick and Benjamin Botkin published slave biographies and narratives. Other historians developed studies on slave agency and resistance.<sup>17</sup> In Brazil, during the early 1980s, the structuralist studies were still influential. The studies of Luis Felipe de Alencastro and Stuart Schwartz on slavery and the slave trade are important examples, as are the demographic analyses developed by Robert Slenes, Manolo Florentino, and Jose Roberto Goes. Nonetheless, the institutionalization of history courses and the foundation of new public universities stimulated local and micro-history research, and themes such as demography, resistance, and agency soon became hegemonic in the study of slavery. The cultural and concrete experience of enslaved men and women was richly described by the studies of Katia Mattoso, while slave resistance was the topic of study by Joao Jose Reis, and later, Flavio dos Santos Gomes and Maria Helena Machado. Silvia Lara and Hebe Mattos analyzed the concrete relation between masters and slaves. Sidney Chalhoub and Keila Grinberg work on legal sources and enslaved people's agency in courtrooms was yet another original contribution.<sup>18</sup>

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17 THOMPSON, E. P. *A Formação da Classe Operária Inglesa*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1987. FONER, Phillip. "History of black Americans: from the emergence of the cotton kingdom to the eve of the Compromise of 1850" In *Library Journal*, April 15, 1983, Vol.108, p.821(1).

18 ALENCASTRO, Luis Felipe de. *O trato dos viventes. Formação do Brasil no Atlântico sul*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000; SCHWARTZ, Stuart B. *Escravos, roceiros e rebeldes*. Tradução portuguesa. Bauru, SP: Edusc, 2001; SCHWARTZ, Stuart B. *Segredos internos. Engenhos e escravos na sociedade colonial, 1550-1835*. Tradução portuguesa. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1988; FLORENTINO, Manolo; GOES, José Roberto. *A paz das senzalas: famílias escravas e tráfico atlântico, Rio de Janeiro, c. 1790-c. 1850*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1997. FRAGOSO, João e FLORENTINO, Manolo. *O arcaísmo como projeto. Mercado atlântico, sociedade agrária e elite mercantil em uma economia colonial tardia*. Rio de Janeiro, c. 1790-1840. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001 (1ª edição 1993, edição revista). LARA, Silvia Hunold. *Campos da violência. Escravos e senhores na capitania do Rio de Janeiro, 1750- 1808*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz & Terra, 1988; MATTOSO, Kátia de Queirós, *Ser escravo*

Moving in the opposite direction of this historiographical turn, three historians presented a different agenda. During the late 1980s and 1990s, Robin Blackburn published books in describing a *longue duree* history of the New World, historicizing different periods and patterns of European colonization that connected slavery and capitalism. In an article published in 1988, Dale Tomich proposed the concept of “Second Slavery” in reference to the experiences of the United States, Cuba, and Brazil in the nineteenth century, arguing the revitalization of slavery was tied to the expansion and transformation of capitalism after the Industrial Revolution. Influenced by Immanuel Wallerstein and Maria Sylvia Carvalho e Franco, Tomich presented nineteenth-century slavery and industrial capitalism as a *contradictory unit*. Finally, facing the problematic dichotomy of structure and agency, Emilia Viotti da Costa presented an alternative agenda, insisting that historians should combine structural analysis and the action of individuals, as demonstrated in her book about the slave rebellion of Demerara.<sup>19</sup>

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*no Brasil* (1ª ed: 1979; trad.port.). São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1981, e *Bahia, século XIX: uma Província no Império*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1992; REIS, João José. *Rebelião Escrava no Brasil. A história do levante dos Malês em 1835* (Edição revista e ampliada). São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003. MATTOS, Hebe, *Das cores do silêncio: os significados da liberdade no sudeste escravista (Brasil, século XIX)* (2ª ed.) Rio de Janeiro, Nova Fronteira, 1998. CHALHOUB, Sidney, *Visões da Liberdade. Uma história das últimas décadas da escravidão na Corte*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1990. GOMES, Flávio dos Santos. *Histórias de Quilombolas – mocambos e comunidades escravas no Rio de Janeiro – Século XIX*. Rio de Janeiro, Arquivo Nacional, 1995, p. 282. FLORENTINO, Manolo. *Em Costas Negras, uma história do tráfico de escravos entre África e Rio de Janeiro, séculos XVIII e XIX*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997. SLENES, Robert W., *The Demography and Economics of Brazilian Slavery: 1850- 1888*. PhD Dissertation. Stanford: Stanford University, 1976.

19 By the categories of Baroque Slavery (refereed to the Iberian colonization, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), Modern Slavery (as the Caribbean Slavery ruled by the Dutch, the French and the British from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries) and the New American Slavery (in nineteenth century) Blackburn suggested the diversity of slavery in America since the beginning of the colonial period and its relation to the development of capitalism and European economies. Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848*. London: Verso, 1988; *The Making of the New World Slavery From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800*. London: Verso, 1997; *The American Crucible. Slavery, emancipation and human rights*. London: Verso, 2011; COSTA, Emilia Viotti da. “Estrutura versus experiência. Novas tendências da historiografia do movimento operário e das classes trabalhadoras na América Latina: o que se perde e o que se

However, their voices were not hegemonic in the 1990s, when most studies about slave families, communities, and resistance prevailed in Brazil and in the United States. On the other hand, in 2003, Walter Johnson's "On Agency" was read in a different context. Criticizing the way that agency became an abstract category in historiography, he suggested an analysis of individual experiences within social and material constrictions. A decade later, his book "*River of Dark Dreams*" revisited the structural connections between slavery and capitalism in the nineteenth-century Mississippi Valley. After decades without any systematic global approach on capitalism or slavery, the historical experiences of the first decade of the twentieth century brought new demands, especially after the economic crisis of 2008. This era lacked theoretical frameworks to deal with global questions, and this seems to have stimulated new studies and the development of new paradigms.<sup>20</sup> In the historiography of slavery, a new generation of historians has been revisiting premises and conclusions from the 1960s and 1970s, and establishing dialog with Blackburn and Tomich. Brazilian historian Rafael Marquese has revisited the debate on capitalism and slavery, engaging in research with Dale Tomich and exploring the concept of Second Slavery. Similar steps were taken by Edward Baptist and Anthony Kaye in American historiography, taking this concept to a new level in studies of nineteenth century slavery in the South. In addition, recent studies by Seth Rockman and Caitlin Rosenthal have emphasized the profitability and the econo-

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ganha". in: *Boletim Informativo e Bibliográfico de Ciências Sociais (BIB)*. Rio de Janeiro, n.29, p.3-16, 1º sem. 1990; And *Coroas de Glória, Lágrimas de Sangue. A rebelião dos escravos de Demerara de 1823*. (1ª ed: 1994; trad.port.) São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998. TOMICH, Dale., "A Segunda Escravidão" In: *Pelo Prisma da Escravidão. Trabalho, Capital e Economia Mundial* (1ª ed: 2004; trad.port.) São Paulo: Edusp, 2011, 81-97. FRANCO, Maria Sylvia Carvalho, "Organização de Trabalho Escravo no Período Colonial," in Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, ed., *Trabalho Escravo, Economia e Sociedade*, (Rio de Janeiro): 143-192, 1978, pp. 143-192.

20 JOHNSON, Walter "On Agency". In: *Journal of Social History*, 2003, Vol.37(1), pp.113-124; And *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*. Cambridge, Massachusetts : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013. PIKETTY, Thomas. *Capital in the 21st Century*. Cambridge Massachusetts : The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014; CHALHOUB, Sidney. *A força da escravidão. Ilegalidade e costume no Brasil oitocentista*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012.

mic rationality behind the development of the plantation system in the nineteenth century. In his recent scholarship, Sven Beckert has also analyzed the global history of capitalism and the diverse forms of labor involved.<sup>21</sup>

This group of historians have set a new agenda, clearly defined in the publication of *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, edited by Beckert and Rothman. In a similar edited volume, the publication of *Escravidão e capitalismo histórico no século XIX: Cuba, Brasil e Estados Unidos* presented the main results of the *Second Slavery Network*, which connected historians from different countries such as Rafael Marquese, Ricardo Salles, Edward Baptist, Dale Tomich, Robin Blackburn, and Jose Antonio Piqueras.<sup>22</sup> This article is the result of this institutional and theoretical agenda.

### ***Social Classes in Global and Systemic Perspectives***

In 1955 Ernest Labrousse published an article calling the attention of historians to the absence of comparative studies on the bourgeoisie. Labrousse not only identified this as a blind spot in the field, but also the political mistakes of the left. In the following decade, Eugene Genovese published the two classical essays that integrated *The World Slaverholders Made*, in which he suggested that the analysis of modern slave societies should not be based on the concept of race but class. Despite his interest in the Old South, he proposed an agenda of

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21 BECKERT, Sven. "Slavery and Capitalism", In: *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Dec 19, Vol.61(16); Baptist, Edward. *The half has never been told: slavery and the making of American capitalism*. New York: Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2014. KAYE, Anthony. *Joining places: slave neighborhoods in the old South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007; And "The Second Slavery: Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century South and the Atlantic World" In: *The Journal of Southern History*, August 2009, Vol.75(3), pp.627-650. BECKERT, Sven; ROCKMAN, Seth (eds.), *Slavery's Capitalism. A New History of American Economic Development*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

22 Rafael & SALLES, Ricardo (org.), *Escravidão e capitalismo histórico no século XIX. Cuba, Brasil e Estados Unidos*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2016

comparative studies of slave societies and slaveholding classes.<sup>23</sup> Since the 1960s, historians have answered Labrousse's call and studies on national and compared bourgeoisies became an important field of research. The works of Adeline Daumard in France, W. D. Rubinstein and R. J. Morris in Britain, Jurgen Kocka in Germany, Marco Merigi in Italy, and Sven Beckert in the United States, among others, exemplify this approach. In Latin America, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto analyzed capitalist development in dependent countries through the study of social classes. Florestan Fernandes' writings in the 1970s focused one of the most important questions to Latin American intellectuals: the development of capitalism and the bourgeois revolution. The comparative study organized by Enrico Florescano with historians from different nationalities took the effort forward in the 1980s.<sup>24</sup>

Most of the first studies concerning social classes were influenced by Marxism, taking the sphere of production as the definitive criteria of social classification, and the struggle between the bourgeoisie and proletariat as a logical consequence of the contradictions of capital. Others would use Max Weber's categories and analyze the social distribution of power and collective identities such as classes,

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23 LABROUSSE, Ernest. "Voies Nouvelles Vers une Histoire de la Bourgeoisie Occidentale aux XVIIIeme et XIX Siecles" In: *Relazioni del Congresso Internazionale di Scienze Storiche*, 2, *Storia Moderna*. Firenze : G. C. Sansoni, 1955 ; GENOVESE, Eugene. *The world the slaveholders made: two essays in interpretation*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969

24 DAUMARD, Adeline. *Les Bourgeois et la bourgeoisie en France depuis 1815*. Paris : Aubier, 1987; RUBINSTEIN, W. *Wealth and the wealthy in the modern world*. London : Croom Helm, 1980. ; MORRIS, R. J. *Class, sect, and party : the making of the British middle class : Leeds, 1820-1850*. Manchester, UK ; New York : Manchester University Press; New York, NY, USA; USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press, 1990 ; KOCKA, Jurgen (org.). *Bourgeois society in nineteenth-century Europe*. Oxford ; Providence : Berg, 1993 ; BECKERT, Sven. *The monied metropolis : New York City and the consolidation of the American bourgeoisie, 1850-1896*. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2001; BECKERT, Sven and ROSEMBAUM, Julia (orgs.) *The American bourgeoisie : distinction and identity in the nineteenth century*. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; CARDOSO, Fernando Henrique. FALETTO, Enzo. *Dependência e Desenvolvimento na América Latina: Ensaio de Interpretação Sociológica*. 7ª ed. Rio de Janeiro: Editora LTC, 1970; FLORESCANO, Enrico (org.) *Orígenes y desarrollo de la burguesía en América Latina, 1700-1955*. México : Editorial Nueva Imagen, 1985

status and parties. In the 1960s, historians and sociologists suggested other paradigms, especially after the crisis of structural Marxism. Edward Thompson's critiques on Louis Althusser and Niklas Poulantzas proposed a historicized analysis of class formation in which social agents identify their common interests and adversaries in their daily experience. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu both incorporated and criticized Marx's and Weber's ideas, building a theory of social distinction. According to him, economic capital is one among other resources (social, cultural and symbolic) disputed by social agents, and social identities are not structurally defined, but built through alliances and discourses.<sup>25</sup>

The contributions of these authors offered an alternative to sociological and historiographical studies on social classes, including the works of R.J. Morris, Sven Beckert, and Jurgen Kocka on the bourgeoisie. Beckert and Kocka participated in collective research and publications that offered broader perspectives on the making of these ruling classes. Kocka organized an important book in which historians from different countries and fields compared European bourgeoisies, while Sven Beckert, along with Julia Rosenbaum, organized a book about the American bourgeoisie that was deeply influenced by Bourdieu. Both publications drifted apart from structural analysis and considered culture and politics important fields in the making of the bourgeoisies. Enrico Florescano organized a similar book, but the difficulties on defining the Latin American bourgeoisies, as much as their "when" and "how," demonstrates the lack of consensus and the challenging of using external categories in these local experiences.

These historians indeed implemented Labrousse's agenda of comparative studies on the bourgeoisies. Nonetheless, an integrated perspective of these local processes in a global perspective was not part of their effort. It was Immanuel Wallerstein and his World System theory that presented national class struggles as connected in the international arena by the interstate system and the world-eco-

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25 THOMPSON, Edward. *The poverty of theory & other essays*. London : Merlin Press, 1978.

nomy. However, Wallerstein's wide definition of capitalism led him to classify every kind of labor as equally capitalist and every ruling class and ruled class as essentially bourgeois or proletarian. Dale Tomich criticized this excessive simplification and suggested that each local economy and social hierarchy should be understood in its particularities, but as part of a *contradictory unit*.<sup>26</sup>

Revisiting our first paragraph on this topic, Genovese's agenda did not have the same success as that of Labrousse. Nor the theoretical debates on social classes did not inspire comparative studies of slaveholding classes. However, the perspective suggested by Wallerstein and, especially, Tomich, allows a more ambitious agenda. Rather than the formal comparison suggested by Genovese, it is vital to have an integrated analysis that connects the making of slaveholding classes and the bourgeoisies in the nineteenth century.

Brazilian historiography has analyzed the elites and ruling classes from different perspectives, and there are three important divergences in the field. The first one refers to the debate between the aristocracy (status group) and the class paradigms; the second one to the relation between economic elite and the state (or the political elite); the third about the elites' mentality or ethos. All of these debates are sustained with different theoretical and conceptual analyses of society and capitalism. The monarchical form of the empire, the nobility titles offered by the king, and the privileged position of landowners are among the arguments behind the aristocracy paradigm.<sup>27</sup> Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco and Eduardo Silva criticized it suggesting

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26 WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel. *The Modern world-system, vol. I, II, III*. Baltimore, Maryland : Project Muse, 2014; TOMICH, Dale. *Through the prism of slavery : labor, capital, and world economy*. Lanham : Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.

27 sustained by Caio Prado Junior, Alberto Lamego and others. Florestan Fernandes presented a complex analysis, based on the concepts of Marx, Weber and Durkheim, and describing this particular society as the expression of dependent capitalism in the periphery. The incomplete transition from the traditional hierarchies of the Old Regime to the modern class structure created this hybrid society characterized by an aristocratic elite (status group) and a cast of black slaves. PRADO JR., Caio. *História Econômica do Brasil*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1985; LAMEGO, Alberto Ribeiro. *O Homem e a Serra*, Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, Edição da Divisão Cultural, 1963.; FERNANDES,

this elite never fulfilled their aristocratic project, since their social privilege was not only based on criteria of honor and family bonds, but also depended on economic activities. According to Silva, land and men should be seen means of production, and their attempt to present themselves as a distinctive social group was a class strategy. Inspired by Edward Thompson and Antonio Gramsci, Ilmar Mattos produced the most sophisticated interpretation of the class paradigm. According to him, from the 1830s to the 1860s, the building of the state and the making of the slaveholding class were part of one same historical process.<sup>28</sup> Based on a different theoretical paradigm, Joao Fragoso analyzed the merchant's elite in Rio de Janeiro and the Parahyba Valley planters in the nineteenth century. According to him, the late colonial and early national economy was relatively autonomous from the world market dynamic, and the changing pattern of economic investment of these elites was explained by their aristocratic or archaic ethos. Their preference for land and slaves instead of commerce and manufactory demonstrates their seek for social status rather than profit.<sup>29</sup>

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Florestan. *A Revolução Burguesa no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Guanabara, 1987; FRANCO, Maria Sylvia de Carvalho. *Homens Livres na Ordem Escravocrata*, São Paulo: Fundação Editora UNESP, 1997.

28 Rather than classified by their position in the economic field or by the property of means of production, the slaveholder class was defined by the historical experience of social conflicts in which men from different economic activities – such as merchants, planters and politicians – identified their common interests and the adversaries, creating social and political alliances and turning the state institutions into important instrument to produce their national hegemony SILVA, Eduardo. *Barões e escravidão : três gerações de fazendeiros e a crise da estrutura escravista*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ : Nova Fronteira, 1984; MATTOS, Ilmar Rohloff. *O Tempo Saquarema: Formação do Estado Imperial*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2011.

29 FURTADO, Celso. *Formação Econômica do Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2007; CARDOSO, Fernando Henrique, Empresário industrial e desenvolvimento econômico no Brasil. São Paulo, Difusão europeia do livro, 1972; FRAGOSO, João. *Sistemas Agrários em Paraíba do Sul (1850-1920)*, *Um estudo das relações não capitalistas de produção*, dissertação de mestrado em História, Rio de Janeiro, URFJ, 1983; FRAGOSO, Joao. *Comerciantes, fazendeiros de formas de acumulação em uma economia escravista colonial: Rio de Janeiro, 1790-1888*, tese de doutorado em História, Niterói, ICH/UFF, 1990; FRAGOSO, Joao. *Homens de Grossa Ventura: acumulação e hierarquia na praça mercantil do Rio de Janeiro (1790-1830)*. Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 1992; FRAGOSO, João & FLORENTINO, Manolo. *O Arcaísmo como Projeto: Mercado atlântico, sociedade agrária e elite*

This article contributes to this debate incorporating Thompson's and Bourdieu's perspectives on class analysis, and also Tomich's postulate on the prevalence of historical processes over theoretical premises. Therefore, the hypothesis of the making of the Brazilian slaveholding class is not only based on economic aspects, but also on the social conflicts in national and international arenas that led men to realize their common interest and to form alliances and identities. Moreover, this article avoids the extreme poles of the debate on economic elites and the state by historicizing different periods in which specific groups had more or less influence in the political system.

### ***The making of the Brazilian Slaveholding Class in Parahyba Valley***

The study of economic, political, and cultural strategies of the most important families from Parahyba Valley reveal investment patterns that changed over the course of the nineteenth century. By following Fragoso's steps, it is possible to identify three main periods. Between the 1810s and the 1830s, some of the first planter families established themselves in this region, leaving behind their economic origins: commerce in Rio de Janeiro, the transportation system between Minas Gerais and the capital, and various financial activities. Until the 1850s, their investments were mainly in land, crops, and slaves, precisely when the plantations were founded and expanded. Between the 1850s and 1860s, the agricultural means of production remained the basis of their wealth, but it is possible to foresee an in-

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*mercantil em uma economia colonial tardia, Rio de Janeiro, c. 1790-c.1840*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001; Recently, Dale Tomich and Rafael Marquese criticized Fragoso's thesis based on a systemic perspective of capitalism and the mutual influence between the world economy and the Brazilian coffee production. The investment on land and slaves would be the local response to the international demand for commodities after the Revolution of Saint Domingue and the formation of mass consumption markets in Europe and in the North of the United States after the Industrial Revolution MAQUESE, Rafael & TOMICH, Dale. "O Vale do Paraíba escravista e a formação do mercado mundial do café no século XIX". In: Keila Grinberg & Ricardo Salles (org.), *O Brasil Imperial*. Volume II – 1831-1870. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2009.

creasing investment in cultural capital, such as refined mansions and furniture, imported clothes, and international voyages. In the last decades of the Brazilian Empire, during the final crisis of slavery, two patterns were identified. While some families insisted in investing in their plantation estates, others preferred rentier investments. Despite the similarities with Fragoso's findings, these patterns do not support his conclusions. Rather than an Old Regime mentality, their strategies were successful precisely because of their capacity to respond to world market demands, and to enjoy political opportunities created during the making of state institutions. Fragoso's interpretation is based on a teleological perspective of the history of capitalism, in which industrialism overcomes the mercantile phase of accumulation. From this perspective, a modern elite mentality should lead to investments in manufactural goods. Thus the Brazilian ruling class' investment in land, slaves, financial assets, and an aristocratic way of life signifies its archaism. However, a more complex analysis of the history of capitalism—integrating uneven ruling classes as parts of a contradictory unit—leads to a different conclusion.<sup>30</sup>

The families from Parahyba Valley were the most successful economic and political agents of their time. The pioneers of the region moved here from other economic activities and invested in land and slaves precisely when the world market demand for sugar and especially coffee increased. In the 1830s under pressure from Britain and some politicians against the slave trade, and facing the insurgence of African slaves, they identified their common economic interests and formed a political alliance, which changed the empire's political agenda. Calling themselves the "planter class" they became the electoral basis of the Conservative Party, which became the main voice in the defense of slavery. Once in power, they unified regional interests, and a national slaveholding class emerged. The end of the Atlantic slave trade in 1850 did not destroy their economy, since their planta-

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<sup>30</sup> These data were presented in the Masters Dissertation presented by the author in the University of São Paulo in 2017, entitled *A arquitetura da escravidão nas cidades do café, Vassouras, século XIX*.

tions were full of recently purchased slaves and they would still have access to the internal trade in ensuing decades.

Between the 1850s and the 1860s, political stability assured slaveholders' interests, and they intensified their investments in cultural goods. Paris had become the symbolic capital of the nineteenth century, and ruling classes from Europe and the Americas adapted their ways of life to new patterns of consumption and social performance. Planters in Parahyba Valley reproduced the strategies of the royalty and the richest families of Rio de Janeiro as well as the European bourgeoisie. According to Adeline Daumard, W. Rubinstein, R. Morris, Jurgen Kocka and Sven Becker, this aristocratic self-image spread through France, Britain, New York, and Germany during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> Thus, this conversion of economic capital into cultural and symbolic goods was not the symptom of an archaic mentality of Brazilian slaveholding elite. Instead, it was an global strategy of ruling classes.

The 1870s and the 1880s were the final decades of slavery and the monarchy in Brazil. The political and economic crises forced the slaveholders in Parahyba Valley to represent themselves once again as the *planter class*, responsible for national economic growth. Families adopted two economic strategies of investment. Those who maintained their plantations estates had historical reasons to believe their interests would prevail in the Parliament. On the other hand, those who preferred rentier investments were seeking for safer opportunities. Giovanni Arrighi identified this latter strategy as part of a global trend in global capitalism in the last quarter of the nineteenth cen-

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<sup>31</sup>DAUMARD, Adeline. *Les Bourgeois et la bourgeoisie en France depuis 1815*. Paris : Aubier, 1987; RUBINSTEIN, W. *Wealth and the wealthy in the modern world*. London : Croom Helm, 1980.; MORRIS, R. J. *Class, sect, and party : the making of the British middle class : Leeds, 1820-1850*. Manchester, UK ; New York : Manchester University Press; New York, NY, USA; USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press, 1990 ; KOCKA, Jurgen (org.). *Bourgeois society in nineteenth-century Europe*. Oxford ; Providence: Berg, 1993 ; BECKERT, Sven. *The monied metropolis : New York City and the consolidation of the American bourgeoisie, 1850-1896*. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.; BECKERT, Sven and ROSEMBAUM, Julia (orgs.) *The American bourgeoisie : distinction and identity in the nineteenth century*. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

ture, and the recent study of Thomas Piketty has demonstrated this was an international pattern of investment by elites at that time.<sup>32</sup> Once again, the supposed archaism of Brazilian slaveholding class was part of conservative strategy of ruling classes around the world during an international economic crisis. During the political crisis of the 1880s, the rising of the abolitionist movement and the systemic slave resistance weakened the national consensus over slavery, and the alliances that forged the ruling class broke when planters from the province of São Paulo set themselves apart from their fellows of Parahyba Valley. More impressive than the decline of Parahyba Valley planters and the Brazilian slaveholding class was their success over six decades, as one of the powerful Atlantic ruling classes of the nineteenth century.

## Conclusion

After decades of contributions of studies that revealed the agency of enslaved people, recent historiography has revisited the relation between slavery, capitalism, and state institutions. This article is part of this collective effort. It argues for the importance of social stratification analysis, focusing on ruling classes with a global perspective. Slavery was as much part of the capitalist world-economy as industry, and it was politically sustained by liberal institutions under similar conditions to those that allowed the rising of bourgeoisies in France, Britain, and the northern United States. Despite their uneven international power and their different trajectories, the slaveholding classes from Brazil, Cuba, and the southern United States were as successful as the bourgeoisie in their local struggles, their economic competition in the world market, and in the political strategies orienting their state institutions. The Civil War in the United States sealed the destiny of slavery in the western world in the 1860s, but

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32 ARRIGHI, Giovanni. *O longo século XX: dinheiro, poder e as origens de nosso tempo*. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 1996. PIKETTY, Thomas. *Capital in the 21st Century*. Cambridge Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014

the Cuban and Brazilian slaveholding classes proved their political power by maintaining it until the late 1880s. The nineteenth century made both the bourgeoisies and the slaveholding classes just as it was made by them.

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