

"IN THIS TRADE, NO PLACES ARE HELD":

Involvement of Portuguese slave traders in the slave trade between Africa and Brazil (1818-1828)

"Neste tráfico não há lugar reservado": traficantes portugueses no comércio de africanos para o Brasil entre 1818 e 1828

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ABSTRACT

Between 1818 and 1828, the Portuguese *Junta do Comércio* (Board of Trade) gave permissions to ships departing from Lisbon to traffic African slaves to Brazil. These permissions were given due to international treaties signed between the crowns of Portugal and Britain in 1815 and 1817. This article discusses the context in which the slave traders acted, the way they received license to trade, and how the sources produced by *Junta do Comércio* during this period permits identification of the slave traders based in Portuguese harbors.

Keywords: Maritime History; Slave Trade; Slavery.

RESUMO

Entre os anos de 1818 e 1828, a Junta do Comércio portuguesa concedeu permissões para que navios partindo de Lisboa fossem traficar escravos africanos com destino ao Brasil. Essas autorizações foram dadas com base nos tratados firmados entre as coroas de Portugal e da Grã-Bretanha em 1815 e 1817. Este artigo discute o contexto em que esses traficantes agiram, o modo pelo qual essas autorizações foram concedidas e como as fontes existentes na Junta do Comércio no período assinalado possibilitam identificar traficantes baseados em portos lusos.

Palavras-chave: História Marítima; Tráfico de escravos; Escravidão.

Introduction

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the dynamics of Portugal-based slave traders selling slaves in Brazil underwent important changes as a result of the slave trade commitments agreed to by the Portuguese Crown in response to British demands. Agreements signed in 1815 and 1817 (the content of which will be presented in the following sections), as well as the transformation of Brazil from a colony to a kingdom under the United Kingdom of Portugal in 1815, the return of the Portuguese Court to Lisbon in 1821, Brazilian independence in 1822, and Portugal's recognition of the Independent Empire of Brazil in 1825 marked legal and international changes to the slave trade (MALERBA, 2000; RODRIGUES, 1975, 5 v.).

The terms agreed upon regarding the prohibition of slavery north of the Equator in 1815 and 1817 led to commitment on the part of Portuguese authorities to issue passports and authorizations for their slave ships to navigate only in ports located south of the Equator and where Portuguese domain was not questioned. As a result of these changes, the Portuguese bureaucracy sought to comply with the accords made with their British allies and to protect the slave traders already established in Portugal.

This article will focus on a group of these Portuguese slave traders. Analyzing the slave trade as a business and detailing the profiles of those involved in it are not new approaches in history research. Many authors have already made important contributions, particularly in the understanding of "the specific ways in which the slave trade process was carried out, both in Africa and in Brazil" (FLORENTINO, 1997, p. 107). Slave traders' commercial interests in colonial society began to take root in the early eighteenth century, when both trafficking and colonial demand for slaves intensified drastically. At that time, the goods produced in the colonial Americas were highly valued in the trade for African captives, giving an advantage in the slave trade to merchants established on the western side of the Atlantic.

Even so, historical research has sought to understand Lisbon's loss of control over the trafficking of Africans and the dominance of slave traders from Rio de Janeiro in the market, since neither the existence of colonial goods nor factors linked to nature are able to explain how the Brazilian port came to receive 80% of the slaves imported by the country from 1700 to 1850.

According to Florentino, the key to this dominance was credit, or the financing methods that the Rio de Janeiro merchants were able to establish: it is in this system of credit that we find "the roots of the process by which Portuguese slave traders were driven out of the slave trade," particularly between 1790 and 1830 (FLORENTINO, 1997, p. 116). This historian calls attention to the radical archaism of Portuguese production chains in the eighteenth century, which differed "even from the classic patterns that marked the societies of the *Ancien Régime*... with the aristocracy owning half of the land, and their ecclesiastical

peers owning another 30%" (FLORENTINO 1997, 116). The key explanation for Lisbon's loss of control over the slave trade in the Congo and Angola to the slave traders in Rio de Janeiro is the archaism in their mission:

Thus, the values associated with a non-capitalist mentality prevailed...It was through this mechanism that the resources acquired in the commercial sphere were channeled into aristocratic activities, many of which resulted in wasted resources. It can therefore be thought that the Portuguese lag in the eighteenth century was not an anomaly, or the result of Portugal's inability to keep up with European ideas of capitalist manifest destiny; instead, this archaism was a veritable social mission, the viability of which was highly dependent upon the appropriation of colonial revenues (FLORENTINO, 1997, p. 117)

In this debate, Maximiliano Menz (2012) argues that recent decades have produced "a true historical consensus over the idea that the slave trade was controlled by merchants living in Brazil—at least in the eighteenth century." In this analysis, this consensus relies on "fragile quantitative evidence" and encompasses a variety of studies by Brazilian and American historians. More recent works have questioned this consensus, presenting series of data that have revived what Menz referred to as "the widely accepted interpretation of trafficking on the Mina Coast and in Angola" (MENZ, 2012, p. 187-189).

We are therefore faced with a dichotomy in which the arguments to explain Rio de Janeiro's predominance as the slave trade capital in the slave trade and bilateral trade oppose the traditional idea of colonial domination by more modern interests. The latter idea has recently been rekindled by quantitative evidence demonstrating the presence of Portuguese goods and capital in the transatlantic slave trade.

One can argue for a consensus only by ignoring other analytical perspectives present in the research on the history of slave trade between Africa and Brazil. While important, economic theory as an approach does not provide a complete explanation, nor is it the argument in all historical studies. The issue involves questions that the economics-based approach cannot answer. For example, the enslaved Africans would have a different destiny if credit, investments in ship fittings, and the goods used in Atlantic trade had come from South American colonies rather than from Portugal, England, or the United States?

Arguments like Florentino's, in my opinion, are beneficial in that they include African powers, conflicts, and demands into the history of the transatlantic slave trade, a fundamental perspective that is not considered in the purely economics-based studies from recent memory. In a study published years ago, I argued that, if there were anything close to a consensus (which I cautiously referred to as "the broadest trend"), it would have been one over the view of slavery as "a business involving slave traders, slave owners, and governments (those of Portugal and, later, of Brazil)" (RODRIGUES, 2005, p. 24). The inclusion of African events as an essential part of the slave trade phenomenon has effects on our understanding of the phenomenon as a whole; it is also seen within the scope of a new understanding of Atlantic History (LINEBAUGH; REDIKER, 2008; REDIKER, 2011; REIS; GO-

MES; CARVALHO, 2010).

In this article, we will see which demands established in the international accords signed in the early nineteenth century resulted in the provision of passports for slave ships traveling from Portugal to Brazil. We will also consider the way in which diplomacy manifested itself in bureaucratic records, and we will examine the profiles of Portugal-based slavers as described in Portuguese primary sources in order to better understand how the State protected the interests of Portuguese slave traders, the intent of which may have been to maintain dominion over African colonies during the first decades of the nineteenth century.

International Treaties and Affidavits of Justification

Negotiations regarding the slave trade between British and Portuguese envoys began in 1808 and continued over the next few years. They resulted in the Treaty of 1815, the Additional Convention to the treaty from 1817, and its Separate Article of 1817 (RODRIGUES, 2000, p. 97-100).¹ Printed in both English and Portuguese, these documents were relevant for a series of affidavits of justification issued between 1818 and 1828 by the Royal Board of Trade ((known locally as the Junta do Comércio)² in Lisbon to legalize the departure of slave ships from Portuguese ports.

In general terms, the 1815 treaty replaced the treaty that had been signed in Rio de Janeiro on February 19, 1810 to establish cooperation between the British and the Portuguese for the gradual abolition of the slave trade. The new agreement from Vienna called for "an immediate Abolition of the said Traffic upon the Parts of the Coast of Africa which are situated to the Northward of the Line" (CONVENÇÃO..., 1815). Slave trade was still permitted south of the Equator in "the actual Dominions of the Crown of Portugal, or to the Territories which are claimed in the said Treaty of Alliance [of 1810]" (CONVENÇÃO..., 1815). These restrictions were in exchange for England's forgiveness of a loan obtained by the Portuguese in London in 1809.

It is in the Additional Convention of 1817 that we find the bureaucratic regulations providing authorization for Portuguese slave ships to participate in the slave trade south of the Equator. Illicit traffic was defined in the following four ways: (a) on British ships under the British flag or British subjects on a ship under any flag; (b) on Portuguese ships in African ports north of the Equator; (c) that which was carried out by subjects of any other government under Portuguese or British flags; and, finally, (d) on Portuguese ships "bound for any Port not in the Dominions of His Most Faithful Majesty [the King of Portugal]" (CONVENÇÃO..., 1817, p. 3). This convention also defined the territories in which the slave trade was illegal, listing those that the Portuguese Crown controlled in African countries south of the Equator, namely:

the Eastern Coast of Africa, the Territory laying between Cape Delgado and the Bay of Lourenco Marques; and upon the Western Coast, all that which is situated from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Degree of South Latitude... the Territories of Molembo and Cabinda

upon the Eastern Coast of Africa [sic], from the Fifth Degree Twelfth Minute to the Eighth Degree South Latitude (CONVENÇÃO..., 1817, p. 3).

The convention altered the terms for the emission of passports and required the translation of these documents into English in order to enable British oversight without fluency in Portuguese. For many Portuguese, these concessions were a bitter loss, but this period was difficult for the Monarchy overall. It had been exiled to Rio de Janeiro after being invaded by French and Spanish forces in 1808 during the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. The Convention of 1817 also established which members of the Portuguese government were authorized to issue passports: the Minister of Maritime Affairs (in the case of ships embarking from Rio de Janeiro), the governor or the captain general of the other colonial captaincies, and the Secretary of the Navy (in the case of ships departing from Portuguese ports). In a way, these terms required those holding administrative offices to faithfully adhere to the agreement.

Affidavits of justification were a prerequisite to the issuing of these new passports. These affidavits of justification were administered to clarify the reasons why ship owners had to confirm their precise weight in metric tons: in cases of seizure, slavers were tried by bilateral Anglo-Portuguese commissions, and any compensation was issued by the Bilateral Commission of London; however, ship owners could not “claim Compensation for a larger Number of Slaves than that which, according to the existing Laws of Portugal, they were permitted to transport, according to the Rate of Tonnage of the captured Vessel” (CONVENÇÃO..., 1817, p. 13).

Finally, the Separate Article of the Additional Convention of 1815, signed in London on September 11, 1817, declared the intention to completely abolish the slave trade. Though it did not stipulate a precise date, it established a term of fifteen years for the Additional Convention.

As for the ships departing from Brazil after its independence, the consequences (or lack thereof) of these diplomatic agreements are well known. Briefly, the formal recognition of Brazil's independence in 1825 was followed by the Anglo-Brazilian Treaty from November 13, 1826, which called for the end of slave trafficking within three years and which reinstated the terms of the Additional Convention of 1817. Ratified by the English Crown on March 13, 1827, the new accord allowed for the legal continuation of the slave trade until March 13, 1830. Negotiations surrounding this treaty, as well as its formal signing, had profound effects on relations between the Empire of Brazil and British governments over the second quarter of the nineteenth century (BETHELL, 1976; CONRAD, 1985; RODRIGUES, 2000). Reactions were clearly reflected in Brazil's political landscape, and they can be traced in the oftentimes tumultuous debates in the Brazilian House of Representatives and the Senate. Attempts to prohibit the slave trade brought disputes within the Brazilian Legislature between constitutional powers and the developing understanding of the country that was to emerge from the separation from Portugal. Foreign pressure upon the slave trade and the related debates and repercussions can be better evaluated if we consider the two laws

issued in 1831 and 1850 to prohibit the trafficking of Africans to Brazil and the difficulties in effectively enforcing them (RODRIGUES, 2000; PARRON, 2009).

Less is known about the effects and consequences of the agreements signed with Great Britain in early nineteenth century on the slavers established in Portugal. The series of affidavits of justification issued by the Portuguese Board of Trade provide important insight into this topic in that they reveal the legal loopholes and justifications used to protect Portuguese slavers. Through these affidavits, we learn of the slave traders and ships that departed from Portugal to participate in the sale of captives; we are also able to trace their reported routes and question whether these routes were strictly followed. There are proven records of thirty-two ships making forty-seven voyages from Portugal to Africa between 1818 and 1828. Table 1 details the vessels for which ship owners requested passports for slave trading expeditions.

Table 1 – Slave trading ships and expeditions departing from Portugal (1818-1828)

Vessel	Year(s) of Voyage(s)	Vessel	Year(s) of Voyage(s)
Andorinha do Tejo	1822	Lucrecia	1825 and 1826
Astrea	1821 and 1826	Maria	1819, 1823 and 1825
Ativo	1824	Maria Teresa	1828
Boa Viagem	1825	Marquês de Pombal	1822
Bom Caminho	1821	Nova Amazona	1818
Bonfim	1821 and 1823	Orfeu	1825
Carlota	1819	Oriente	1822
Cisne	1820	Paquete Feliz	1825
Conde dos Arcos	1825	Restaurador	1818
Dois Irmãos	1828	São Francisco de Assis	1818 and 1820
Especulador Africano	1827	São José Diligente Vulcano	1823
General Rego	1819, 1823 and 1825	São Nicolau Augusto	1827
General Sampaio	1819, 1821 and 1828	Triunfo da Inveja	1819 and 1821
Gólfinho	1826	Via Láctea	1827
Indústria	1818, 1821 and 1823	Voador	1827
Liberal [O]	1821	Zéfiro	1818 and 1820

Source: Torre do Tombo National Archive (Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo: Caixa 204, Maço 62).

With a quick glance at Table 1, we can deduce that many of these voyages were illicit, despite the fact that they complied with the formalities of the bilateral Anglo-Portuguese accords. In its definition of illicit trafficking, the Convention of 1817 includes ships destined for ports outside of Portuguese dominion. This category included all of the ports of Brazil as of 1822 (or 1825, if we want to be more legalistic). Portuguese authorities knew that allowing the trafficking of slaves to Brazil was illegal after Brazilian independence and the recognition thereof. Nevertheless, the Board of Trade in Lisbon continued to issue passports for slave ships destined for Brazilian ports between 1822 (or 1825) and 1828; the entity served as an authority legitimizing and protecting merchants and guaranteeing the Portuguese colonial mission, the focus of which had shifted to Africa. Thus, of the forty-seven voyages listed in the Table, at least seventeen were illegal according to the diplomatic agreements signed between Portugal and Great Britain, since they occurred after the signing of the treaty recognizing Brazilian independence.

The affidavits of justification from the Board of Trade in Lisbon provide insight into some of the business connections between the owners of the slave ships departing from Portuguese ports. They not only reveal business relationships; they also give us a glimpse into business networks involving men involved in other commercial activities.

Slave Traders, Their Profiles, and Interactions between Them

Slave traders networked with each other and other businessmen in “companies with representatives spread out across many countries” (MARQUES, 2001, p. 610), with members on all continents surrounding the Atlantic. People from a variety of sectors and industries were involved,

...from the black king selling slaves to the American plantation owner who used them; [the network] consisted of countless intermediaries and accomplices—merchants from the African coast, corrupt colonial authorities who allowed for the importation or exportation of slaves, sailors who transported them across the Atlantic, and so on—who were involved in the slave trading system (MARQUES, 2001, p. 610).

If we include the authorities who acted on behalf of the Kingdom of Portugal, the trading system becomes more complete than Marques’s description. There are challenges to overcome in the quest to understand who the investors in the slave trade market were. Nevertheless, some understanding of ship-owning slave traders and their interactions with others in the system can be gained from the affidavits of justification from the Portuguese Board of Trade, as well as from other sources.

Slavers seemed to be united, particularly in times of repression, by a sense of identity; they offered mutual protection and sought to display their power and fortune. Verger has called attention to this by describing, for example, the public demonstrations of religiosity that they promoted in the Brazilian state of Bahia (VERGER, 1981, p. 76-79). Manolo Florentino (1997, p. 122), who researched the workings of the slave trading community in Rio de

Janeiro, found that it was common practice among most slavers in Rio de Janeiro between 1811 and 1830 to purchase or charter each other's vessels.

I will briefly describe the owners of some of the slave ships that worked out of Lisbon, focusing on those who were able to establish business connections, particularly between 1818 and 1823. In spite of advances in research in recent years, an important challenge remains: "...the biographies of those involved in the slave trade, and, more specifically, of those who failed or for whom success was only moderate or fleeting, are generally unknown or difficult to ascertain based on the existing documentation" (MARQUES, 2001, p. 610).³

The first of the slave traders I will discuss is João Esteves Alves, a merchant with investments in ships used on a variety of routes. His business-related interests involved many vessels, including the brig known as *Restaurador* and the schooner or sailing yacht known as *São Francisco*, both of which were active in 1818. Most of the records on Alves describe him as the sole proprietor of the ships, and as a man with a peculiar habit of demanding questionable rewards and exceptions for himself. The first situation to reveal this was his loaded request that the officials of the Belém Tower not hinder the departure of his galley, *General Miranda*, on its trip to Pará, Brazil, since his crew sought to leverage the good winds blowing therein.⁴ The second case was another event with *Restaurador*, which, though ready to depart to Angola, had not yet acquired certification of its tonnage "in order to declare the number of heads that the ship [was] to receive in compliance with the Treaty [of 1817], in which five heads [were] permitted for every two metric tons."⁵ The cargo agents, who were likely members of the local Ship Authority, questioned the amount of cargo declared. Alves argued that, in the slave trade, measurements varied widely:

...in this business, no places are held, because...as soon as the first slave boards the ship, there are no protective areas or reserved spaces inside the ship, and with tarpaulins, they attempt to sleep all the way to Brazil; for this reason, the stockings and measurements are very diverse and serve only for this trade.⁶

From Alves's perspective, all space available was to be considered in the measurements used to determine the number of Africans to be loaded on board, despite the fact that they did not occupy all of the ship's space. This evidently contributed to overcrowding below deck, but Alves demonstrated no humanitarian concern in this regard. On the contrary, he was concerned only with the delay in the embarkation of his brig: the tribunal of the Board of Trade would not process his request for another week, recording it in September 1818. The cargo agents disagreed, arguing that, in any vessel, including a slave ship, space was to be reserved for food stores, water, sails, and moorings, as well as areas to accommodate the ship's crew which, in this case, was composed of thirty-nine men. Audaciously, Alves said that the cargo agents doing the measuring were not performing their functions and were "even treating the petitioner poorly," and he begged that His Majesty "to send the agents to board the brig and take an exact measurement including the chamber, the galley, and the crew's quarters, for in such negotiations of slaves, there is there is no extra space

on the voyage to Brazil...and issue the certificate."⁷

This arrogance, typical of those who were accustomed to attaining privileges from the State, was not limited to attempts to require public employees to measure their ships using methods that favored them. Alves wanted more for his ships on their many voyages to islands in the Atlantic, as well as to the Mediterranean, Angola, East Africa, and Brazil between 1818 and 1820.⁸ He requested a loan from the Navy Arsenal of sixteen pieces of artillery "with the appropriate accompaniments" so that *Restaurador* and *São Francisco de Assis* could traffic slaves from Mozambique and Cabinda to Brazil, mostly likely to defend against privateers on the Prata River. The Navy made the effort of responding, informing him that only *Restaurador* was eligible for artillery, but that it was not to be loaned out "due to any need for them that may arise from one moment to the next" at the Fort of São Paulo, where they were in use at the time.⁹

Manuel Ribeiro da Silva, a contemporary of Esteves Alves's, was a merchant in Lisbon who was born in 1767. Between 40 and 60 years of age, he made his fortune on overseas trade and established solid relationships with merchants in Lisbon and at ports in northern Brazil. The first report of this slave trader mentions him as the owner of the brigantine *Di-ana*, on a voyage from Bahia and Porto Novo in 1804 (PARÉS, 2013, p. 363). In 1807, he was a financier and business partner of Antônio Rodrigues de Figueiredo for the galley *N. S. da Conceição Flor de Pernambuco*, which had been constructed in Bahia. In 1812, Ribeiro da Silva became partner of the company Jacinto José Dias de Carvalho & Cia. for the galley *Felicidade*, for which a passport was requested in Lisbon in June of that year for a voyage to Pará. We find him again years later as Estêvão José Alves's partner for the ship *Incomparável*, destined for São Luís. He shared ownership of *Ativo* with Antônio José de Amorim in 1824, which had come from Serinhaém, Pernambuco, Brazil; until it was purchased by the two, it was named *Apolo*. Ribeiro da Silva lived for a time in the Recife, the capital of Pernambuco, but he would have returned to Lisbon at this point—most likely because of the anti-Portuguese sentiment in Brazil at the time. In Recife, a priest accused him of defiling women and carrying a weapon (CABRAL, 2008, p. 44). As a slaver, he also owned *Lucrécia* in 1826, but the ship most frequently associated with Ribeiro da Silva's name was the galley *Santa Cruz*, with four requests for passports to sail to Pará between 1826 and 1828. The same galley remained active in the slave trade in northern Brazil: its owner asked for exemption from the requirement of taking a chaplain on a voyage "with a small crew" on the *Holy Cross* to São Luís, in light of the fact that a resolution from the Portuguese Royal Board of Trade under the reign of Dom Miguel had created this possibility.¹⁰

Ribeiro da Silva is also the witness on the affidavits of justification for *Especulador Africano* in 1827, owned by Manuel José Rodrigues. At this point, and at the age of 60, he lived in the Lisbon parish known as Santa Justa, in a property on the street named Rua da Prata. Like other slave traders, Manuel Ribeiro da Silva may have ceased his involvement in the slave trade around 1826, at which point he seems to have begun directing his invest-

ments in trade in other goods between Portugal, Maranhão, and Pará. This was likely the kind of trade activity that he bequeathed to his son, Manuel Ribeiro da Silva Filho, who he had certainly been educating in business matters. As a witness to the affidavit of justification for *General Sampaio* in 1828, Ribeiro da Silva Filho was described on the document as a merchant in Lisbon who was 28 years of age and living at the same address as his father.¹¹

Interactions between slave traders can be seen in ship property declarations, as well as in the frequency with which these same merchants served as witnesses for their fellow slavers' requests for passports.¹² Manuel da Cruz, a business partner of Matias José de Almeida for the *Andorinha do Tejo* in 1822, declared to be true everything contained in the request made by his colleague Francisco José de Sousa Lopes for *São José Diligente Vulcano* in 1823. Domingos Fernandes Alves, a merchant in Rio de Janeiro and part owner of the *Astrea* in 1826, appeared in the affidavit of justification for *Boa Viagem* from the year prior. Francisco José Guimarães, a slave trader in Rio de Janeiro, was Marcelino José Alcântara's partner in ownership of *General Rego* in 1819. In 1823 and 1825, Alcântara is listed as sole proprietor of this same ship. João José de Faria, a merchant in Lisbon, was owner of *General Sampaio* in 1828, but seven years prior, he had served as a witness for the affidavit of justification of the same ship, then owned by Manuel Gomes da Cunha & Cia. He is also listed as the witness on the affidavits for *Lucrecia* and *Paquete Feliz* in 1825.

Between 1821 and 1822, Antônio Francisco da Silva served as a witness for *Bom Caminho* (the owners of which had been in the slave trade for approximately twenty years) and for the owners of *Marquês de Pombal* in Maranhão. Established in Lisbon, he spent these years working as the intermediary between the owners of the *Triunfo da Inveja*; during the same period, he was also part owner the galley *Maria*, which sailed between Belém, Salvador, Angola, and Lisbon.¹³

Bernardo José Fernandes, a merchant in Lisbon, was another slave trader who served as a witness for affidavits for *Astrea* in 1826, when he was 50 years old. His professional interests included co-ownership of *São Nicolau Augusto* with Antônio José Moreira in 1827.¹⁴

The list of witnesses provided by ship owners, a required part of the passport request process, can tell us more about the interactions between these merchants. Before proceeding further, I would like to note that, with the descriptions of residential and business addresses, the affidavits of justification also provide information on the social geography of Lisbon. Only one witness lived on the southern side of the Tagus River (in Cacilhas); all of the others were concentrated in the upper-class parishes of Lisbon, such as Madalena, Lapa, Mártires, Sacramento, Santa Justa, and São Paulo. The bourgeoisie of the first half of the nineteenth century had adopted aristocratic habits, such as the abundance of white and black servants in the houses, "from secretaries, stewards, or servants, to cooks, coachmen, water carriers, footmen, butlers, and squires" (SÁ, 1992, p. 9). Their houses and shops were located near the river, which pulsed with sea life, but at a convenient distance from others in riverside enclaves of sailors and members of the lower classes. These properties were

located in Bairro Alto and Alfama, several parishes with concentration areas of wealthy members of society:

There were marked linguistic differences between the regions, including differences in slang. At night, the boundaries between bohemia and respectable society were most noticeable. Prostitutes, fado singers, horsemen, bullfighters, coachmen, vagabonds, and sailors had their characteristic worlds; they maintained an open coexistence, regardless of each other's social origins (SÁ, 1992, p. 9-10).

Some witnesses were frequently named on the affidavits of justification. Merchants from Lisbon such as Antônio da Cunha Guimarães, Bento Antônio de Andrade, Feliciano José Colares, and Sebastião Lopes Ramos are listed as witnesses on many passport concession documents from the Board of Trade. However, the most common slave trader witness was Bento José da Cunha Viana, who I will discuss further in the coming section.

Viana was a specialist in obtaining various types of passports. It was not by chance that he was described in the reports as a forwarding agent for ships. In this role, he was able to obtain certifications from the Ship Authority; he studied the legislation and diplomatic agreements to instruct his clients on how to legitimize their business, and he visited the Portuguese Board of Trade offices to check on the progress of requests. With the exception of *Ativo* in 1824, all of the cases for which he served as a witness were dated between 1825 and 1828.¹⁵ Viana also lent credibility to the requests, particularly when slave trade in Brazil under the Portuguese flag became illegal.

He commonly served as a proxy for many merchants both in Lisbon and overseas. In Lisbon, he began work in the late eighteenth century mediating passport approvals for individuals who wanted to travel to Brazil for the first time or return there after a stay in Portugal.¹⁶ People from the Portuguese city of Porto particularly valued his services, since he delivered documentation and monitored the progress of their requests in Lisbon. Viana was also involved in the issuing of passports to merchant ships not connected to the slave trade: he worked as a proxy in Lisbon for my merchants from Porto who planned to send their ships to Rio de Janeiro¹⁷ or other ports in the Americas for trade.¹⁸ Viana mediated dozens of requests for navigation between Portuguese ports and Brazilian ports in Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco, Bahia, and São Paulo.

Similarly, Viana aided in processes for passports for ships from overseas that wanted to travel to Portugal and to Porto in particular,¹⁹ and he is listed in the records as providing services even to freed slaves such as Inácia Maria dos Prazeres who, after obtaining freedom from her owner Manuel Barbosa de Carvalho in Portugal, wanted to return to her home state of Pernambuco.²⁰

Viana was an expert in passports, including those that could be used to mask illegal activities such as the arrival and departure of slaves in Portugal, which had been prohibited since 1761. In 1776, a law was passed allowing only seafaring slaves who were return to

the high seas and who could not serve their masters on Portuguese soil, legislation which, unintuitively, has been referred to in recent studies as a clear example of early abolitionism in Portugal.²¹ When he came from the Grão-Pará, João Inácio de Siqueira, captain of the ship *Senhora do Livramento e Telêmaco*, brought with him two mixed-race children (Mari and Joaquim) and two young black women (Romana and Isabel). Isabel was a freed slave who brought a baby with her. All had come from Benguela originally. Siqueira exhibited no shame in disembarking with his black companions in Lisbon in 1809. Siqueira sought Viana's services to obtain justification for their presence and their passage.²² The efforts to bring them to Portugal on this date suggest that they were treated as slaves and were likely to serve him on board on the next trip to Rio de Janeiro. If they could have been proven to be freed slaves, fewer explanations would have been necessary.

Foreigners also sought Viana's services to take advantage of the opportunities created by the opening of Brazil's ports to trade. This was the motivation for Sardinian priest Jerônimo Raggio, as well as for Spanish citizen Juan (João) White, of Cádiz, who sought to travel to Rio de Janeiro on board the English ship *Rembler*.²³ Portuguese documents listed his name as João White, while his name was spelled Juan White on the Spanish documentation attached to his passport request. He was likely from the same family as Jose Maria Blanco White, a known Spanish intellectual and abolitionist and Juan's contemporary. In the early nineteenth century, along with other deputies from the Royal Court in Cádiz, Jose Maria Blanco White fought against the slave trade, which had been gaining strength in Cuba and Puerto Rico (BLAS; RAMOS-GOROSTIZA, 2014; FRADERA, 2013, p. 72).

The renowned forwarding assistant and proxy felt the effects of Brazilian independence. His friends rallied to help him. Manuel José Maria da Costa e Sá, an official from the Secretariat of the Navy and the High Seas and deputy at the Portuguese Board of Trade, wrote a letter to Bernardo José d'Abrantes e Castro, member of the Overseas Council, to suggest that they find a way to support Viana, whose business had suffered a blow after the recognition of the Empire of Brazil.²⁴ It is possible that suggestions like these helped the representative's career survive after 1825 in the market for passports for ships illegally transporting slaves to Brazil which, as we have seen, benefited from the authorities of the Overseas Council and the Board of Trade turning a blind eye and providing approvals. We also have a revealing example of how interactions between public agents from different realms of power within the Portuguese State manifested into support for a businessman from the private sector who had friends in these places. In a world with social and legal inequality, helping a friend to keep his business afloat and survive detrimental changes in laws was something seen as being within the bounds of normality. It is discouraging to observe how this definition of normal has passed the test of time and how transparency in public power is an achievement that is quickly reversible, particularly when the society is powerless, divided, or distracted.

Final Comments

In this reflection on the role of Portugal in the slave trade, the intention was not to take sides or to present one side of the dichotomy as wholly good or wholly bad, an approach which I would consider to be reductionist. In the historical event that was the slave trade, research into large blocks of time is relevant for detecting trends, but it may cause us to neglect the specificity of issues that are only visible in the study of shorter periods. On the other hand, studies may become muddled when researchers rely too heavily on a series of data from a short period to extrapolate ambitious explanations. Disregarding political circumstances and social transformations in the name of “safe” numerical data may inadvertently cause us to lose sight of the complexity of such extensive historical events.

Though it goes beyond the scope of this article, an exercise in comparative history would be necessary to confirm either Rio de Janeiro’s dominance in the slave trade or the strength of Portuguese slave traders in maintaining more modern interests and overcoming persistent archaism. By considering the data presented herein, I sought to demonstrate the efforts required by Portuguese merchants to remain active in the slave trade, and how those involved in the slave trade worked together to channel their existing commercial interests into former Portuguese colonial ports in the Americas through the formation of commercial associations and representation of overseas merchants in Lisbon and Portugal. In these efforts, they were able to rely on the crucial support of the Portuguese Crown in quickly shifting circumstances in which so much was at stake: relations with their secular and most important foreign ally (Great Britain), the loss of political power over their most important colony (Brazil), continued involvement in the profitable slave trade in the Americas, and the viability of their newest colonial mission, the focus was Africa.

These factors say nothing of the mission to maintain the aristocratic social hierarchy, of the entrepreneurial spirit of merchants in Rio de Janeiro (or in Pernambuco or Bahia, for that matter), or of Lisbon’s power in the slave trade: the evidence presented herein is meant to reflect only the attempts to keep businesses alive, with agents fighting on many fronts and adapting to a rapidly changing world. This is therefore a story of historical characters facing the adversities of their time using the tools and allies available to them.

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Notes

1 These three well-known treaties signaling the end of the African slave trade in Brazil are available online. The Treaty between Great Britain and Portugal, Signed at Vienna the Twenty-Second of January One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifteen (*O Tratado da abolição do tráfico de escravos em todos os lugares da costa de África ao norte do equador, entre os muito altos e muito poderosos senhores o Príncipe Regente de Portugal e El-Rei do Reino Unido da Grande Bretanha e Irlanda, feito em Viena pelos plenipotenciários de uma e outra Corte em 22 de janeiro de 1815, e ratificado por ambas*) is available in digital form at <<http://bd.camara.gov.br/bd/handle/bdcamara/1764>>; the Additional Convention to the Treaty of the 22nd of January 1815 between HIS MOST

FAITHFUL MAGESTY and HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY for the purpose of preventing Heir Subjects from engaging in any illicit Traffic in Slaves, and the Separate Article to the Convention can be obtained at <<http://bd.camara.leg.br/bd/handle/bdcamara/1866>>, accessed on 20 April 2017.

2 Combined in Torre do Tombo National Archives on the Portuguese Board of Trade (hereby referred to as ANTT-JC), box 204, pack 62. Though restructured in 1877, the Portuguese Board of Trade performed regulatory and tribunal functions between the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century; it was composed of deputies nominated by the Crown who served in the offices of secretary, judge, and auditor. See Guimarães (2008, p. 288-290).

3 Some works in particular have aided in increasing the knowledge on the slave traders and their connections. See Albuquerque (2016), Gomes (2016), and Jesus (2004).

4 This is the only vessel for which Esteves Alves is listed along with a business partner who, in this case, was Domingos José de Miranda. Ultramarino Historical Archives, Conselho Ultramarino, consulted at <http://resgate.bn.br> (hereby referred to as the AHU-CU), *Pará*, box 146, doc. 11.069, 22 February 1814.

5 "Affidavits of Request and Justification for João Esteves Alves for the Licensing of his Brig, *Restaurador*." ANTT-JC, box 204, pack 62.

6 "Affidavits of Request and Justification for João Esteves Alves for the Licensing of his Brig, *Restaurador*." ANTT-JC, box 204, pack 62.

7 "Affidavits of Request and Justification for João Esteves Alves for the Licensing of his Brig, the *Restaurador*." ANTT-JC, box 204, pack 62.

8 "Passport for Travel from Lisbon to Barcelona to Rio de Janeiro, 14 August 1816" in AHU-CU, *Rio de Janeiro*, box 276, doc. 19.164; "Passport to Travel between Lisbon, Tenerife, Angola, and Brazil to Transport 180 Slaves," 7 October 1818 in AHU-CU, *Avulsos do Brasil*, box 43, doc. 3.460.

9 AHU/CU, *Ultramar*, box 25, doc. 2.131, request from 2 June 1818.

10 "...vessels which had no decent or dignified place to perform the holy sacrifice of mass or where the small crew could be dispensed for chapel, a calculation which was wise to make, and with which the navigation of vessels with such faithful subjects would be relieved of such a heavy burden..." AHU-CU, *Maranhão*, box 180, doc. 13.092, 9 March 1831. The same vessel requested a passport to travel to Maranhão, Brazil, in January 1832; cf. AHU-CU, *Maranhão*, box 180, doc. 13.106.

11 AHU/CU, *Bahia*, box 249, doc. 17.165; AHU-CU, *Pará*, box 144, doc. 10.955; AHU-CU, *Maranhão*, box 166, doc. 12.110, 5 June 1821; "Notice of Request by Antônio José de Amorim..." and "Notice of Request by Manuel Ribeiro da Silva, Owner of the Brigantine Known as the *Lucrécia*, with the Purposes of Slave Trading," in the ANTT-JC, pack 62, box 204; AHU-CU, *Pará*, box 164, docs. 12.522, 12.547, 12.569, and 12.585; "Notice of Request by Manuel José Rodrigues, Owner of the Schooner Brig Known as the *Especulador Africano* for Slave Trading," and "Notice of Request by João José de Faria, Owner of the Brigantine Known as the *General Sampaio* for Slave Trading," in ANTT-JC, pack 62, box 204.

12 Unless indicated otherwise, the information in this and the following paragraphs comes from ANTT-JC, pack 62, box 204.

13 Passport issued by the Provincial Succession Council of Pará authorizing the galley *Maria* to depart from Pará for Lisbon (Belém, 1 June 1821)—record found in the em AHU/CU, *Pará*, box 152, doc. 11.622; Passports authorizing the same galley to travel from Lisbon to Pará on 4 April 1818, 14 November 1821, and 3 August 1822, as recorded in the AHU/CU, *Pará*, box 162, doc. 12.408; box 151, doc. 11.687, and box 155, doc. 11.894; Passport for travel from Lisbon to Bahia and Angola as recorded in the AHU/CU, *Bahia*, box 261, doc. 18.258.

14 Passport issued on 20 June 1821 authorizing São Nicolau Augusto to travel from Lisbon to Bahia—record found in the AHU-CU, *Bahia*, box 264, doc. 18.620; Certification of Ship Ownership dated 1 June 1822 and recorded in the AHU-CU, *Bahia*, box 269, doc. 18.947; request for a "style ticket" (passport) for the ship to travel to São Luís on 4 August 1826 recorded in the AHU/CU, *Maranhão*, box 179, doc. 12.953.

15 The vessels named *O Astrea*, *o Dois Irmãos*, *o Especulador Africano* ou *Especuladora Africana*, *o General Sampaio*, *o Maria Teresa*, *o Orfeu*, *o São Nicolau Augusto*, *o Via Láctea*, *o Voador*, *o Lucrécia*, and *o Conde dos Arcos*, all of which are recorded in ANTT-JC, pack 62, box 204.

16 See, just to name a few, the requests for passports to return to Rio de Janeiro from Manuel Pinheiro Guimarães and his family in 1798 and from Bernardino Peres in 1801. AHU-CU, *Rio de Janeiro*, box 168, doc. 12.478 and box 191, doc. 12.754.

17 See, for example, AHU-CU, *Rio de Janeiro*, box 245, doc. 16.697, signed in Lisbon and dated 8 May 1807. This is only one of the many passport requests that he negotiated for that year; in 1816, we find more signs of his name

associated with this activity.

18 See the request in Porto by Joaquim Rodrigues Pinheiro in which he solicits a passport to travel to Pernambuco through his proxy, as recorded in AHU-CU, *Pernambuco*, box 282, doc. 19.180, 20 October 1820; Passports issued for *Senhora da Penha de França* and *São José Fortaleza* for travel from Porto to Bahia dated 13 September 1807 in the AHU-CU, *Bahia*, box 249, doc. 17.176; Request from José Almeida da Silva for a passport for the ship *Urano* to travel to Santos from Portugal, with a stop on the Island of Madeira. AHU-CU, *São Paulo*, box 60, doc. 4.566, 8 November 1806.

19 AHU-CU, *Pernambuco*, box 231, doc. 15.582, 1801, and box 285, doc. 19.502, 1822.

20 AHU-CU, *Pernambuco*, box 258, doc. 17.296, signed in Lisbon and dated 16 December 1805.

21 See, for example, Marques (2017) and "Um regresso ao passado em Gorée: Não em nosso nome." *Diário de Notícias* (the Daily News Journal), 19 April 2017, available at <http://www.dn.pt/portugal/interior/um-regresso-ao-passado-em-goree-nao-em-nosso-nome-6228800.html>, accessed on 20 April 2017.

22 AHU-CU, *Rio de Janeiro*, box 255, doc. 17.422, signed in Lisbon and dated 23 September 1809. The document does not indicate whether the request was approved.

23 AHU-CU, *Rio de Janeiro*, box 266, doc. 18.258, dated 7 August c.1812 and box 265, doc. 18.235, signed in Lisbon and dated 7 July 1812.

24 AHU-CU, *Colônia do Sacramento*, box 4, doc. 288, 20 June 1826.

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