

# “What will these people do when the final emancipation of slaves is decreted?” - domestic service and slavery in the Paraíba Valley coffee plantations.

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“O que fará essa gente quando for decretada a completa emancipação dos escravos?” - serviço doméstico e escravidão nas plantations cafeeiras do Vale do Paraíba.

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## Abstract

This article discusses the issue of domestic slavery in coffee plantations located in the Paraíba Valley during the second half of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century. It is divided into two main parts. The first discusses how Brazilian historiography treats this topic and emphasizes the importance of studying domestic slavery in rural areas. The second analyses the relations between slaves and masters inside the big houses taking as an example the Pau Grande plantation.

## Resumo

O presente artigo discute o tema da escravidão doméstica nas plantations cafeeiras do Vale do Paraíba Fluminense durante a segunda metade do século XIX. A análise é dividida em dois momentos principais. O primeiro traz uma discussão historiográfica sobre o tema na historiografia brasileira, enfatizando a importância do estudo da mesma no espaço rural onde se encontravam a grande maioria dos escravos do centro-sul do Império. O segundo reflete sobre os espaços fronteiriços que envolviam as relações senhores-escravos domésticos no ambiente da casa grande tendo como locus privilegiado de estudo a fazenda Pau Grande.

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## Keywords

Domestic Slavery, Family, Paraíba Valley, Brazilian Empire.

## Palavras-chave

Escravidão Doméstica, Família, Vale do Paraíba, Brasil Império.

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The data presented herein were taken from the International Labour Organization (ILO) report: Domestic workers across the world: global and regional statistics and extent of legal protection by International Labor Office Geneva, 14/1/2013. Available at <[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/-dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_173363.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/-dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_173363.pdf)>. Access in Jan. 15th, 2015. The research mentioned was held between 2009 and 2013, covering all formal workers from 117 countries in different continents. In Brazil, the data were obtained based on the IBGE Census and did not include a significant number of housekeepers working informally and/or that are 15 years old or younger. The addition of such variables would certainly increase the percentage, because it is estimated that only 30% of the housekeepers is formally employed in Brazil. See Appendix 2, p. 124.

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In the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, the domestic workers did not receive the same labour rights as the other categories. In April 2013, the Federal Senate approved the Proposal of Constitutional Amendment (PEC, in Portuguese), the so-called "PEC das Domésticas" (Domestic workers PEC), should match their rights to the other workers'. About this topic, please refer to: NUNES, Christane Girad; SILVA, Pedro Henrique Isaac. "Entre o prescrito e o real: o papel da subjetividade na efetivação dos direitos das empregadas domésticas no Brasil". *Sociedade e Estado*. Brasília, vol.28 n°3, set./dez. MELO, Hildete Pereira de. "Criadas e trabalhadoras". *Estudos Feministas*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 6, n° 2, 1998. BRUSCHINI, Cristina; LOMBARDI, Maria Rosa. "A bipolaridade do trabalho feminino no Brasil contemporâneo". *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, São Paulo, n. 110, p. 67-104, 2000 e BRITES, Jurema. *Serviço doméstico: elementos políticos de um campo desprovido de ilusões*. Campos: Paraná, n. 3, p. 65-82, 2003.

4

The phenomenon of incorporating former slaves to the domestic service was already explored by the North-American historiography. See: SHARPLESS, Rebecca. *Cooking in Other Womens Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865-1960*. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010 e GLYMPH, Thavolia. *Out of the House of Bondage: the transformation of the plantation household*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

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About race relations and work relations after the abolition: COOPER, Frederick; HOLT, Thomas e SCOTT, Rebecca J., *Beyond Slavery: explorations of race, labour, and citizenship in postemancipation societies*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000 e RIOS, Ana Maria; MATTOS, Hebe Maria. "O pós-abolição como problema histórico: balanços e perspectivas". *Topoi*, n° 8, 2004, pp. 17-195.

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See more about the process of transformation in the landlord class family and habitus at: MUAZE, Mariana. *As memórias da viscondessa: família e poder no Império*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2008.

The domestic services are made by black people: it is a black coachman who drives us, it is a black woman that serves us. By the stove, the cook is a black man and the slave is breastfeeding the white kid. I would like to know what will these people do when the final emancipation of slaves is decreed.

Ina Von Binzen, 1886

According to an International Labour Organization (ILO) survey, Brazil has currently the biggest number of domestic workers in the world.<sup>2</sup> In line with the data available, it is a predominantly female function, since 94% of the 7.2 million people in this industry are women. This rate amounts to 17% of the female workforce with registered jobs in the country. In other words, one out of six women formally employed is a housekeeper, and this proportion increases to 60% when it comes to Afro-descendant women. The numbers presented show a social reality that keep women - specially Afro-descendant women - in precarious working positions, outside the commercial circuit, with a high level of informality and requiring limited or no schooling at all, with low wages. Such reality is reinforced when we think that currently only 30% of the housekeepers are regularly employed, and those only had their rights guaranteed by law on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, after the Supplementary Law 150 was approved by the President Dilma Rousseff.<sup>3</sup>

How could we understand such difference in rights among Brazilian workers? I believe that slavery, the abolition process and the work relations after the abolition are important historical factors to understand this phenomena. After all, the domestic work was broadly performed by slaves during the Empire period, besides, it was the function that employed more black women, former slaves, after the abolition.<sup>4</sup> In the new context, the ones who were freed were integrated into the labour market through the execution of services that, most of the times, would provide them similar conditions to their former life in captivity.<sup>5</sup> This situation has spread with time, and with the connivance of a Law that devoted little attention to those workers. The gender and race-specific boundaries during the slavery were strong enough to keep most of the former slaves tied to the domestic and private domain, delegating them working positions with little social, cultural and economical value. The historical consequences of this process are found up to the present, as showed by the ILO data.

During the second half of the 19th Century, the family model created by the Empire's landlords class valued the good manners, refinement, the consumption practices, as the example of the new social habitus on the rise in Europe. However, in here, the proximity between the slavery and the domestic orders was decisive for the family living.<sup>6</sup> This article assumes that, when reinventing themselves, the landlord families not only give a new meaning to the European habitus, shaping it to their needs, but also transforms their relation to the ones who they interact daily within their houses, that is, the domestic slaves. During this process, countless functions and services performed by the slaves were introduced within the house space to generate more comfort, refinement, and to obey the precepts of good manners and *savoir vivre* coming from Europe. What were those services required in large farms? Who would perform those services when it comes to gender,

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In relation to the permanence of values and conceptions of hierarchical and uneven worlds after the abolition and in the present, please see: SALLES, Ricardo. *Nostalgia Imperial: escravidão e formação da identidade nacional no Brasil do Segundo Reinado*. São Paulo: Topbooks, 1996.

age, and family? Which power relations would involve landlords and domestic slaves in the new context? Which border areas the domestic interaction would be opened in the relations between landlords and slaves? Thinking about such issues may be a first step to understand the relations between our past of slavery and the current obstacles to enforce the labour rights for domestic works in Brazil. But not only that. With a more general framework, such questions would help to think about why the exclusion constitutes our current society and to think over the role of our slaveholding matrix in the production of historical distances between people and citizenship, people and rights that is typical from the current Brazilian society.<sup>7</sup>

It seems that the concern of the German teacher Ina Von Binzen, when writing to her German friend Grete, was founded: “what will these people do when the final emancipation of slaves is decreed?” As can be verified by the current data about domestic work in Brazil, over three centuries of dominance of slavery relations were not easily surpassed. On the contrary, having the family as their greatest stronghold, relations of work based on hierarchy, violence and inequality (with reference to the slavery period) were redesigned and were lost in time, under the protection of the private life. Such a big endurance explain the data collected by the ILO report, but also scenes witnessed by many of us daily, such as babysitters wearing white uniforms in public spaces (clearly determining their social place in relation to the family they are with), bathrooms for the nurses in clubs, and different bedrooms for the maids in very expensive apartments, some of them cubicles, without windows.

The complexity of the issues presented and the nuances in the transition from the slave work to the free work explain that, in the limits of this article, the proposed discussion will approach only the period of slavery in Brazil. Next, I present the domestic slavery topic in the context of the Brazilian historiography, with preliminary notes about the relations between landlords and captives within the dwelling houses of large coffee farms. At that moment of the research, I focused on obtaining data related to the slaves from the Pau Grande farm, in Paty do Alferes, Paraíba Valley, while trying to answer the questions above mentioned. The selection of this region is justified because it was central to the economy and the politics during the Empire, in the context of the “second slavery”<sup>8</sup>. During the long 19th Century, the rising industrial capitalist system concurrently fostered the paid employment regimen in Europe and slavery in broad scale, in areas producing cheap primary products, mainly in the southern United States, Caribbean and in this part of the Paraíba Valley. In this context, the South-Central region of Rio de Janeiro had a higher concentration of slaves until the legal end of slavery during the Empire, after the signature of the Lei Áurea (Golden Law, in English), in 1888.<sup>9</sup> Such geographical concentration of the slavery in Brazil was accompanied by a social concentration, because between 1836 and 1850, during the coffee expansion, the great landlords possessed half of the slaves in this part of the Paraíba Valley and, between 1851 and 1865, this index peaked to 72.2%.

Notes on studies about domestic slavery in Brazil:

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TOMICH, Dale W. *Pelo prisma da escravidão: trabalho, capital e economia mundial*. São Paulo: EDUSP, 2011; MARQUESE, Rafael e TOMICH, Dale. “O Vale do Paraíba escravista e a formação do mercado mundial do café no século XIX”. In: SALLES, Ricardo e GRINBERG, Keila (org.). *O Brasil Imperial* (vol. 3). Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2010.

9

In relation to the mega owners of the Paraíba Valley, Rio de Janeiro Part, please see: SALLES, Ricardo. *E o Vale era o Escravo*. Vassouras, século XIX. RJ: Civilização Brasileira, 2008.

10

See: SOUZA, Flavia Fernandes. Para casa de família e mais serviços: O trabalho doméstico na cidade do Rio de Janeiro no final do século XIX. Master's degree dissertation. São Gonçalo: FFP/UERJ, 2009 e CARVALHO, Marcus F. M. de. "De portas adentro e de portas afora: trabalho doméstico e escravidão no Recife, 1822-1850". In: Afro-Ásia, Salvador, n. 29/30, p. 41-78, 2003; ARIZA, Marília Bueno de Araujo. O ofício da liberdade: contratos de locação de serviços e trabalhadores libertandos em São Paulo e Campinas (1830 - 1888). Master's degree dissertation, Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2012.

11

In relation to the historiographic production about the domestic services within the urban area, I highlight: SOUZA, Flavia Fernandes. Op. Cit.; DIAS, Maria Odila Leite da Silva. Quotidiano e poder em São Paulo no século XIX. São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1984; CARVALHO, Marcus F. M. de. De portas adentro...Op.Cit.; SOARES, Luiz Carlos. "Escravidão Doméstica". In: O "povo de Cam" na capital do Brasil: a escravidão urbana no Rio de Janeiro do século XIX. Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras, 2007 e KARASH, Mary. A vida dos escravos no Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1850. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000.

The daily maintenance of the domicile was one of the oldest and more widespread methods of slave labour use in Brazil. The preparation and cooking of the food, the water supply, the disposal of wastes in the appropriate location, the kids and babies monitoring, the making of tools for the daily use, the cleaning and arrangement of the spaces were functions performed in many different houses of the Portuguese America and the Empire - most of the times by African slaves and their descendants. With the upsurge of the Atlantic slave trade in the first half of the 19th Century, the use of slave labour in domestic tasks. Disseminated by the different social classes during the empire, it was hard to find someone who did not have at least one slave. In the cities and in small rural properties, the captives performed several tasks without much specialization, provisioning the farm services, services on the streets or household tasks. However, in 1850, with the end of the slaves trade, this trend was reversed. With the discontinuation of the entry of African workforce in the Brazilian ports, the prices of this workforce increased considerably, and having slaves was more and more a privilege of a few. For the same reason, economical activities with low profitability gradually began to sell their captives to up-and-coming producing areas, and the main area was the sector of coffee production in the Central-south region of the Paraíba Valley.

In relation to the urban zones, such modification in the geography and in the figures of slavery has caused a deep change in the labour market during the 1870s and 1880s. In relation to the domestic sphere, there was a multiplication of the forms and agreements that can be proven by the variety of newspaper advertisements recruiting or offering captive of freed workers. Via this and other sources, historians realized that, with the rising value of the slaves after 1850, there was an increase in the practice of renting captives and hiring freed slaves<sup>10</sup> for the roles of: laundress, cook, maid, wet nurse, pageboy, housekeeper, tidbits traders, coachman, that were previously performed mainly by slaves. In the case of the slaves at issue, they were characterized as "inside the house" (performing services within the house) or "outside the house" (performing services outside the house, like laundress, ambulant black women, the "negras do tabuleiro", etc.). The domestic slaves used to work directly to their owners, or "for rental", when they performed the roles in somebody else's houses through the payment of an amount set by their master. Many of those involved in "outside the house" activities would only earn for these activities, that is, they performed the activities that would generate income and then they would pay their master (owner or the renter) a daily leave. However, with the steady decline of slavery from 1870 on, as stated before, many domestic services began to be performed by free workers, some of them were former slaves, complicating even more the relations between employer and employee.<sup>11</sup>

Domestic slavery is not a new topic in the historical analyses of the Brazilian society. I dare to say that Gilberto Freyre was the first specialist to address this subject. Viewing the patriarchal family as the basis for the Brazilian colonial formation, Freyre highlighted the pater familias - head of the family, landlord and master of the slaves - as the ultimate authority within the "house" space. According to his interpretation, the patriarchal family included not only the members of the

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FREYRE, Gilberto. *Casa Grande e Senzala* (25ª edição). São Paulo: José Olympio Editora, 1987.  
FREYRE, Gilberto. *O Escravo nos anúncios de jornais brasileiros do século XIX*. CBBA/Propeg: 1984.

13

DIAS, Maria Odila Leite da Silva. *Quotidiano e Poder... Op.Cit.*; GRAHAM, Sandra Lauderdale. *House and Street: the domestic world of servants and masters in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1988. I also highlight: MATOSO, Kátia. *Ser Escravo no Brasil*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1990. MATOS, Maria Izilda Santos de. *Cotidiano e cultura: história, cidade e trabalho*. Bauru: EDUSC, 2002 e GRAHAM, Sandra Lauderdale. "O impasse da escravatura: prostitutas escravas, suas senhoras e a lei brasileira de 1871". *Acervo*, vol. 9, 1996.

14

GRAHAM, Sandra Lauderdale. *Caetana diz não*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2005,

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MATOS, Maria Izilda Santos de. "Porta adentro: criados de servir em São Paulo de 1890 a 1930". In: BRUSCHINI, Maria Cristina; SORJ, Bila (Org.). *Novos olhares: mulheres e relações de gênero no Brasil*. São Paulo: Marco Zero, 1994; CARVALHO, Marcus J. M. de. *Op. Cit.*; Flavia Fernandes de Souza. *Op. Cit.*; COWLING, Camillia. *Conceiving Freedom – women of color, gender, and the Abolition of Slavery in Havana and Rio de Janeiro*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina press, 2013; CUNHA, Olívia Maria Gomes da. "Criadas para servir: domesticidade, intimidade e retribuição". In: \_\_\_\_\_; GOMES, Flávio (Org.). *Quase-Cidadão: histórias e antropologias da pós-emancipação no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: FGV, 2007.

nuclear family, but also aggregates, dependents, domestic slaves and plantation slaves, the last ones in the social and power hierarchy that was established. Emphasizing the issues of mixture of races and private life, the domestic slavery was valued in its daily and cultural dimension by the lullabies, stories, games, tales, cooking and sexual relations, and the wet nurses were the more prominent individuals among the "inside slaves". Writing this in the decade of 30 of the 20th Century, the author intended to enhance the positive influences of the black culture and reject the scientism and racism trends that considered crossbreeding as a chronic problem in the Brazilian social formation, said by authors such as Nina Rodrigues and Oliveira Vianna. Freyre also wrote a book, *O Escravo nos anúncios de jornais brasileiros do século XIX* to discuss, among other themes, the domestic slavery in the Empire routine, through the pioneering analysis of advertisements of weekly papers as a source of research.<sup>12</sup>

After a long gap in the context of Social History, the domestic slavery was discussed again in the 90s by historians who highlighted the presence of women in History. The works of Maria Odila Leite Dias and Sandra Graham Lauderdale valued the forms of female resistance and demonstrated how women could violate the rules and make up new ways of acting in their pursuit of gaining space for social action. The former questioned the daily lives and the role of the slaves and freed slaves women in São Paulo during the 1800s, affecting with her analysis a series of subsequent studies. The second writer has chosen the binomial protection and obedience (*Proteção e Obediência*) as interpretative key to the patriarchal relations in Brazil during the 1800s, and used the domestic services as main object of her analysis.<sup>13</sup>

Using the concept of "webs of significance" from Clifford Geertz, the North-American historian recovered visions, experiences and resistance of the slaves experienced in the urban manorial houses within the city of Rio de Janeiro. In a subsequent study, Sandra Graham gave her considerations about the domestic slavery, focusing in the rural environment, through micro analyses of the lives of the slave Caetana and the freed slave Bernardina, both living in the coffee-producing Paraíba Valley.<sup>14</sup> According to the records in the Ecclesiastical court, Caetana was forced to marry the slave Custódio, following the orders of her master, but she refused to have a sexual relationship with her husband. And Bernardina is the main heiress in the will of her former mistress, Inácia Delfina de Souza Werneck, however, she could not receive the amount due to manipulations of the executor, the Baron of Paty do Alferes. Both examples are valued by the author in the sense of showing how women in different social groups tried to impose their wills in the context of the patriarchal society in 1800s.

Currently, the domestic service is receiving more and more attention of researches interested in discuss family, gender relations, labour market, slavery and post-abolishment. Concerned about understanding the social relations as dynamic and complex, the contemporary analyses accept opportunity for negotiations for the several marginalized social groups - slaves, free Africans, free slaves, free workers, women - although recognizing the utmost instability of the forms of life and work experienced in the daily routine. In this group, I highlight the studies of Maria Izilda Matos, Lorena Féres da Silva Telles, Marcus

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MUAZE, Mariana. A Descoberta da infância: a formação de um habitus civilizado na boa sociedade imperial. Dissertação (Mestrado em História Social da Cultura) " PUC-RJ, Rio de Janeiro, 1999; CARNEIRO, Maria Elizabeth Ribeiro. Procura-se preta, com muito bom leite, prendada, carinhosa: uma cartografia das amas de leite na sociedade carioca 1850-1888. Tese (Doutorado em História) " PPGHIS, UNB, Brasília, 2006. MARTINS, Bárbara Canedo Ruiz. Amas-de-leite e mercado de trabalho feminino: descortinando práticas e sujeitos (Rio de Janeiro, 1830-1890). Dissertação (Mestrado em História) "Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2006. KOUTSOUKOS, Sandra Sofia Machado. "Amas na fotografia brasileira da segunda metade do século XIX". In: Studium– dossier "Representação imagética das africanidades no Brasil". Campinas, 2007. Available at: <<http://www.studium.unicamp.br/africanidades.html>>. Access in Dec. 18th, 2014. MACHADO, Maria Helena P. T., "Entre Dois Beneditos: histórias de amas de leite no ocaso da escravidão". In: XAVIER, Giovana; BARRETO, Juliana e GOMES, Flávio (Orgs.). Mulheres Negras no Brasil escravista e do Pós- Emancipação. São Paulo: Sumus/Selo Negro, 2012.

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As in the Brazilian case, the historiography dedicated to the family and gender issues contributed to convert the domestic slavery in a research topic. Anne Firor Scott and Catherine Clinton, for example, questioned the ideal of the southern woman, fragile and helpless. However, they did not emphasize the slaves, and this minimized the faces of violence which they were subject to. An important book interpretative upturn about domestic slavery was the one written by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, because it has shown how the captives work was impregnated in the household daily life. In 2008, Thavolia Glymph diagnosed the meanderings of the imbalances of power between mistresses and domestic slaves, demonstrating the violence suffered by the slaves, from those mistresses who were experts in using physical and psychological violence, and were key characters in the creation of values and formation of the slaveholding society from the South. SCOTT, Anne Firor. *The Southern lady: from pedestal to politics, 1830-1930*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995. CLINTON, Catherine. *The plantation mistress: women's worlds in the old South*. New York: Pantheon, 1982; \_\_\_\_\_. *Caught in the web of the big house in the web of Southern social relations: women, Family and education*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985. FOX-GENOVESE, E. *Within the plantation household*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988, p 35. GLYMPH, Thavolia. *Out of the house... Op. Cit.* To study the small properties, I mention: BURKE, Diane Mutti. *On slavery's border: Missouri's small slaveholding households 1815-1865*. Athen and London: University of Georgia Press, 2010.

Carvalho, Camillia Cowling, Flavia Fernandes de Souza and Maria Olivia Gomes da Cunha<sup>15</sup> that, over and above important considerations about the "servants", present a diverse range of sources (literature, memories, "municipal ordinances", criminal cases, actions to release, reports from the police chiefs, newspaper advertisements, travelers journals, censuses and school documents) to the interested parties. The studies are unanimous to point out the prioritization existing among several "domestic" roles, that were performed by slaves. And they state that, at the summit of this hierarchy, there were the wet nurses.

In a previous study, I considered the role of the wet nurses within the family units of the manorial class of the Empire, using as a guide of the different ways of dealing with and conceiving childhood during the 1800s. I highlighted the endurance of this type of nursing practice, although the medical-scientific discourse and a large portion of the women's press were against it. Maria Elizabeth Ribeiro Carneiro studied the wet nurses within the space of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia (Holy House of Mercy, Health Clinic) and emphasized how they were represented in the medical-scientific discourse, in the literature and in the iconography between 1850-1888. Sandra Sofia Machado Koutsoukos and Maria Helena Machado also presented important contributions to this topic. The former made a survey of wet nurses photographs in photographic studios during the Empire, concluding that the portraits of children with their wet nurses were the most frequent image of domestic slaves produced under the orders of the manorial families. The second one has demonstrated, through the analysis of a criminal process in which the wet nurse suffocates and kills the white child, the several sources of tension in the relations between masters and slaves in the context of the domestic intimacy. From the narrative of several agents involved with the case, emerge the hardships of the slave, that was living a conflict about who she would feed (her son, Benedito, or her master's son, with the same name), the countless sleepless nights, the overlapping activities to be performed and the unfulfilled promises of her master.<sup>16</sup>

Bearing in mind this context, it is interesting to note that the complexity of the forms of slavery, the issue of the agency, the daily resistance, as well as the several experiences of the slaves were issues widely studied by the slavery social history. Nevertheless, in relation to domestic slavery, I would like to present two considerations. The first one concerns to the need to combine the analyses of the actions and resistance of the slaves as an overall picture of the economic, social, political and cultural frameworks and processes in force during the 1800s, with the goal of understanding the links between them. The second one concerns to the high quality of the studies, which locus is the urban area, contrasting with the almost non-existence of interpretations for the rural areas. But the rural life was very significant for the Brazilian society, up to, at least, the 1940s. During the 1800s, despite the growing importance of the cities, especially Rio de Janeiro, the vast majority of the free population and slaves, in particular, were still in the rural environment. And after the end of the Atlantic slave trade, the number of urban captives has declined at a much faster pace in comparison to the ones of the rural areas. The 1872 census points out that the provinces of Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, that

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The designation was taken from the study of Ricardo Salles for the Paraíba Valley, considering as mega owners the ones with more than 100 slaves. SALLES, Ricardo. *E o vale era o Escravo*. Op. Cit.

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Capivary Baron Inventory, 1863. Executor: Joaquim Ribeiro de Avellar Jr. Vassouras: CDH/ Universidade Severino Sombra (box 116).

20

The analysis of the database created by the inventories in Vassouras, registered in the old Historical Documentation Center of the University Severino Sombra, demonstrates that, in the 923 inventories enrolled between 1821 and 1888, 30,534 slaves were registered and only 2,829, that is, 9.26%, had some kind of registered profession. In the book "E o Vale era o escravo", Ricardo Salles states that the profession started to be written down only after 1845. SALLES, Ricardo. Op. Cit. p. 202-3,

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I would like to emphasize that I am not directly associating the number of people living together and the type of family (nuclear or extended). As stressed before, such categorizations have a meaning according to the form in which the family agents relate to each other. And, thus, they should take into account affections, personal connections, marriage strategies, mechanisms to maintain the properties and other factors.

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TELLES, Augusto C. da Silva. "Vassouras: estudo da construção residencial urbana". *Revista do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional*. Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da educação e Cultura, 1968, vol. 16, pp. 9-137, Planta VIII. The details about the dispositions of the rooms and the setting of the residents were provided by Ms. Ivone Barros Franco, to whom I express my sincere thanks.

is, the South-Central region, concentrated more than half of the slaves of the whole Empire. Most of the captives were allocated in the rural areas, as farmers ("from the land", as shown in several studies, surveys and the 1872 census), and the domestic service is the second main role shown. Therefore, the investment in researches approaching the subject in different spaces and conformations of rural property is vital for the understanding of the nineteenth century society as a whole. As the example of the North-American historiography,<sup>17</sup> such effort would enable a broad review of the role of the domestic slavery in our historical formation and would result in an in-depth criticism to the notion of "docile" domestic slavery established by Freyre, that is still present nowadays in the Brazilian social imagery.

### Between the house and the land: rural domestic slavery in the plantations of the Paraíba Valley.

In this section of the article, I concentrate greater attention to Pau Grande farm and to the relations between masters and domestic slaves inside their houses. Located nearby the Paty do Alferes village, Pau Grande plantation was one of the oldest and more important and producing properties of the region. After beginning as a sugar mill during the 18th Century, under the command of the landlords José Rodrigues da Cruz and Antônio Ribeiro de Avellar, the farm increased and extended beyond its limits, until becoming one of the biggest coffee complexes from Vassouras, managed by the Capivary Baron and, afterwards, by his son, Joaquim Ribeiro de Avellar, Viscount of Ubá. In 1863, after the death of the Baron, his son, the future Viscount of Ubá, inherited a total of 709 slaves, being classified as a mega owner of slaves.<sup>18</sup> The largest part of the amount received was distributed among the lands and properties forming the Pau Grande complex: Cachoeira (122 slaves, 160.000 coffee trees), Posse (104 slaves, 200.000 coffee trees), São Joaquim (93 slaves, 168.000 coffee trees), Glória (100 slaves, 100.000 coffee trees), Papagaio (77 slaves, 200.000 coffee trees) and the already known Pau Grande farm (213 slaves, no discrimination of coffee plantations), where the landlord and his family lived.<sup>19</sup>

In relation to the role of the slaves, the inventory of the Capivary Baron is insufficient in details. Most of the 709 captives has no determined role, with only those specifications: carpenter (1), trucker (3), trooper (1), foreman (1), blacksmith (1), cook (1), tailor (1), pageboy (1). The lack of definition in the activities of the captives in the document was not an exception to the norm in the inventories of the period. Such format shows that the age and the body condition were very important, because they affected directly the price of the slaves and the gross total estate enrolled.<sup>20</sup> There is no way to explain why those men and women were specially qualified in this document, but 3 of them may be considered as domestic slaves: Felicidade (cook, African, 55 years old, 700\$000), Juvenal (tailor, African, 50 years old, 800\$000) and Paschoal (pageboy, creole, 33 years old, 1,300\$000). The high rating received by those three is justified by the skilled roles they had, and

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Reference to the term used by MARX, K. "The Commodity" Capital. São Paulo: Abril Cultural, 1982. Cap. I., Livro 1, Vol. 1.

24

Enrollment list of the slaves of Joaquim Ribeiro de Avellar, 1872. Document pertaining to the private files of the family Barros Franco.

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At that time, lived in Pau Grande farm the couple Joaquim and Mariana Ribeiro de Avellar, their children Elisa, Luisa, Julia, José Maria, Antônio and Joaquim, besides the French governess Mme Doyen, their cousin, Ms. Antônia Ludovina Mascarenhas Salter and Joaquim Mascarenhas Salter. The eldest daughter, Maria José, had married Manoel Tosta and was living in the court, but she had the habit to spent periods with the family in Petrópolis and in the farm. In relation to the number of domestic slaves in the Pau Grande farm, we have to make a proviso. Through the enrollment list from 1872, it is not possible to know where the slaves lived, and the couple had other farms in that occasion. Even so, only Pau Grande and Glória were properties with dwelling houses with a greater comfort, and Glória was never mentioned in letters as a dwelling house. Therefore, the numbers presented may involve more than one property.

the highest value was given to Paschoal, certainly, because of his age, being considered highly productive, with great vitality and physical strength for a captive.

The Big house of the Pau Grande farm, built as a Portuguese "quinta" (farm) in the beginning of the century had two main wings connected by a chapel. On the left, lived Joaquim Ribeiro e Avellar, his wife Mariana Velho de Avellar and their six children. On the other half, lived the cousins Anna Balbina, Maria Serafina and Antônia Ludovina de Mascarenhas Salter, all single. The architecture, therefore, fostered a limited family interaction, with small nuclear families,<sup>21</sup> without a general arrangement that would preserve the proximity of the relatives, extended family. After all, there were open passageways in the chapel and in the dining room, which kept the connection between both sides of the house through the areas reserved to conviviality. In such spaces, the domestic slaves pertaining to both families would also pass, and the chapel had a broad ground floor, where the farm slaves had access to the mass on Sundays and holy days, they should be standing, and could be observed by the master and their families, who were on the second floor, close to the altar.<sup>22</sup>

This brief description of the place of residence intends to show the reader that the number of domestic slaves with a role described in the inventory of the Baron of Capivary does not correspond to what should be the daily reality of that space, that was big and would be difficult for only 3 people to work. Besides that, since the mid-century, the manorial class of the Empire was adopting a refinement of the social habitus, incorporating Europeanized behaviors as an element of prestige and a class differential. Such habitus included the appreciation of etiquette, education, schooling, fashion, but also a wide range of consumption goods. The list of such articles (assorted silverware, emblazoned fine tableware, glassware, linen, tablecloth, chandeliers and furniture) and the quantities in the inventory of large landowners are an excellent reference to realize the "commodity fetishism"<sup>23</sup> during the process of construction of taste and values of the dominant classes during the 19th century. And, in the dwelling house of the slave plantations, such objects were preserved, cleaned, polished, ironed and packed by slaves in domestic services. The new social habitus and the rules of *savoir vivre* were regularly followed by Mariana Velho de Avellar, when she became responsible for the management and administration of the domestic environment of the farm, in the 1860s, when she moved definitely to the farm with her husband, son of the Baron of Capivary.

The registration of the slaves of Joaquim Ribeiro de Avellar (1872), Mariana's husband and universal heir of the commodities in the house of the Pau Grande farm, allows us to examine the roles performed by the slaves within his properties.<sup>24</sup> Not ignoring the issue of the source, in terms of origin and age of the slaves listed, because we know that the masters used to lie in these fields, aiming to formalize the ownership of individuals who were illegally enslaved after the 1831 Law, the list brings important points for discussion. Only 9 years after the death of the Baron of Capivary, 91 domestic workers appeared in the enrollment list of the slaves of his son and universal heir, 9 of them free slaves and 15 already deceased, among over 800 slaves listed. In 1872, the family had 2 properties, in which they used to stay for long



periods: Pau Grande farm and Petrópolis house, acquired in 1863. That is to say, between those two main houses, 67 slaves and 9 free slaves had been working on domestic services. Those people should serve around 10 individuals with permanent residence in the farm and a more limited nuclear family in Petrópolis, because it was more common to see only the couple with their children going to Petrópolis.<sup>25</sup> Let us look at the figures.

By analyzing the slaves of Joaquim Ribeiro de Avellar in the enrollment list from 1872, I have made a list with two categories of functions: slaves “outside the house” and slaves “inside the house”. The former ones worked as foremen, blacksmiths, rural workers, construction workers, gardeners, troopers, poultry keepers, farmers, coachmen, carpenters and riders. While domestic slaves, “from the inside”, performed tasks as seamstress, housekeeper, maid, ironer, dishwasher, pantry worker, pageboy, cook, laundress, tailor and caretaker. Converted into numbers and materialized into family groups whenever possible, the roles mentioned provide the map of the domestic organization and of who were the African and Creole, men and women, adults and children working there. Let us see:

#### I. Domestic slaves in relation to function, age, origin and gender<sup>26</sup>

	Total number of slaves (discounted the deceased)	Number of freed slaves	Number of Africans	Minimum and maximum age	Gender (M, F)
seamstresses	10	2	1(65 years old)	12<65 years old	10 F
housekeeping (domestic service)	28	3	5(50<68 years old)	9<68 years old	8 M, 20 F
Maid	19	2	1(48 years old)	15<48 years old	19 F
ironer	0 (1 deceased not replaced)	-	-	-	-
Pantry worker	1	0	0	30 years old	1M
Pageboy	7	2	0	20<49 years old	7M
cook	4	0	2 (48<55 years old)	39<55 years old	2M, 2F
laundress	4	0	0	25<55 years old	4F
Tailor	2	0	1(50 years old)	30<50 years old	2M
Housekeeper	0 (1 deceased not replaced)	-	-	-	-

27  
Mariana Velho de Avellar notebook, 1880-1884. Private collection of the Barros Franco family.

When analyzing the table, we can notice that there are roles following a gender distinction, as is the case of seamstress, maids and

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The analysis of the ads in the *Jornal do Commercio* newspaper between 1840 and 1850 also pointed out the preference for men as cooks.

29

According to Guerrand, the kitchens were called as rejection space during the 19th century, because it was the last place of the house where the bourgeois would come in, so they were spaces where the masters hardly ever would enter. GUERRAND, Roger-Henri. "Espaços Privados". In: PERROT, Michelle (Org.). *História da Vida Privada: da Revolução Francesa à Primeira Guerra*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1999.

30

Mariana Velho de Avellar notebook, no date. Private collection of the Barros Franco family.

31

In relation to the Ribeiro de Avellar and Velho da Silva families, please see: MUAZE, Mariana. *As memórias da viscondessa*. Op. Cit.

32

Letter from Mariana Velho de Avellar to Leonarda Maria Velho da Silva. Petrópolis, November 13th, 1862. Roberto Meneses de Moraes collection.

laundress, who were women, and pageboys, who were men. In relation to the categories of pantry worker and ironer, I prefer not to state they were distinguished by gender, due to the reduced number of captives found, and this would certainly lead to a mistaken generalization. In relation to tailors, the denomination in Portuguese is defined as masculine, linked to the knowledge of sewing up fine clothes, with far-fetched fits. Nevertheless, many seamstress mastered this art and would cut heavy dresses, as described in the family letters, through the ordering of fabrics, buttons and embellishments for women's clothing. It is worth saying that the seamstress were considered as domestic slaves because they performed their daily activities within the house, under the watchful eye of the mistress, as a task performed in groups. In addition, the high number of slaves dedicated to this was due to the manufacture of clothing for the captives within the domestic unit.

Sewing, accounting and distribution of clothing to the slaves was a female function. In relation to Pau Grande farm, Mariana Velho de Avellar had a notebook to take notes of the quantity of pieces of clothing manufactured by her seamstresses and the distribution of them to the farm slaves.<sup>27</sup> She would write down "clothes taken by the farm people" and pointed out the ones receiving "pants and shirt", "skirt and shirt", "long sleeve shirt" and "short sleeve shirt", showing the heavy work burden performed by the seamstresses throughout the year, after all, it was a staff with over seven hundred slaves. The notebook, monthly filled up from 1880 to 1884, was divided in three lots, with the name of each slave receiving the pieces of clothing. When the clothes were delivered to the foremen, for distribution, which was rare, it was also registered.

Still in relation to the gender issue, the number of cooks is surprising, especially if we add to the table the ones recently deceased. Among the 7 cooks enlisted, there were 6 men, 5 African. Even if we consider that some of those were not domestic slaves, and that they were preparing the meal for the farm slaves, the data above points out an "African" team, prominently formed by men within the house. If we think about the necessary handling of big and heavy iron pots, pans, firewood for the oven, as well as killing, slicing and carry the animals in the so-called "dirty kitchens", outside the house, we can realize that physical strength was an important feature for this role.<sup>28</sup> However, the "clean kitchen" tasks, where the pastries, doughs, soft drinks, cakes, juices and stew were made, could be provided by both genders and would follow a Europeanized standard. In the Pau Grande farm, the kitchens were located at the end of long hallways. The windows faced the rear side of the house, up in the hill, where a creek would supply water to the house. In the kitchens there were yet two stairs taking to the ground floor, with storerooms, through some of the house slaves would pass without accessing the social area. The kitchens were central spaces within the big houses.<sup>29</sup> All domestic captives could move around this area. The preparation of the food was mainly performed by the cooks and by some workers classified as "inside the house", but activities such as dish washing and heating the bathing water were also performed there.

In relation to the food prepared, some recipes served in the Pau Grande farm survived over time, written down on a notebook with

33

Letter from Mariana Velho de Avellar to Leonarda Maria Velho da Silva. Petrópolis, February 15th, 1862. Roberto Meneses de Moraes collection.

34

Letter from Leonarda Maria Velho da Silva to Mariana Velho de Avellar. Rio de Janeiro, August 8th, 1864. Roberto Meneses de Moraes collection.

35

Letter from Leonarda Maria Velho da Silva to Mariana Velho de Avellar. Rio, August 8th, 1864. Roberto Meneses de Moraes collection.

36

Letter from Leonarda Maria Velho da Silva to Mariana Velho de Avellar. Petrópolis 3<sup>rd</sup>. f December 22nd. Roberto Meneses de Moraes collection.

notes such as: "Angels' cake - excellent, economic in the absence of eggs".<sup>30</sup> As the vast majority of slaves were not able to read, to prepare the food the slaves would need the help of a literate, in general the mistress. The list includes sour starch biscuits, corn bread, fruit confectionery, very common in the Brazilian cuisine, sweet egg cream from Portugal and plum cake, an European influence.

As it is shown, the strong presence of African people in the kitchen, pointed out by the enrollment from 1872, contrasted with the will to "Europeanize" the dietary habits, which can be noticed in the recipes copied, the women's newspapers and letters exchanged between Mariana Velho de Avellar and her mother, Ms. Leonarda Maria Velho da Silva<sup>31</sup>: "mother, please lend me (...) Luiz, your cook, not only to treat others as I wish and must, but also to teach my "kitchen pets" how to cook some delicacies from which I've been deprived for so long".<sup>32</sup> When asking her mother - who lived in the court - to lend her the cook to spend some time in the farm, Mariana Velho de Avellar intended not only to impress her guests coming for dinner, but also would make Luiz teach her slaves, whom she refers to as "kitchen pets". Luiz stood out as a "state of the art" cook, because he knew how to use firewood, charcoal and pottery, and also how to prepare exquisite meals.

The captives designed for the "inside the house services" had free pass in the kitchen. Those workers are the majority in the enrollment from 1872, certainly because they had several roles, such as: cleaning and organization of the house, dish washing, removal of waste, serving the table, care of the silverware and clothing, besides some goodies made by men and women listed as "domestic service". In relation to them, the letters show several roles they could perform daily: "you see, mother, amid all this confusion, a laundress got sick and I was obligated to put Felipa to wash and Bernarda to iron".<sup>33</sup> Another example was given by Ms. Leonarda in August 8th, 1864, when she acquired an excellent slave for Ms. Antônia Mascarenhas Salter paying one million and five hundred and fifty thousand reais, including the taxes. The acquirer celebrates: "she cooks, made my dinner for 2 days and I did not feel hungry, I believe my taste is similar to our friend's. She moderately irons men's clothing, washes and, even in the kitchen, prepares some meals." So, the new slave was very talented and could perform different tasks: cook for sophisticated tastes, iron, wash.<sup>34</sup>

It is interesting to notice that, in a farm as big as Pau Grande, there were several slaves who would perform these roles, without the need to pay such a high amount. However, the mistress wanted a slave who already had the know how of sophisticated services in the kitchen and with the clothes, abilities which were difficult to learn and more and more appreciated. Among the qualities of the slave, she enlisted also her toughness, joy and gratitude, all characteristics of a "good slave". Finally, she asked her daughter to "be in the dinner where the black woman will cook for the first time, so that you could tell me what you see".<sup>35</sup> The need to train the "inside the house slaves" appears in other passages: "my servant is a 24 year-old girl that knows nothing. During the days she spent here, her and the other black people have made stupid things. I have to keep an eye on them, in order not to lose the few slaves I have".<sup>36</sup>

The kitchens were central spaces within the big houses. How-

ever, when someone could walk outside the kitchens, they had better chances to get their much dreamt freedom. You can see in the table below that all free domestic servants had 4 main roles: maid, pageboy, seamstress and housekeeping. The data also show that those men and women would continue in the same roles performed by them when they were slaves. This may have several explanations that do not exclude each other, like gratitude as a guiding principle of the relationship between masters and former slaves; the existence of family links that would attach those free slaves to their original staff; even the fact that they did not see other possibilities of works after the long period in the captivity of the farm. From the 9 free slaves found, only 2 have no parental link with the slaves from Pau Grande, they are: Mariana, seamstress, creole, origin unknown, and Maria, maid, listed as being born within the property, but with deceased parents. I believe Maria should be relative to any domestic slave, that decided to free her because of the advanced age. But, as she was orphan, the registration of relationship is not on the list. The younger women who were designed to the task were between 15 and 17 years old. As she was maid at such young age shows that they kept her in the same place as their relatives, because it was no easy to achieve the condition of free slave or domestic servant. She probably had the help and supervision of older slaves when performing her tasks.

The slaves enrollment from 1872 for the Pau Grande farm here used is currently in the private files of the Barros Franco family. It is a copy kept by Joaquim Ribeiro de Avellar, with the slaves belonging to his property.

II. Table with the free slaves with domestic roles, by role performed<sup>37</sup>

	Name	Age	Other relatives	place of birth
Maid	Maria	6	Single, child, deceased parents.	creole
	Deolinda*	44	Single, 1 child	creole
Pageboy	Otoni	28	Single, no children, son of the laundress Euph Euphenia.	creole
	João	20	Single, son of Deolinda*	creole
Seamstress	Joana	22	Single, 5 children, wide parental network	creole
	Mariana	22	Single, no children, unknown origin	creole
housekeeping	Ponciana	31	Married, 3 children and wide parental network	creole
	Genésia	30	Single, daughter of Ludocina**, with child	creole
	Ludocina**	50	Single, 2 children, 3 grandchildren	African

With regard to the family networks, the enrollment from 1872 allows us to identify several generation of slaves who performed, in different or simultaneous periods, roles within the big house. I would like

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SALLES, Ricardo. E o vale era escravo. Op. Cit.; SLENES, Robert W. Na Senzala uma Flor, esperanças e recordações na formação da família escrava -Brasil Sudeste, século XIX. São Paulo: Ed. Unicamp, 1999; FLORENTINO, Manolo e GOES, J.R. A paz das senzalas. Famílias escravas e tráfico atlântico, Rio de Janeiro, 1790-1850. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1997.

40

Heitor Moura, in a recent article, presents estimates for the arrival of Africans in that area, covering even after the 1831 Law. See: MOURA, Heitor. "Tirando leite de pedra": o tráfico africano estimado a partir de dados etários". In: MUAZE, Mariana & SALLES, Ricardo (Org.). O Vale do Paraíba e o Império do Brasil nos quadros da segunda escravidão. Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras, 2015.

41

Official list of resident slaves on every propriety. It contained name, age and origin, and became mandatory after the Free Womb Law in order to control each slave should be freed

to indicate the family of the ironer Bernardina (creole, 50 years old, single), with 3 children: the maid Martiniana (creole, 17 years old, single), the domestic servant Ponciana (creole, 31 years old, married with the carpenter Ambrósio, and mother of Raul, 10; Deolinda, 7, Florinda, 6), and the pageboy Leoncio (creole, 26 years old, married to Laurentina, seamstress). Aside from the fact that Bernardina and her 3 children worked as "inside the house slaves", the spouses of their children had specialization: Laurentina, Leoncio's wife, was seamstress and also sister of the pantry-worker Firmino (creole, 30 years old, single). Although they were able to belong to the "inside the house slaves", Laurentina and Firmino had other 6 brothers, all of them working in the fields, as their mother, Alda (African, widowed, 54 years old).<sup>38</sup>

It is clear that the interaction in the same environment, shown in the example above, facilitated the relationships of affection and solidarity, which sometimes would be converted into marriages between the "inside the house slaves". However, we can not ignore that such choices were a successful strategy to maintain the family group in the same living space. Another similar case: the free slave Ludocina (domestic servant, 50 years old, African). After raising her two daughters within the big house, she kept Ginésia (domestic servant, creole, 30 years old, single and mother of Antônio) and Adelaide (domestic servant, creole, 29 years old, married to the cook Augusto and mother of Maria) as a part of the domestic slaves, accounting for 3 generations (mother, daughters and grandchildren) working and living in the manorial house.

Nevertheless, not always the domestic slaves with a family could stay close to their relatives and children after they reach the working age. The couple Daniel (cook, African, 50 years old) and Aderandrina (maid, creole, 42 years old) had 5 children. Among them, Eugenia (3 years old) and Marcelina (9 years old) spent their time with the parents, because they did not reach the working age yet. Nonetheless, Quirino, only 12 years old, Daniela, 22 years old and Midelina, 19 years old (and married to Manoel) were allocated in the farm, with different work spaces from their parents and brothers. Besides that, for sure, the several tasks and the heavy daily labour performed in the coffee fields and in the big house made it even more difficult for them to live together.

Considering all domestic slaves enlisted in the enrollment from 1872, in relation to their families, there were 37 captives without family, with no parental link within the staff, and 27 different family groups, with different formations, involving one to six domestic slaves in the same formation. For this calculation, I included the non-blood relation, such as husband and wife, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, etc. The data shows not only the existence of slave families in large farms, broadly indicated by Ricardo Salles, Manolo Florentino, Roberto Góis, Robert Slenes and others, but also that there were different slave families, with several formations, serving the inside of the big house.<sup>39</sup> The African presence in those families shall be considered, mainly because it is well known that several slaves enrolled in 1872 as creole, were actually Africans who arrived to the Paraíba Valley after 1831, when the slave trade was already illegal in Brazil.<sup>40</sup>

In relation to the slave children, the enrollment from 1872 allows us to make interesting analyses. Among the 67 slaves and 9 free

adults who performed their tasks within the properties of the Pau Grande complex, there were 33 slave children, who could circulate in the same environment of their parents and relatives. Besides that, no matter if their parents were mentioned at the “matrícula”<sup>41</sup> as “from the inside” or “from the outside”, the field “role” of the children enlisted was blank, just below the name of their mothers, when they were alive. Such organization allows us to say that, when this field was filled, the child was already working. This was the fate of Cezandrina (daughter of Bonifácia, from the plantation), Abel (son of Abel, domestic service), Cepalpino (son of Faustina, 40 years old, maid) and Deolinda (deceased parents), all working as “domestic servants” at the age of 10 and 11. It is interesting to notice that the same age was kept for the “outside the house” children, indicating that this was the age when childhood years finished for all the ones who were born as captives. This also allows to state that the “domestic service” was the first occupation of every servant. In this role they would learn to make a bit of everything, and afterwards they could be designed to the roles they were specialized to, stay in the domestic service or even go to the plantations, when they showed no ability or good behavior to stay within the manorial house.

The letters exchanged between Mariana Velho de Avellar and Ms. Leonarda Velho da Silva also helped us to think about the daily routine of the domestic slaves. From the family daily life described in the letters, arise the coming and going of maids, the form the masters treated the slaves, the wet nurses with the children, and the movement of the slaves of the court to the province, borrowed or purchased. Crossing the manorial discourse with the wills, inventories and enrollment of slaves, we can understand the uneven relations, symbolic violences and survival strategies permeating the relations between masters and slaves. In a letter written in November 13th, 1862, Mariana expressed to be thankful: “God and the Blessed Mother will give you relief and everything you desire, my good mother, for the good and relief you have made borrowing me your great slave who, when behaving well, no money can pay”.<sup>42</sup> Such considerations point out to the appreciation of the “good slave”, that, in the eyes of the mistresses, were those who had ability for the service and good behavior.

Understood as two sides of the same coin, slaves ability and obedience should be positively balanced in the form they were ideally conceived in the existing system of domination. However, in the passage mentioned above, Mariana acknowledged that, in fact, this was complicated, because the good behavior and execution of the tasks requested depended on the willingness of the captive. Her comment, then, shows some condescension with their behavior, due to the good quality of the work provided. As a strategy, the slave used her good service as a bargaining tool, valuing her before the mistress and allowing her to get, maybe, an advantage when the service was performed gladly. With the exception of subtle complaints such as that one, no detailed description of disobedience on the part of the domestic slaves was found in the letters. The ones who challenged the epistolary narrative here demonstrated had little or no interest at all in reporting the reactions, endurance and acts of rebellion of the slaves. In the discourse found in the letters between Mariana and Ms. Leonarda, we can

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In relation to breastfeeding during the 19th century, please see: MUAZE, Mariana. *A Descoberta da infância: a formação de um habitus civilizado na boa sociedade imperial*. Dissertação de Mestrado, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 1999.

44

Letter from José Maria Velho da Silva to Mariana Velho de Avellar. June 26th, no date. In relation to slaves diets and health, please see: KARASCH, Mary. *A Vida dos Escravos no Rio de Janeiro 1808-1850*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000, especially Chapter 5.

notice the vertical relationship of the domination system of the manorial class, and everything seemed to work according to the existing hierarchical rationale.

Searching for the roles of the ones who appeared as coadjuvants in the epistolary narrative at issue, we see that the domestic slaves used to accompany their masters in travels. When the Ribeiro de Avelar family spent periods in their houses in Petrópolis and in the court, they used to take a large number of slaves to serve them. The transit of domestic slaves would also occur for other reasons. A very common case was the wet nurses case. As Mariana had many slaves, often a relative would ask her to concede pregnant slaves for the breastfeeding. In March 25th, 1862, she commented: “mother, you will help me by telling Juca that I offer him Felisberta, who raised my two daughters. She is different from Bernarda in relation to the housekeeping, but she is very careful and clean, and she gave birth after Carolina, I believe.” Her letter show the need to synchronize the births, the characteristics of hygiene and care, as well as her clear preference for wet nurses known by the family. Her intention was to avoid problems such as: sickness, lack of hygiene, promiscuity and poor diet, which were the main arguments used by doctors condemning this type of breastfeeding.<sup>43</sup>

The transit of slaves from the farm to the court and vice-versa also occurred in cases of medical treatment. In June 26th, for example, the counselor José Maria Velho da Silva was explaining his daughter, Mariana, the medical advices received from the doctor, Mr. Peixoto, for the recovery of the slave Sebastião: avoid rain, wind and sun, take a walk, avoid eating fat, avoid alcoholic beverages and, if possible, drinking milk. The justification for the temporary relocation of the captive was the clean air of the field, but there were clear recommendations, such as: “do not spoil him, because he gets lost with this attitude. I gave him work to do, because he is very lazy.”<sup>44</sup>

The uniform and seamless narrative contained in the letters clearly minimized the daily conflicts and violence, reproducing the dominant discourse in the slaveholding society. However, details appear in simple notes, such as the laziness in the case of Sebastião, or the bad behavior of the slave mentioned before. In the existing domination system, the selection of tasks, places of accommodation, quantity of hours worked, permission for religious cults, the possibility to live as a family, the formation of cronyism relationships, the authorization to save the earnings... everything was in the calculation of manorial power, not to mention the prerogative of physical violence. For the ones who worked or moved around the dwelling space of the masters, the possibility to earn benefits was more likely. Even so, in the existing patriarchal culture, the masters should keep an unstable balance of the privileges granted, always reminding them that the benefits were something that could be taken away from them at any moment.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, on the part of the captive, it was necessary to know the ground rules and their breaches. That said, often, the main purpose of escapes, insubordination, small acts of rebellion and bad behavior was not to beat the system, but being valued by the masters. Even so, any action was risky, because the links were unevenly established. The slavery relations within the households involved privileges granted, but also the existence of abuse, humiliation, harassment,

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REIS, João José e SILVA, Eduardo. *Negociação e Conflito*. Op. Cit.

46  
GRAHAM, Sandra L. *Proteção e Obediência*. Op. Cit.

physical and moral violence. In the culture of patriarchal domination, the values connected to authority, dependency and hierarchy constituted a power vocabulary, spoken through small gestures, gazes and choices. The consequences and possibilities belonged to the horizon of expectation of the slaves. The calculations of the ways to act were a daily practice performed by both social actors at issue. However, masters and slaves depended on their results unevenly, because they occupy different spaces in the society.

Nevertheless, even when guided by hierarchical relationships of daily living, affection, complicity and fidelity would arise and go beyond the vertical structure master-slave. Those ambiguous relations, potentially enabled by the patriarchal power, are one of the most difficult aspects to evaluate in the links created between masters and slave servants. Obviously, I don't want to soften the big house slavery, as Gilberto Freyre did, but try to understand how the connections established within the domestic area operated. The interpretative challenge is kept, because the binomial protection and obedience does not explain everything.<sup>46</sup>

Let us think about the example of the slave Felisberta, appearing in the letters exchanged between Mariana and Carolina, wife of her brother Juca, living in the court.

You have made me such a great favor borrowing Felisberta to raise Maria Izabel that, naturally, the importance of the service is beyond my natural problem in writing.

I am very grateful for your delicate favor. (...) I am grateful with all my heart.

Felisberta performs exactly her role, making an effort to please us, so much that she is coming back to you missing us a lot. I wish her all the best, because she deserves it. If the doctor didn't tell her to leave the court, I would let her be here with me. (...)

I send you a warm hug, and also to Mariquinhas, Júlia, Lulu, Antônio Ribeiro, José Maria and also Ms. Antônia and Ms. Maria.

I recommend Ms. D. Mariana, to Mr. Braz and Mr. Joaquim Mascarenhas. I miss my friend and brother. Greetings to Janjana, Maria Gertrudes and Bernarda. With all my heart,

Your thankful sister and friend,

Carolina Velho<sup>47</sup>

Felisberta went to live with the couple Juca and Carolina Velho da Silva in March, 1862, on the birth of Maria Izabel. The slave was chosen because she had raised Júlia and Luísa, daughters of Mariana. In the letter above, Carolina thanks for the almost 3 years when the wet nurse stayed in her house, praising her. Crossing the letters with the inventory of the Baron of Capivary (1863), whose staff of slaves enlisted was entirely inherited by Joaquim and Mariana, we can found the African, Cabinda, 30 years old, named Felisberta. In reproductive age, evidences show that it is the same captive. Working with this hypothesis, we can deduce that, if Felisberta raised Júlia, Luísa and Maria Isabel,



50

"By means of Sabino you will receive a dress that Maria Izabel sends to her mother Beta". Letter from José Maria Velho da Silva to Mariana Velho de Avellar. Court, March 20th, 1867. Roberto Meneses de Moraes collection.

51

It is interesting to highlight that, in the inventory of Ms. Leonarda Maria Velho da Silva, Deolinda was mentioned as one of her slaves, calculated in 800\$000. Inventory of Ms. Leonarda Maria Velho da Silva, Rio de Janeiro, March 16th, 1871. Roberto Meneses de Moraes collection.

52

My emphasis. Letter from Leonarda Maria Velho da Silva to Mariana Velho de Avellar. Petrópolis, Saturday, December 3rd, 9:00 p.m., s/a. Roberto Meneses de Moraes collection.

53

Such examples show how, at the same time as the violence, which was always present, slavery as an institution created spaces, for bargaining and for conflicts, in a daily life defined by social hierarchic division. REIS, João José & SILVA, Eduardo. Op. Cit.

she had, gave birth at least three times, from which the children may be survived or not. After a long time living in the court, in the house of Juca and Carolina, Felisberta experienced health problems and returned to the farm, supporting the practice of sending captives to the province when convalescent. However, the sources don't mention if, when returning to Pau Grande, the captive found her children.

In 1866, with the birth of Mariana, second heir of Carolina and Juca, the Viscountess send to her brother another wet nurse. This time, Bernarda was chosen:

(...) Little Mariana is very well and Bernarda performs a great job, we are putting on weight, she pleases us a lot. She is very respectful and gratefully thanks the constant and good news that, by myself, she receives about her son, she thanks a lot the care taken with Feliciano. If Bernarda continues like that, as I wish, I am satisfied.

Send us news about Felisberta, our friend, because we always remember her seriousness, pride and evidences of friendship and interest she gave us when raising Maria Izabel: what a nice creature! Send regards to Felisberta, tell her we always remember her with joy. (...)

Your true friend and brother

José Maria.<sup>48</sup>

In the manorial discourse, the compliments to the domestic slaves Felisberta and Bernarda showed significant qualities: ability in the tasks performed, good behavior, gratitude, willingness to please, subservience and acknowledge of the master-slave hierarchy. In exchange for the services rendered, the masters used the "bargaining system" constituted. In the case of the African from Moçambique, Bernarda, 40 years old, Mariana Velho de Avellar promised her that her son, 3 years old only, would stay in the farm receiving the care necessary to his development. However, if she was going to be a wet nurse, why they did not send her information about the baby who was just born? Mariana herself said in the letter that the slave gave birth after Carolina. Such absence points out two possibilities: the death of the child right after birth, or permanence of the child with the mother in the court, but this choice was very rare, because the masters did not appreciate their children to share the milk and care of the wet nurse with another child.<sup>49</sup>

As we can see, despite what it may seem when reading the epistle for the first time, the negotiations between mistresses and wet nurses had nothing to do with the existence of harmonious relationships. The mortality rate in the early childhood was huge in all social groups, and amongst the slaves this number was even higher, due to the precariousness of their living and working conditions. Therefore, Bernarda, as well as Felisberta, mentioned before, knows that maybe she might never see Feliciano and her other children, if they existed, again. However, if she resisted to perform her new task, she would deflagrate a conflict that could mean losing the benefits earned as a "inside the house slave". So, she only had to obey the request of the masters and negotiate for them to take care of her child. Thus, maybe,

54

My emphasis. Will of Ms. Mariana Luiza da Glória Avellar. Paty do Alferes, 1848. Roberto Meneses de Moraes collection.

55

Agreement for the sale of slaves written by Ms. Mariana Luiza da Glória Avellar, Pau Grande farm. March 9th, 1848. Roberto Meneses de Moraes collection.

56

The idea used here is inspired by Bourdieu, to whom the symbolic power/symbolic violence acts on the world, allowing it to obtain the equivalent to what is obtained with force (physical or economic force). For Bourdieu, the symbolic power is not on the «symbolic systems», but in the relationship between who exercises the power and the ones who are subject to it. Thereby, the power of the words and mottoes of the ones who said them can be understood. BOURDIEU, P. O poder simbólico (10ª ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2007, pp. 14-15.

57

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he would have a better fate.

Cases like these show border areas, extremely ambiguous, of the relationship between masters and domestic slaves. The long years of conviviality generate good feelings, as the ones expressed by Juca, Carolina and Maria Izabel in the letters. The latter sent a dress as a gift to Felisberta, who she lovingly called “mother Beta”.<sup>50</sup> With her age, she could not go out to shop, so, the dress was acquired by her father or, most likely, her mother. Another example to be mentioned is the case of Deolinda. The recovery of the slave from Ms. Leonarda was celebrated by Mariana, her daughter: “I am very satisfied with the news from Deolinda. Thread the needle with her eye covered and with sore eyes is a miracle, the treatment is correct”.<sup>51</sup> The ambiguity of the relations at issue shows slaves that performed several roles within the house. In a letter sent on December 3rd, Ms. Leonarda said:

we were surprised when Daniel arrived, answering our questions saying that there were no news and that everybody was well. But, as nothing is perfect, he told us, after that, the bad news that poor Simão was dead. We are very sad about this very good slave, liked by Mariquinhas, when she was a child, and finally when he was my vallet de chambre when I stayed in Botafogo. Joaquim, certainly, must be sad, even more to be used to him. But let us stop talking about sad things and talk about happy things.<sup>52</sup>

On the part of the captives, there were a series of expectations in relation to the good services rendered, far beyond the dress received by Bernarda or the medical treatment for Deolinda. The great desired moment, at least from the point of view of the slave, was the acquisition of the emancipation. However, nothing was guaranteed. The close living, the affections and fidelities built for years of domestic slavery could be rewarded with freedom, or not. So, opening the will of the master was an important moment for the slaves, because they had the chance to achieve their dream of freedom. The possibility to grant this ultimate benefit was an instrument of domination executed daily by the masters and mistresses. The will of Ms. Mariana Luiza da Glória Avellar, aunt of Joaquim Ribeiro de Avellar, is very significant to the culture of manorial power:<sup>53</sup>

I free all slaves, namely: Guilhermina, creole, Jesuína, creole, Emília, brown, Militana Inhanhana.

The will is going to pay for the parts belonging to the sisters of both slaves Balbina and Maria do Bom Jesus, so they can be free.

She leaves a gold chain, a memoir, earrings and cloths for the master to share with the slaves who are free, namely: Guilhermina, Jesuína, Emília, Militana and Deolinda.<sup>54</sup>

Shortly after registering the emancipations above in a will, Ms. Mariana da Glória changed her mind. She sold Militana Inhanhana, Balbina and Maria do Bom Jesus to her brother, Baron of Capivary. In the purchase and sale document for the slaves, she clearly stated that the transaction was not because of economic reasons. She explained: “I make this sell as a result of her bad behavior” and kept accusing the bother two of colluding with the bad behavior of Militana.<sup>55</sup> The attitude here described shown an authoritarian and pedagogic character, strongly supported by the culture of manorial domination. Her attitude

reached not only the punished women, but all domestic slaves who, through this act, felt the heavy hand of the arbitrary power of the masters on their fate. In the existing slaveholding grammar, emancipation (or any other privilege acquired in the bargaining system involved in the existing patriarchal relationships) should be understood as a blessing, a generous concession, and so, it could be withdrawn. Ms. Mariana da Glória benefited of this instability and used tricks known by her peers to use justice in her favor. When selling slaves, she revoked a part of her will without the need to reformulate it, because she could not free what did not belong to her anymore. As a simple gesture legitimized by the system of manorial domination, she sealed a new fate for those slaves.

As you can see in the existing bargaining system, they would not give up the use of force whenever necessary. Besides physical violence, there was also the symbolic violence<sup>56</sup> imposing the dominance of the masters and reminding them all the time the social place of the slave, that is, a mere commodity whose fate belonged to someone else. In conclusion, it is possible to state that the “good slave” in the eyes of the dominant class, was the one who had internalized the patriarchal culture and behave as desired. The attitudes of Ms. Maria da Glória show that women from wealthy classes, housewives, also followed the trends of patriarchal domination and tried to keep the order in the private sphere, through her functions managing the house. From this daily dynamics, extremely ambiguous affection and complicity were created, which, when highlighted, help to understand the complexity of the relationship between masters and domestic slaves. But such emotions did not soften the domestic slavery, on the contrary, they converted it in a complex historical phenomenon, with consequences in our current society.

Back to the considerations about the existing domestic work, made in the beginning of this article, we can say that the slaveholding habitus, based on discretionary, authoritarian and dominant hierarchical social relations during the 1800s, laid deep roots, that were kept until nowadays. Their values, built for centuries of physical and symbolic violence, were reinvented for the long duration and have found a permanence locus despite the social struggles and labor disputes occurred over the 20th and 21st centuries. The domestic service, a category that had just achieved isonomy in relation to the labor rights and where only 30% of the workers are regularly employed, is certainly one of those permanence locus.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, we may still mention the rural work, that only achieved full labor rights in the 1988 Constitution, and presents the highest rate of “contemporary slave labor” of the Brazilian society. Such statements make us think about the relations between past and present. I give to the reader in these pages some contributions for their consideration.

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