

# Landing African captives and medical routines at the Port of Recife, Brazil prior to 1831

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Os desembarques de cativos africanos e as rotinas médicas no Porto do Recife antes de 1831

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## Abstract

The Provedoria-Mor da Saúde of Pernambuco (Brazil), the government agency which took care of public health in Pernambuco, was created in 1810. Thereafter, slave ships that arrived at Recife were visited by health agents who verified if the recently arrived enslaved people carried diseases which were considered contagious, according to the 19<sup>th</sup> century medical sciences. Only those who carried the said maladies were sent to the Santo Amaro Leprosarium to be treated. Once they were healed, they were returned to their owners to be sold. The employees of that health agency examined slave ships that carried more than 47 thousand people to Recife. Their reports help us to understand how the slave trade was carried out in a major Brazilian harbor, before it was declared illegal in 1831.

## Resumo

A Provedoria-Mor da Saúde de Pernambuco foi criada em 1810. A partir de então, os navios negreiros que chegavam no Recife passaram a ser visitados por agentes da saúde que verificavam se os escravizados recém-desembarcados traziam doenças consideradas contagiosas, de acordo com a medicina da época. Apenas aqueles que traziam esses males eram mandados para o Lazareto de Santo Amaro para serem tratados. Uma vez curados, eram devolvidos a seus donos para serem vendidos. Os empregados da Provedoria da Saúde vistoriaram navios negreiros que trouxeram mais de 47 mil pessoas para o Recife. Seus relatos das visitas ajudam-nos a entender o funcionamento do tráfico de escravos num dos principais portos brasileiros antes que este fosse decretado totalmente ilegal, em 1831.

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## Keywords

Slave Trade; Contagious Diseases; Quarantine; Recife Harbor.

## Palavras-chave

Tráfico de Escravos; Doenças Contagiosas; Quarentena; Porto do Recife.

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CONRAD, Robert E. *Tumbeiros: o tráfico de escravos para o Brasil*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1985, p. 58.

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VASCONCELLOS GALVÃO, Sebastião. *Dicionário chorográfico, histórico e geográfico de Pernambuco* (Rio de Janeiro, 1908-1927). Recife: CEPE, 2006, vol. 1, p. 82-83. Also refer to: SANTOS FILHO, Lycurgo. *História Geral da Medicina Brasileira*. São Paulo: Edusp, 1966, p. 256.

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PEREIRA DA COSTA, F.A. *Anais Pernambucanos*. Recife: Fundarpe, 1983-1985, vol. 7, p. 147.

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We thank Francisco Sales de Albuquerque, Vera Lúcia Costa Acioli, and Hildo Leal da Rosa for the digital and transcribed copy of the book provided within the Conservation Project for the Documentary Collection of the Health Department of the Port of Recife ("Projeto de Conservação do Acervo Documental da Vigilância Sanitária do Porto do Recife" – APEJE/MP-PE – PROCURADORIA), under the coordination of Francisco Sales de Albuquerque and Vera Lúcia Costa Acioli. We also thank Professor Ana Lúcia Araújo and Almanack's peer reviewers for their thorough reading of the original article; CNPq for supporting this research; Alexandre Guilherme de Farias Oliveira, a PIBIC/CNPq scholar in 2008/2009.

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Arquivo Público Jordão Emerenciano (Recife), "Livro d'Entradas das Embarcações Vezitadas da Provedoria Mor da Saúde" (hereinafter "APEJE, Livro d'Entradas").

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To be more accurate, the book only has 3 disembarkation records in 1813, 17 in 1814, 25 in 1819, 27 in 1820, 28 in 1821, 12 in 1822, 19 in 1823, 10 in 1824, 16 in 1825, 13 in 1826, 11 in 1827, 7 in 1828, and 5 in 1829. About the total number of slave ships that arrived in Pernambuco, refer to: Transatlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages. [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org)

Before Brazil passed its anti-slave trade law in 1831, the slave trade was part of everyday life at the country's major ports. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, social hygienists recommended Africans who disembarked in the country should be taken to a quarantine facility, where, according to Robert Conrad, they should be confined for at least eight days and kept under observation, receiving medical care before being sold at their owners' slave warehouses.<sup>1</sup> Although slave ships were coming to Recife since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that it was established that "negros novos" – "new negroes," that is, recently arrived Africans – should be sent to the Santo Amaro Lazaretto.<sup>2</sup> Located by the Beberibe River, the Lazaretto was at what was considered a safe distance from Olinda and the central area of Recife, thus safeguarding residents against pestilential miasmas emanating from the bodies of people who were receiving care. The Santo Amaro neighborhood was freshened by ocean winds, which would cross the isthmus connecting Olinda and Recife before reaching that area. That wind regime, according to miasma theory, would protect more populated areas from diseases that were considered contagious at the time. The Office of the Provedor-mor (Commissary General) of Health of the Province of Pernambuco was then established in 1810.<sup>3</sup> From that point on, inspectors were supposed to visit slave ships and examine captives, referring those with diseases considered contagious to the lazaretto. In addition to other sources, this work will mostly focus on a book that survived from the old Office of the Provedor-mor of Health, in which we find a substantial amount of records on disembarkation from slave ships in Recife between the years 1813 and 1829.<sup>4</sup> Our goal is to investigate how the disembarkation of captives took place in the city before the 1831 anti-slave trade law made the Atlantic slave trade move to Pernambuco beaches. As we will see, there were specific routines to be followed, involving traders, health agents, and free workers and slaves in different human trade activities. As Pernambuco was the third biggest receiving point for African captives in Brazil and the fourth in the Americas, the Port of Recife can be a parameter to help us understand human trade on a broader scale.

Unfortunately, the book is incomplete. Its first section has 20 disembarkation records between 1813 and 1814 and basically includes information about the vessels' origins, arrival dates, captains' names, number of crew members, number of days of voyage, and total number of captives who disembarked. The pages of the book covering the following years (1815-1818) are blank, until 1819, when we see the emergence of a "Termo de Desimpedimento e Entrega dos Escravos," an "Instrument of Clearance and Release of Slaves" for each vessel up until 1829. In these very thorough instruments, they recorded number of captives aboard, owner and/or consignee's name, master's name, number of sick individuals, types of diseases, number of survivors and morbidity during treatment, slaves' marks, and people to whom cured individuals were released. The book has a total of 193 entries regarding slave ships, from which 47,110 live captives disembarked between 1813 and 1829.<sup>5</sup> Transatlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages data demonstrates that the Office of the Provedor-mor's records were incomplete, as the former indicates a total of 148,440 African captives disembarking in Pernambuco between 1813 and 1829.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the sample we are looking into in this survey represents approximately a

third of total captives who arrived in the province in that period. As we put together the records from that book and information about slave trading from other contemporary sources, we can look at how part of the Atlantic human slave trade routine was before 1831.

### The quarantine matter

Jaime Rodrigues reports the Office of the Provedor-Mor of Health was created at the Court by John VI of Portugal on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1809, as a response to fears fueled by a few epidemics many believed were spreading from slave ships. It was almost a consensus that examination of captives before disembarkation and effective quarantine could prevent many of those illnesses. Nevertheless, the quarantine strategy didn't work, not even at the Court, where John VI lived. Atlantic traders found ways to go around and avoid these recommendations.<sup>7</sup> In Pernambuco, the quarantine didn't work either, as powerful traders wanted to sell their captives as soon as they disembarked. The slave ship quarantine debacle is confirmed by travelers Henry Koster, who wrote about Pernambuco between 1811 and 1814, and Tollenare, who visited the province in 1817. Both described how captives were supposed to disembark in Santo Amaro, where the Lazaretto was based and the sick should receive medical care. That was where slaves should be kept in quarantine, according to them. However, they recognized, such rule was not observed. Captives were quickly moved to the city. The fact that two travelers describe such events suggests that, even though ineffective, maybe that rule was public knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

The absence of quarantines, however, does not mean there weren't people who wanted it, not only for sanitary reasons, but also for political economy reasons. In 1799, the Pernambuco governing junta met with D. Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, claiming that the impossibility of going through with 15-day-minimum quarantines was bad business for farmers. They told him that a few days earlier the consignees of three slave ships had sold captives to their own salesmen "under alleged names." After that bogus transaction, they had taken the Africans to the interior, where they were sold to "poor farmers" for "double and triple the price." The junta argued that, if they were to comply with the quarantine requirements, those farmers would have had the time to come to Recife to buy captives at the port for more reasonable prices and without the risk of buying sick individuals. In case of deaths during quarantine, it would be the traders' loss and not the farmers', who were already burdened with huge debts.<sup>9</sup>

In 1800, the Bishop of Pernambuco, Azeredo Coutinho, added to their claims. The author of a notorious work in favor of trading people from Africa to Brazil, the Bishop actually compared Pernambuco to Rio de Janeiro traders, claiming the latter, who were "often much wealthier" than Recife traders, were more willing to accept the order to only disembark and sell slaves in the outskirts of the Nossa Senhora da Saúde area.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the Bishop may have had received incautious information on Rio's situation, where, just like in Pernambuco, quarantines were not followed through, which caused serious dispute between traders and the authorities.

Notwithstanding, the government agents' complaints were not heard. Notice No. 21 from March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1800 let them know that the prince had excused slaves who arrived in Pernambuco from quarantine.<sup>11</sup> It was a victory for slave dealers. But that's not how this story ends. In 1801, once

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RODRIGUES, Jaime. *De costa a costa: escravos, marinheiros e intermediários do tráfico negreiro de Angola ao Rio de Janeiro (1780-1860)*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2005, p. 284.

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KOSTER, Henry. *Viagens ao Nordeste do Brasil*. Recife: Secretaria de Educação, 1978, p. 395-396. TOLLENARE, Louis F., *Notas Dominicais Tomadas durante uma Viagem em Portugal e no Brasil, em 1816, 1817 e 1818*. Salvador: Progresso, 1956, p. 139.

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UFPE History Research & Teaching Laboratory (LAPEH): Overseas Historical Archive (Project Resgate [Recovery]) – ACL-CU-015, box 212, D. 14405. *Ofício da Junta Governativa da Capitania de Pernambuco ao Secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar*, Nov/25/1799.

10

LAPEH: Overseas Historical Archive (Project Resgate) – ACL-CU-015, box 216, D. 14657. *Ofício do bispo de Pernambuco*, Jun/06/1800.

11

About the quarrels between traders and the Court's Office of the Provedor-mor, refer to: RODRIGUES, JAIME. *Op. Cit.*, p. 286-292. About the Prince's notice, refer to: LAPEH: Overseas Historical Archive (Project Resgate) – ACL-CU-015, box 216, D. 14.661. *Ofício da Junta Governativa da Capitania de Pernambuco ao Secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar*, Jun/09/1800.

12

LAPEH: Overseas Historical Archive (Project Resgate) – ACL-CU-015, box 223, D. 15.104. Ofício da Junta Governativa da Capitania de Pernambuco ao Secretário de Estado da Marinha e Ultramar, Jan/21/1801.

13

“Representação da Sociedade de Medicina ao Presidente da Província”, May/11/1842. In: *Annaes da Medicina Pernambucana* (Recife, 1842-1844). Recife: Secretaria de Educação e Cultura, 1977, p. 127. About the Great Plague of 1666, refer to: CABRAL DE MELLO, Evaldo. *A Fronda dos Mazombos: Nobres contra Mascates*, Pernambuco, 1666-1716. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995, p. 38. OSÓRIO DE ANDRADE, Gilberto (Org.). *Morão, Rosa & Pimenta: notícia dos três primeiros livros em vernáculo sobre a medicina no Brasil*. Recife: Arquivo Público, 1956, passim.

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Digital Newspaper & Periodical Collection of the National Library of Brazil (HDBN), DIÁRIO DE PERNAMBUCO. Recife: 26<sup>th</sup> of January, 1832, 01/Feb/1832. Mr. Cowper to the President of the Province, 14/Jan/1832, in APEJE, *Diversos Cônsules*, vol. 2 p. 217.

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TOLLENARE, L.F. Op. Cit., p. 22-23.

16

KOSTER, Henry, Op. Cit., p. 28.

again the junta wrote a petition signed by the farmers themselves asking the government to bring quarantines back, so they could buy slaves “first-hand.” To this complaint, the members of the government added the argument in favor of public health. They said, “without quarantines,” diseases such as bexigas (pox) and “mal de Luanda” (scurvy) were “spreading” and 180 people had already died in the village from those illnesses.<sup>12</sup>

While that official letter represented yet another chapter in the conflict between “poor farmers” and slave traders, the timing of the junta’s statement was very convenient. The idea of contagion was gradually evolving as medical research developed, supported by experiences in cities where the Atlantic slave trade took place, which were always subject to diseases that were transmitted and worsened by the mildew from the holds of slave ships. But let’s not focus only on slave trading. Ships coming from an often epidemic-stricken Europe also terrorized cities connected with the Atlantic world. Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century people still believed the Great Plague of 1666, the captaincy’s most overwhelming epidemic ever, had come from Europe.<sup>13</sup> Actually, many contemporary physicians correctly refuted the idea that several diseases originated in Africa, a theory that was used to justify some of the authorities’ sanitary measures. One of those measures, in 1832, was to put an English trading brig, and not a slave ship, in quarantine upon its arrival in the city. The measure greatly upset the English consul. In a letter to the province’s president, Mr. Cowper complained about how the slave ship received immediate clearance, while the Peruvian remained in strict quarantine. What the consul couldn’t understand, or perhaps wouldn’t accept, is that for Pernambuco’s health agents, the Peruvian, having set sail from a cholera-stricken port, was considered a much bigger threat than the schooner *Despique*, even though it arrived in Recife with barrels full of shackles and chains after it illegally disembarked captives at Pau Amarelo Beach.<sup>14</sup>

So slave ships were not the only vessels that could be singled out by the Office of the Provedor-mor for inspection. In 1817, Tollenare wrote that health agents inspected the ship he was on as soon as it arrived at the Port of Recife, led by a local practitioner who went to the ship on a sloop sailed by eight black men wearing nothing but skimpy loin cloths.<sup>15</sup> That didn’t happen with the ship *Henry Koster* was aboard, which crossed the shoal led by a practitioner who also approached the ship on a boat rowed by scantily clad black men. Koster, however, did not take too long to disembark in the city.<sup>16</sup> In fact, a more thorough inspection on merchant vessels was only justified when it was suspected it could carry diseases that were considered contagious. However, it is noteworthy that inspecting a merchant vessel like the one Tollenare was aboard, or the Peruvian, which was detained in 1832, to check for people with “pox,” “ophthalmia,” dysenteries, scurvy, and other illnesses then considered contagious was very different from inspecting a ship with hundreds of ravenous, dehydrated people coming up a disease-infected hold. We know wounds from punishment or friction with shackles and the ship’s wooden walls and floor were disregarded, as well as all sorts of dermatitis, as inspectors assumed the captives’ owners were able to take care of their sores. What health agents were really interested in was the possibility of contagion. That is, in terms of medical science at that time, according to which, for example, scurvy – often referred to as mal de Luanda, the “evil of Luanda” – could be contagious, which sustained the decision to send captives suffering with

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Pernambuco-born doctor S.A. Mavignier clearly separates *variole* from *petit variole* in his paper published in Paris in 1829, in which he looks into illnesses found in Pernambuco. National Library of Brazil (Rio de Janeiro): MAVIGNIER, Simplício Antonio. *Du Climat de Pernambuco*. Paris: Didot le Jeune, 1829, p. 48. About "Mal de Luanda" as a "blood infection," according to medical science at the time, refer to: "Tratado XII: do escorbuto ou mal de Luanda," in: GOMES FERREIRA, Luís. *Erário Mineral* (Org.: FURTADO, Júnia Ferreira). Belo Horizonte: Fundação João Pinheiro. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, 2002, vol. 2, p. 689-700.

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There is extensive literature on the matter, but what is interesting here is to observe how a group of very experienced doctors from Pernambuco were quite aware of this debate when they established the local Medical Society in 1842. Indeed, they were all educated in Europe. *Annaes da Medicina Pernambucana*, *passim*.

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Mr. Cowper to the Earl of Aberdeen, Jan/01/1844. In: *British Parliamentary Papers, Slave trade. Correspondence with Foreign Powers relative to the Slave trade* [class B and C], n. 28, vol L, Feb. 04, Aug. 09, 1845, fls. 407.

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CHRISTOPHER, Emma. *Slave Ship, Sailors, and their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 29.

that serious, fatal condition to the lazaretto. On the other hand, medicine in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was advanced enough to know the difference between "bexigas" ("pox"), a general name that could mean a lot of things, including smallpox, and "measles," a much less threatening disease, howbeit contagious.<sup>17</sup>

It is important, therefore, to avoid having an anachronistic view of contagion. Before the microbiology revolution spearheaded by Pasteur, there were many doubts and academic debate regarding the way diseases spread; after all, many people believed (quite correctly, as a matter of fact) that not all illnesses could be explained by physical contact between people, let alone by the presence of pestilential exhalation, which in fact could dissipate when disembarkation was properly ventilated. The most hardliners on contagion as the primary cause for diseases were actually called "contagionists" by their opponents. Nevertheless, the miasma theory was taken very seriously. It is not without reason that medical journals would publish intensive barometric and eolian studies of the areas. Regardless of this debate, which came all the way to Pernambuco, there was some consensus on how much exposure port cities suffered. It was also known, from experience, that many diseases were really transmitted from one person to the other. That was beyond doubt even for the most ardent advocates for the temperament theory, which was invigorating at the time as chemistry developed and investigated the elements and substances that, as believed at the time, constituted the different body humors, thus allowing for huge development in drug manufacturing.<sup>18</sup> A good doctor was one who could balance these two major contemporary trends. So preserving public health required some carefulness to prevent physical contact between sick and health individuals.

Mill owners were not completely unfamiliar with these issues. As the English consul in Pernambuco would say a few years later, sometimes farm owners incurred debts to buy more people and ended up worse than before, as recently acquired captives would bring illnesses that could greatly affect *ladinos* (acculturated slaves). What happened was that owners who were not careful could wind up with fewer workers than they had before buying people who had recently come from Africa.<sup>19</sup> Situations like these explain the tension between Atlantic slave traders and authorities and health agents who were really concerned about contagion. In the period comprised in the Office of the Provedor-mor's book, the idea of Africa being a white man's grave was already well established, and even those who did not believe that could feel the pestilential miasmas emanating from slave ships, with smells of death and rotteness, as Emma Christopher recalls, which hit the land before vessels could be spotted in the distance.<sup>20</sup>

That tension did not go away with Independence. On March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1822, the City Council of Recife sent an official letter to the Governing Junta of the Province complaining about misconduct on the part of traders, who would start to sell their captives as soon as they disembarked. The Junta claimed they should be sent to the Lazaretto in Santo Amaro. Yielding to their demand, a bando dated March 18<sup>th</sup> that same year banned the display of captives "naked or barely naked for sale by the doors of their receivers and in the center of this capital city." It is interesting to highlight the use of a bando, which was a public pronouncement by a town crier who played a snare drum. It read that such "pernicious" practice allowed for "easy communication of contagious diseases." The bando also demanded

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PEREIRA DA COSTA, F.A. Op. Cit., Vol. 6, p. 541 and vol. 7, p. 374-375. APEJE, Registro de Provisões vol. 9/01, "Bando sobre a proibição dos negros pelas ruas", Mar/18/1822.

that all "new negroes" should disembark in Santo Amaro, thereafter "the only place where it is allowed to openly trade them." Traders should "provide for warehouses and other accommodations that best suit them." And these were not the only demands, as "negroes who are found infected with contagious diseases" should be admitted to the Lazarus Hospital's warehouse. Violating that new rule resulted in a fine. The first strike should cost the offender 6 mil-réis (one thousand réis) a head; the second, 20 mil-réis; and the third, in addition to paying a 50 mil-réis fine, the offender should be sent to prison. All fine revenues would pass to the hospital.<sup>21</sup>

We do not know how effective these measures were, but the Office of the Provedor-mor's book clearly demonstrates health agents did oversee the disembarkation of vessels, at least of those recorded in the book, also doing a head count of captives to make sure they matched the numbers informed by the ship's master or captain. After that inspection, in compliance with the bando, the sick were taken to a warehouse at the Lazaretto to receive care. To be precise, 2,912 of total 47,110 captives recorded in the book were taken to the Office of the Provedor-mor's agents before being released to their owners and/or agents. This means 6.18 percent of all live captives who disembarked were found to be sick, even by the relatively low standards of slave trade medical science, which used to immediately clear entire crowds with wounds and/or diseases that were not considered contagious at the time.

#### The Office of the Provedor-mor and its work

According to the Office of the Provedor-mor's book, apparently there were procedures to follow. After anchoring in one of the areas of the port (Mosqueiro, Lamarão or Poço), ships were charged a customs clearance fee, and captives in general disembarked and were taken to health inspection. A doctor and a surgeon, Felipe Neri Rodrigo de Carvalho and Manoel Pereira Teixeira, were in charge of examining them. Individuals with contagious diseases were taken to the Lazaretto for treatment, and remained in the custody of the health guards who signed the inspection papers. Those who did not seem to be infected with contagious illnesses were immediately released to their owners, consignees, or their agents. After treatment, health guards should take care of the captives by notifying or taking them to their owners.

The great majority of physical examinations took place at Pilar Beach, on the isthmus connecting the port area of Recife and Olinda. There were occasional inspections aboard the vessels and even at the Santo Amaro Lazaretto.<sup>22</sup> When examinations were to be conducted at Santo Amaro, slaves were taken from the isthmus by boat to the place where only individuals accused of having diseases considered contagious remained "in custody" for treatment. This was certainly the more appropriate procedure for health agents. Nevertheless, it was an inconvenience for traders who had to have hundreds of people disembarking, walking from the disembarkation location all the way to the isthmus, and then getting on a boat to Santo Amaro. After examinations, they were authorized to take captives back to the city or wherever they wanted. Of course, traders found it more convenient to have examinations conducted at Pilar Beach, as it was easy to get there from all major docks in the port area, and then just walk to the city afterwards. Meanwhile, for health agents, conducting inspections at the beach must have been better than going on a crowded vessel with hundreds

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At least once human cargo from a ship was examined at a private warehouse. That was the case of the brig Santo André Deligente, owned by Francisco José de Araújo. It was, however, a vessel seized by the imperial brig Bahia. It arrived in Recife on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1823 with 107 captives from Angola. Maybe its seizure, about which we have no information, could explain why this case was an exception. APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 126 verso and 127.

23

According to Pereira da Costa, there was an old pulley there, probably used to punish a lot of people since Colonial Brazil. PEREIRA DA COSTA, F.A. Op. Cit., Vol. 2, p. 154-155.

24

To safely enter the port ships would aim for the Master's Cross by Saint Amaro chapel's cross. PEREIRA DA COSTA, F.A. Op. Cit., Vol. 7, p. 360-361.

25

GRAHAM Maria. Diário de uma Viagem ao Brasil (e de uma estada nesse país durante parte dos anos de 1821, 1822 e 1823). São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1956, p. 114.

26

GRAHAM, Maria. Op. Cit., p. 139.

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APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 91 e 121.

28

APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 126 verso.

29

State Public Archive, M9/G3 n. 1623. Eliziário Antonio dos Santos & José Mamede Alves Ferreira, "Planta do bairro do Recife e do porto de Pernambuco", Recife, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1854. GONSALVES DE MELLO, José Antonio. Gente da Nação. Recife: Editora Massangana, 1989, p. 274. PEREIRA DA COSTA, F.A. Op. Cit., Vol. 6, p. 49. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 163. MOTA MENEZES, José Luiz. Atlas Histórico Cartográfico do Recife. Recife: Prefeitura da Cidade do Recife/Fundaj, 1988, passim.

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About African funeral rituals in Brazil, refer to: REIS, João José. A morte é uma festa: ritos fúnebres e revolta popular no Brasil do século XIX. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1992.

of people inside the hold. Pilar Beach was outside the fortresses built at the time of the war against the Dutch, which means it was at the old "Fora de Portas" – "Outside the Doors" – village of Recife.<sup>23</sup>

Walking north from Pilar Beach through the isthmus would take to the Brum Fort and the Cruz do Patrão – the Master's Cross –, which guided vessels that came into the port.<sup>24</sup> Walking in the same direction, there was a longer beach section stretching all the way to Forte do Buraco, the Hole Fort. Walking more beach stretches would take to Olinda. In the unit of measure of the time, it was a one-league long distance between the two ends of the isthmus. Walking south from Pilar Beach would take to the Our Lady of the Pillar Chapel (c. 1680) and into the port area, the neighborhood of Recife per se, through Pilar Street, which roughly connected with present-day Bom Jesus Street, immortalized as a slave trading venue in two famous pictures available online in different art collections. The first was painted by Dutch West India Company soldier Zacharias Wagener, a watercolor painter of limited talent, yet an excellent investigator of the social life in Recife during the Dutch occupation (1630-1654). The second picture was by Augustus Earle, used to illustrate a travel journey belonging to John VI's chambermaid Maria Graham, who visited Recife in 1820 and witnessed the Brazilian Independence in loco. It is interesting to notice how the two paintings adopt opposite perspectives. Wagener is looking from the doors to the center of the city, while Earle looks exactly at Recife's north gateway arch – "Count Maurice's Gate." Outside this arch was Pilar Beach.<sup>25</sup> What the two pictures have in common is the slave market in the middle of Bom Jesus Street, renamed Rua dos Judeus – Jew Street – in the Nassovian period, then Rua da Cruz – Cross Street – in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and back again to Bom Jesus Street in present-time Recife. A third picture of the street, looking at "Recife's North Gate" – that is, the same perspective as Earle – was drawn by Maria Graham herself in sepia. This is a less famous picture, probably because it does not depict people being traded, unlike the other two.<sup>26</sup> As we have seen, the street depicted in the three pictures connected with Pilar Street (and Beach).

At Pillar beach, outside the gates drawn by Earle and Graham, the Office of the Provedor-mor had a "warehouse" to incarcerate captives who were subject to physical examination.<sup>27</sup> We do not have information about where exactly this warehouse used to be, but we do know it had easy access to the Lazaretto across the river by rowing or sailing any type of shallow draft boat or canoe. "Cleared" captives would then go to trade sites, such as probably Alexandre José de Araújo's "warehouse" at "rua da Cadeia, fundo pra rua da Senzala Velha" ("Prison Street, back facing the Old Slave Quarters Street"), where 58 captives were inspected by the Office of the Provedor-mor on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1823.<sup>28</sup> The Old Slave Quarters and New Slave Quarters Streets were parallel to Bom Jesus Street (or Cross Street in the 1800s) depicted by Wagener, Earle, and Graham. Those street names already had those names at the time of the Dutch occupation (1630-1654) and demonstrate how the port area and the African slave trade were closely connected.<sup>29</sup>

Not far from there was probably the place where they disposed of the bodies of people found dead in the holds of slave ships anchored in Recife, or those who would pass away shortly after disembarking, before they could create bonds with other people that could make sure they had proper funeral rituals.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps that is the origin of an urban legend according to

31  
MAVIGNIER, Le Climat, p. 49. There are old rumors about captives buried by the present-day Master's Cross.

32  
TORRES RAMOS, Ana Catarina. "Além dos mortos da Cruz do Patrão simbolismo e tradição no uso do espaço no Recife". In: 26ª REUNIÃO BRASILEIRA DE ANTROPOLOGIA, 2008, <https://www.ufpe.br/cioarq/images/documentos/V23N2-2008/artigo3.pdf>.

33  
GRAHAM. Diário de uma Viagem, p. 140.

34  
VAUTHIER Louis L., Diário íntimo de Louis Léger Vauthier. In: FREYRE, Gilberto (Org.), Um engenheiro francês no Brasil. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1970, vol. 2, p. 569.

35  
DIÁRIO DE PERNAMBUCO. Recife: June, 16<sup>th</sup>, 1841. In: National Archives (London). Foreign Office vol. 84/36, Slave Trade, Brazil Consular, Mr. Goring to Lord Palmerston Jul/26/1841, fls. 128-129.

which captives were buried alive by the Master's Cross. That story is actually confirmed by Pernambuco-born physician Simplício Mavignier in his paper on the weather of Pernambuco published in 1829 in Paris. According to Mavignier, "non-baptized" captives were buried in the surroundings of the Master's Cross.<sup>31</sup> In order to verify whether that was true, archeologist Ana Catarina Torres Ramos conducted excavations at the site, but did not find evidence of a cemetery. Nevertheless, her paper suggests maybe Recife's Master's Cross was originally located north of its current location, virtually in the middle of the isthmus. Additionally, as Torres Ramos points out, in Colonial Recife there was another cross more to the south, depicted in 17<sup>th</sup> century iconography, between the neighborhood of Recife and the Brum Fort, outside the defensive walls that protected the city, so Fora de Portas. A Dutch map bared the inscription karkoff on that place, meaning cemetery, according to Torres Ramos.<sup>32</sup>

That second cross was closer to the Pilar Church and Pilar Beach than the present-day Master's Cross. So as years went by, maybe the stories started to mix up about the old European cemetery and the large number of African bodies disposed of across the isthmus over time. In reality, Africans who arrived dead or passed away shortly after disembarking in Recife were carelessly handled. That is confirmed by Maria Graham, who reports one day, while riding by the sandy isthmus, she saw a dog dragging the arm of a person who was barely buried.<sup>33</sup> Twenty years later, French engineer Vauthier reported he saw the body of a black person floating in the ocean, and no one cared.<sup>34</sup> An even more compelling report was giving by someone who crossed the Olinda isthmus all the way to the neighborhood of Recife on June, 1841. As he walked he found one, two, three bodies lying around along his way. All exposed to ravens. One of them, probably a child ("a small corpse"). Asking people around about what he saw, he learned it was yet another outcome of slave trading. They were Africans who had passed away from different illnesses. That report was attached to the English consul's mail. According to him, people involved in slave trading were used to discarding the bodies of dead Africans by disposing of them in the city's mangroves.<sup>35</sup>

Things were probably not very different across the Beberibe River, at the Lazaretto. Many people might have been left to rotten or only just buried in the surrounding mangroves and open fields. This probably old custom in Recife must have helped set the stage for the provincial government to build the first public cemetery nearby. After all, Santo Amaro's mangroves had been a body disposal site for a long time. The churches were full to capacity when, in 1851, the Santo Amaro Cemetery was established. It was a one-kilometer walk from the Lazaretto (today Recife's Cancer Hospital). A lot of "nobles from the land," including slave traders, are buried in that cemetery. As it turns out, not so far away from the many Africans they brought to Brazil. All are equal in death.

Between 1813 and 1829, the Office of the Provedor-mor was chaired by the guarda-mor (master of the rolls) and juiz delegado (judge-delegate) of public health João Antonio de Oliveira. We do not have more information about him, except for the coincidence it is that he had the same last name as two slave traders from that time, José Antonio de Oliveira and Francisco Antonio de Oliveira. João Antonio de Oliveira's team included inspectors and at least another five guards were expressly cited. Moreover, the Slave Lazaretto probably had other workers to provide inmates with



36  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls 125 verso.

37  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls 83; About Boris as a health guard as well, refer to: *Ibid.*, fls. 65 verso.

38  
RODRIGUES, Jaime. *Op. Cit.*, p. 291.

39  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls 131, 132, 134, 145 verso, 190 and 191.

40  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 131.

care, make ointments, and watch them. In 1823, for example, Maria Therta (?) Angélica de Carvalho was "in charge of putting on bandages on some slaves in custody."<sup>36</sup> Documents mention there was an "interpreter," Joaquim Boris, among members of the staff working at the Lazaretto, so it is safe to assume there were also experts to help captives and health agents communicate with each other.<sup>37</sup> Those were the people with whom the sick interacted when they disembarked in Recife.

In the 1820s, the work routine of health agents went through some changes due to institutional matters related to the Office of the Provedor-mor. According to Jaime Rodrigues, after the independence of Brazil, the Emperor's concerns about the office in Court and health control measures reduced in favor of slave traders. The government's lack of interest would have resulted in the decay of the Offices of the Provedor-mor. In 1821, Rio's guarda-mor, in charge of coordinating Offices of the Provedor-mor across the country, asked for resources to renovate the Lazaretto in Pernambuco, which, according to him, was "in ruins."<sup>38</sup> It looks like the petition was ultimately granted, because the Lazaretto underwent renovation in 1824 and 1825. We do not know, however, whether it was ineffective or the office's criteria were looser, because afterwards people who arrived sick were usually treated aboard the slave ships.

It is hard to imagine all the consequences arising from that change, but we can suppose it probably made it easier for traders to have control over the treatment. Now, captives recovered not only under watch by health guards, but also by people slave traders trusted or even hired for this purpose. We know slave ships used to have pharmacies, and sometimes even infirmaries to treat their crew and healable captives, because those who were not subject to cure were simply thrown in the ocean during the voyage. Once they arrived in Recife, however, it was only natural they received better care; after all, on land they had easy access to clean water and fresh food, which were considered crucial to prevent scurvy, as well as more medical drugs available. More survivors meant more profits. According to the Office of the Provedor-mor's book, we know the schooners *Regeneradora*, *Velha de Dio*, and *Dona Ana* and the brigs *Bonfim*, *São José Grande*, and *Quatro de Agosto* had infirmaries big enough to take people in for treatment, including captives from other slave ships.<sup>39</sup>

The first vessel to have sick captives from other craft moved to its own infirmary was the schooner *Regeneradora*, which arrived from Angola on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1824 with 219 Africans aboard. One of them was agonizing and died before disembarking. After examination conducted by a "physician Felipe Néri Rodrigo de Carvalho and an approved surgeon Luis Jose Saraiva," 209 people were released to the ship's master so he could comply with their owners' wishes. The remaining nine captives, however, were sent back to the brig, where they were kept in health guards Antônio Joaquim dos Santos and José Vicente Viana's custody in the infirmary. It stands out that such measure was temporary until the conclusion of the Lazaretto's "rebuilding."<sup>40</sup>

On March 16<sup>th</sup> that same year, 1824, the sick aboard the schooner *Velha de Dio*, coming from Angola, were also kept in custody on the vessel. The physician and surgeon in charge of them were the same who examined the captives on board of the *Regeneradora*. Captives who were not afflicted with ailments considered contagious were released to the ship's master. 26 sick people were sent to the schooner's infirmary and kept under the

41  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 132.

42  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 133.

43  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 134.

44  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 136.

45  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 139 verso.

46  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 141, 142 verso,  
144, 145, 145 verso, & 148.

47  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 153 & 166.

48  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 174 verso and 175.

49  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 188 verso and 191.

50  
Records show presence of pox in 54 entries,  
dysentery in 43, ophthalmia in 41, scurvy in  
12, measles in 9, and maculo syndrome (an  
inflammation of the rectum with relaxation of  
the sphincter, prolapse, and gangrene) in 4.

51  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 164.

52  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 141.

care of health guards João Caetano da Silva and Antônio Joaquim dos Santos; that is, not the same guards in charge of healthcare on the Regeneradora. Of those in custody, 16 fully recovered and were released to pilot Manuel Pedro Soares, while 10 didn't make it and passed away.<sup>41</sup>

Apparently, that "rebuilding of the lazaretto" was finally over when the Felicidade docked in the city on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1824, as 10 captives diagnosed with dysentery and scurvy were taken to its facilities. Seven of them eventually died. The remaining 242 survivors were released to the ship's master.<sup>42</sup> We do not know how serious record omissions were in the following months, but it is relevant to highlight that, by the end of that year, the lazaretto once again became inappropriate to admit inmates. When the brig Bomfim arrived from Angola on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1824 with 449 live captives, the 39 who were afflicted with "pox and scurvy" were sent to the ship's infirmary under the care of health guards João Caetano da Silva and Jose Vicente Viana.<sup>43</sup> In December that year, two people with scurvy among 154 captives brought by the cutter Minerva da Conceição remained aboard the vessel on the master's watch.<sup>44</sup> In March, 1825, 26 sick people on board of the brig Primoroso Divino were also admitted to the craft's infirmary. Once again, the admitting papers suggest that was a temporary measure only until the Lazaretto's "rebuilding was concluded."<sup>45</sup>

Due to gaps in the documentation we investigated, it is difficult to establish when exactly the Lazaretto's "rebuilding" was finally "concluded," and even if it actually did happen. What we do know is that in the following years, several vessels admitted sick captives who recently arrived to their own infirmaries. That was the case of the slave ships Bonfim, Minerva da Conceição, Velhade Dio, Feiticeira, Dona Anna, and Conceição Thalegrafo in 1825.<sup>46</sup> In 1826, the slave ships Atrevido Brasileiro and Imperador do Brasil also admitted captives to their infirmaries for treatment.<sup>47</sup> In 1827, again we see the Imperador do Brasil and the smack Desengano.<sup>48</sup> In 1829, that was the case for the brigs Donna Anna and Quatro de Agosto.<sup>49</sup>

Admission on board of vessels may have contributed to bringing guards and health inspectors closer to slave traders in Recife. While physicians and surgeons were in charge of diagnosis and discharge, guards had to administer treatment, witness deaths and burials, and release survivors. Each one with their own duties, these workers could influence the rhythm of part of the trading of enslaved people. We cannot affirm health agents were completely at the mercy of slave traders, and they were probably profiting from it somehow. That close relationship may also help us understand underreporting and gaps in documentation, which, for example, only reports diseases afflicting captives in 85 entries and rarely specifies the number of people suffering from each illness.<sup>50</sup> It also helps to explain minor misreports, such as when seven slaves on the Príncipe Real were mistakenly registered on the brig General Silveira.<sup>51</sup> It is not an overstatement to suppose this kind of information may have been intentionally suppressed, maybe out of sheer incompetence.

Although we may assume a close relationship with slave traders, we must take into consideration that employees working for the Office of the Provedor-mor had their own demands. We know little about them before 1831. Nevertheless, in 1835, one of the health guards, Germano Antonio Alves, spearheaded a petition urging for the fulfillment of the unkept promise of a wage raise. The first record about Alves in the Office of the Provedor-mor's book dates from 1825, when he was appointed along with

53  
PEREIRA DA COSTA, F.A. Op. Cit., Vol. 6, p. 541.

54  
Archive of the Legislative Assembly of Pernambuco (AALEPE), Petitions, Case P-115. April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1835.

55  
In 1829, Germano Antônio Alves advertised a slave of his who, at the age of 25, was a “master in the craft of bakery” with seven years of experience. With those skills, he was certainly a profitable worker. Perhaps Alves was already facing financial difficulties at that time. HDBN, DIÁRIO DE PERNAMBUCO. Recife: November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1829, No. 235.

56  
RODRIGUES, Jaime. Op. Cit., p. 287.

57  
PEREIRA DA COSTA, F.A. Op. Cit., Vol. 6, p. 541.

58  
APEJE, Health Department of the Port of Recife, vol. 3, s/n, passim.

59  
APEJE, “Livro d’Entradas”, fls. 101 verso. Also refer to: Slavevoyages, ID n. 48.903.

60  
Apud ALBUQUERQUE, Débora de Souza Leão; VERSIANI, Flávio Rabelo and VERGOLINO, José Raimundo Oliveira. Financiamento e Organização do Tráfico de Escravos para Pernambuco no Século XIX. Economia, Brasília, v.14, n.1, p. 220, Jan/Apr 2013.

another health guard, João Caetano da Silva, to oversee the eight Africans with scurvy who were receiving care in the brig Bonfim’s infirmary.<sup>52</sup> So in 1835, he already held a position in the Office for at least ten years. In his petition, Alves claimed the Office of the Provedor-mor was not only important to the province, it was not at all “unprofitable.”<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the petition added, while health workers’ earnings in Rio de Janeiro were proportional to the number of hours they had scheduled for health inspections, and while they also had time to rest during work hours, in Recife they were granted no rest time, because they had to inspect vessels anchored both at Mosqueiro and Lamarão. Finally, he wrote, no other office contributed as much for the greatness of the nation as “an establishment promoting health for a people against contagions and plagues.”<sup>54</sup>

We do not know whether the guards were successful in their demand.<sup>55</sup> But Alves and other petitioners were right when they claimed the Office of the Provedor-mor was not “unprofitable.” In Rio de Janeiro, according to Jaime Rodrigues, slave traders were very much against paying the 18 mil-réis fee for a health inspection, claiming they were already burdened with many other taxes right from the moment they set sail from Brazil to Africa.<sup>56</sup> In Pernambuco, Pereira da Costa reports that the “Slave Lazaretto” charged 12 mil-réis for their agents’ inspection. It is an apparently modest fee, and since Pereira da Costa – like many educated dilettantes of his time – not always revealed his source or offered more details, we do not know how much that whole process was.<sup>57</sup> Notwithstanding, there is another book from the Office of the Provedor-mor that can give us a more clear idea about this. It points out inspectors charged owners and/or consignees 200 réis “a head” for “grown-up slaves” who disembarked and 100 réis for the “little” ones.<sup>58</sup>

### Releasing rehabilitated captives and the threads of the trade

Despite difficulties in performing their duties and their unsuccessful quarantine propositions, the Office of the Provedor-mor was not inoperative, regardless of its flawed system. People who were afflicted with diseases considered transmissible were truly subject to being held in custody for treatment. That minimum care was about a certain practical knowledge regarding what the aforementioned English consul mentioned, which was the risk that the sick could contaminate the healthy, harming farmers or slave traders who had people for sale in Recife. So it is not difficult to understand why there were occasions when even slave traders asked the Office of the Provedor-mor would send agents to inspect for contagious diseases.

The first request of that kind involved the brig Vigilante Africano, which arrived in Recife on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1822, with 428 live captives aboard. Among them, 7 people were afflicted with “pox” and dysentery. It could be argued that the number of sick people was small compared to the large number of people confined in the brig. Nonetheless, the slave trader Elias Coelho Sintra (or Cintra), “orally asked” the Office of the Provedor-mor to send agents to “inspect” his ship.<sup>59</sup> Elias Coelho Cintra’s request cannot be disregarded, because at that time he was probably Pernambuco’s biggest Atlantic slave trader. Not only this is stated in the Office of the Provedor-mor’s book, but also in Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages, which was recently surveyed and points out that, before 1831, Cintra was responsible for bringing at least 10,312 captives to Pernambuco.<sup>60</sup>

61

Overseas Historical Archive, Lisbon: Angola, box 133, Jul/04/1817, Jun/23/1817, Jul/30/1817, Aug/12/1817, Aug/18/1817, Sep/23/1817, Nov/18/1817. Also refer to CAPELA, José. *As burguesias portuguesas e a abolição do tráfico da escravatura, 1810-1842*. Porto: Afrontamento, 1979, p. 94-95.

62

Documentos Históricos: Revolução de 1817. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Nacional, 1954, vol. CV, fls. 238, 246.

63

Papers relating to the brig Gavião, Fernando Po, Apr/16/1821, in *British and Foreign State Papers, 1821-1822-1823*. London, Printed by J. Harrison and Son, Orchard St. Westminster, 1829, fls. 237-239.

64

TYPHIS PERNAMBUCANO. Recife: April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1824. In: MELLO, Antônio Joaquim de (Ed.). *Obras Políticas e Literárias de Frei Joaquim do Amor Divino Caneca*. (Recife, 1875); reedição: Recife, Assembleia Legislativa, 1972, tomo II, p. 515.

65

NUNES CAVALCANTI Jr. Manoel, "O egoísmo, a degradante vingança e o espírito de partido": a história do predomínio liberal ao movimento regressista (Pernambuco, 1834-1837). 2015. Tese (Doutorado em História, UFPE), p. 126. VASCONCELLOS GALVÃO, Sebastião, Op. Cit., Vol. 1, p. 192.

66

(HDBN), DIÁRIO DE PERNAMBUCO. Recife: November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1829 and November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1829.

67

(HDBN), DIÁRIO DE PERNAMBUCO. Recife: March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1829.

68

About Gabriel Antonio, refer to: CARVALHO, Marcus. J. M. de. *O galego atrevido e malcriado, a mulher honesta e o seu marido, ou política provincial, violência doméstica e a Justiça no Brasil escravista*. In: SOHET, Rachel; BICALHO Maria Fernanda; GOUVÊA Maria de Fátima (Orgs). *Culturas Políticas: Ensaios de História Cultural, História Política e Ensino de História*. Rio de Janeiro: FAPERJ/Ed. Mauad, 2005, p. 201-234.

69

APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 145 verso and 146 verso. Also refer to: *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database Voyages in [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org)*, ID n. 48.882.

70

Apud ALBUQUERQUE; VERSIANI; VERGOLINO. Op. Cit., p. 220.

Cintra deserves a few lines of mention. He used to live in Angola before settling in the province. When the Pernambucan Revolt broke out in 1817, he was against it and took refuge in Bahia. His loyalty to the crown was rewarded, because as long as the insurgence went on, the governor of Angola forbade all slave ships heading to Pernambuco from getting customs clearance, except for Cintra's, who had proved his loyalty.<sup>61</sup> The documentation of the 1817 inquiry includes a "List of traders, manufacturers, farmers, and other pecunious residents of Recife, and whom any contribution up to the amounts indicated herein will not heavily burden." That document states Cintra was a "generous European," owner of around 160,000 cruzados in urban buildings, mills, businesses, money. According to the document, it was not a big sacrifice for him to donate 2 contos de réis (2 million réis).<sup>62</sup>

A bold businessman, Cintra had one of his vessels, the brig Gavião, arrested by the English in 1821, when he was preparing to get captives from the notorious Duke Ephraim of Calabar.<sup>63</sup> In 1822, he signed a petition urging the Portuguese battalion to stay in Recife, because at that moment it was threatened with banishment by the governing junta, led by Gervásio Pires Ferreira, who persisted after 1817 and was granted amnesty by the Liberal Revolution of 1820. This new context forced Cintra into opposition to the local government. In the following years, during the independence movement, he kept acting with deliberation, so much so that Frei Caneca expressly accused him of having control over the Portuguese, funding the group that was planning to overthrow the federalist government of Manoel de Carvalho Paes de Andrade, who had taken up office in December, 1823, and eventually proclaimed the Confederation of the Equator in July, 1824.<sup>64</sup> His fortune was considerable. He became owner of the Pedreira mill, among others, as well as the old Coelhos meadow, now Coelhos neighborhood in Recife.<sup>65</sup> He apparently never gave up his ultramontane convictions, as in 1829 even the more moderate liberals who ran the *Diário de Pernambuco* newspaper accused him of being a member of the Masonic lodge *Coluna do Trono e do Altar*.<sup>66</sup> That same year, a piece of news reported 3 "new negroes" had been stolen from his warehouse. They all bore the letter E (for Elias, Cintra's given name) on the left side of their chest.<sup>67</sup>

Cintra was also proficient in training people in the trade, as Gabriel Antonio started his successful career working as a master and manager on his slave ships. After 1831, that old employee working for Elias Coelho Cintra became one of the province's biggest slave traders. It is not an exaggeration to suppose, therefore, that maybe Cintra kept working in this business after 1831 through Gabriel Antonio.<sup>68</sup> With his great fortune and interests founded upon the slave trade, his request for an inspection of the captives brought on the *Vigilante Africano* could only be a genuine, and obviously concerned one. Who knows, maybe he even wanted to speed up their treatment.

Another attention-grabbing case is the schooner *Dona Ana*, owned by Antônio José Vieira da Silva, which arrived in Recife in 1825 with 281 captives, 24 of which were sick with scurvy and "ophthalmia."<sup>69</sup> There is an amendment in the end of the record, because the first head count was wrong, and this may be confusing for the reader. However, the release records make it clear the examination was requested by José Ramos de Oliveira. This is another character deserving of a special mention here, because he was the son of a big slave trader working in Pernambuco, José

71

The Salgado mill is listed in the IAHGP Register of Historic Places, and it is yet to be properly investigated. Meanwhile, by taking a look at it, we may see the Salgado was a diversified enterprise. It not only produced sugar, but also other byproducts of sugar cane, as well as leather, flour, etc. Register of Historic Places listing the Salgado Mill. IAHGP. In 1823, the mill's manager wrote to Mister Ramos about an outbreak of "bexigas cristalinas" (chickenpox) afflicting the captives, asking his employer for vaccine and "new slaves." IAHGP, Archeological Institute Fonds (FIA), "Correspondência de José Joaquim Pereira para José de Oliveira Ramos" (1823), Bx. 7, doc. 0380.

72

Tollenare, L.F. Op. Cit., p. 218, 225, 228, 231, 271. Documentos Históricos: Revolução de 1817. Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Nacional, 1954, vol. CV, fls. 238, 241.

73

That same list of pecunious people said Bento José da Costa had something around one million and one half "in vessels, urban and rural buildings, including mills, cattle farms, trade businesses, etc." and could easily donate 4 contos de réis. Cintra was also the father-in-law of Domingos José Martins, a bankrupt trader and civil leader of the 1817 movement. They say that was the only reason why he got involved in the Pernambucan Revolt of 1817. A notorious slave trader in Lagos and Porto Novo, Domingos Martins was the natural son of the leader he was named after and supposedly witnessed his father's execution in Bahia. As Bento José da Costa was a well-established Atlantic slave trader, it is reasonable to speculate that he may have made it easier for his son-in-law's unfortunate son to start in the business. About Domingos Martins, refer to: VERGER, Pierre. Fluxo e refluxo do tráfico de escravos entre o Golfo de Benin e a Bahia de Todos os Santos dos séculos XVII a XIX. São Paulo: Corrupio, 1987, p. 466-473, 481-483. COSTA E SILVA, Alberto da. Francisco Felix de Souza, Mercador de Escravos. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2004, passim.

74

We do not have access to his probate, but we do have his wife's (the proceeding of which opened 3 years after her husband's death), which indicates at least 633 contos de réis in net assets. The Salgado Mill alone was worth more than 140 contos de réis. IAHGP (Recife), Deceased: Izabel Maria da Costa Ramos. Administrator: Bento José da Costa Jr. Recife, 1849.

75

State Public Archive (Recife): City Council vol. 7, May/26/1829.

76

APEJE, O Nazareno. Recife: nº 32, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1846.

77

National Archives (London). Foreign Office vol. 84/809, Slave Trade, Brazil, January to December 1850. Consul Christopher to Lord Palmerston, 30/05/1850, fls. 97, 97 verso.

de Oliveira Ramos (just like his son's name, but the other way around), responsible for bringing at least 5,186 captives to Pernambuco before 1831.<sup>70</sup>

Tollenare became friends with "Mr. Ramos" (senior), as he usually referred to the slave trader. He praised the refined ways of his family and visited his Salgado mill, described with enthusiasm in his journal. The products from Salgado were exported through the shoal of the Ipojuca River, along the north border of Porto de Galinhas Beach.<sup>71</sup> Tollenare said the shoal had capacity to receive vessels of up to 150 tons, which may have been an overstatement. But if that was true, following slave trade rules, according to which it was proper to load five captives for every two tons, a vessel this big could carry up to 375 people across the Atlantic. José de Oliveira Ramos, just like Elias Coelho Cintra, stood against the Revolution of 1817, but was not able to flee on time and was arrested by the rebels. He was only released when the Imperial Troops took over Recife. His name also appears on that list of traders and "pecunious" people in Pernambuco, in which he is described as a "stubborn European who is clung to wealth," with a fortune of "around a million or so, give or take" in vessels, trading businesses, mills, slave trading, and more than 300,000 cruzados in currency. The document also said Ramos could easily donate 4 contos de réis, double the amount they supposed Elias Coelho Cintra could pledge. It also states Ramos was single, but had recognized his natural children.<sup>72</sup>

José Ramos de Oliveira, the son of "Mister Ramos," was probably one of the owners of the Bonfim, which brought 353 captives to Pernambuco in 1822, because according to record No. 48.906 of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages ([www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org)), the vessel belonged to the trade name "José de Oliveira Ramos e Ramos (filhos)." He certainly inherited much of his father's fortune, so much so that he managed to marry one of the daughters of Bento José da Costa, a wealthy trader who was involved in the 1817 movement.<sup>73</sup> They were certainly one of the wealthiest couples in Pernambuco.<sup>74</sup> José Ramos de Oliveira went into politics early in life, but was never fully engaged in it. He was a member of the City Council and the Provincial Assembly. The first time he ran for office representing the conservative wing, in 1829, he received the most votes in Recife, 1007, followed by one who remained after the Confederation of the Equator, Antonio Joaquim de Mello, who was in jail for publishing incendiary pasquinades attacking Pedro Land nonetheless received 768 votes.<sup>75</sup> It would be wearisome to list José Ramos de Oliveira's numerous duties in the following years, but it is noteworthy that he was a founding partner and first chairman of the Associação Comercial de Pernambuco, the Commercial Association of Pernambuco, which congregated the wealthiest traders in the province.

His necrology was written by Borges da Fonseca, a radical liberal (!) who was full of praise for the province's "first capitalist" and "only banker." José Ramos de Oliveira, according to Fonseca, passed away because he underwent surgery with an English physician, Doctor May, despite recommendations to the contrary by other local doctors, who were not pleased with that piece of gossip and refuted Fonseca, casting doubt on the subject.<sup>76</sup> Another of José Ramos de Oliveira's unusual friendships was with the English consul in Pernambuco, the man who was supposed to oversee the slave trade. According to him, the diseased was his "intimate friend." The consul acknowledged Oliveira's father was a "slave merchant," but the son was a bold slave keeper, so much so that he considered his 180 Brazilian cap-

78  
(HDBN), *Diário de Pernambuco*. Recife: March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1835.

79  
It is worth highlighting that, in April, 1831, José Ramos de Oliveira once again was the consignee for the Dona Ana, returning from Serra Leoa carrying nothing but an innocuous load of wax, which definitely did not make such a long voyage worth it. (HDBN), *Diário de Pernambuco*. Recife: April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1831.

80  
GOMES, Amanda Barlavento. "O barão traficante e as redes sociais do tráfico: Francisco Antonio de oliveira, 1820 - 1855," p. 3. Article introduced at the 7<sup>o</sup> Encontro Escravidão e Liberdade no Brasil Meridional (7<sup>th</sup> Meeting on Slavery and Freedom in Meridional Brazil), Curitiba (UFPR), 2015, <http://www.escravidaoeliberdade.com.br/>

81  
Apud ALBUQUERQUE; VERSIANI; VERGOLINO. Op. Cit., p. 220.

82  
CAPELA, José. *Conde Ferreira e Cia: Traficantes de escravos*. Lisboa: Afrontamento, 2012, p. 171. About Angello Francisco Carneiro's career in slave trading, refer to: ALBUQUERQUE, Aline Emanuelle De Biase. De "Angelo dos retalhos" a Visconde de Loures: a trajetória de um traficante de escravos, (1818-1858). Master's Dissertation, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 2016. p. 10.

83  
GOMES. Amanda. Op. Cit., *passim*.

84  
ALBUQUERQUE, Aline. Op. Cit., *passim*. About the networks of slave traders who operated the Pernambuco route, also refer to: REIS, João José; GOMES, Flávio dos Santos; CARVALHO, Marcus J. M. de. *O Alufá Rufino: Tráfico, Escravidão e Liberdade no Atlântico Negro* (c.1822 - c. 1853). São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2010, capítulos 10 e 11.

tives' work "an experience with free labor."<sup>77</sup> About his activities, Borges da Fonseca also said he quit slave trading at his father-in-law Bento José da Costa's request as a condition to marry his daughter. Because Costa had been a prolific trader before 1831 and continued to sell people in Recife after that, it is hard to believe in all those qualms. Besides, the Porto de Galinhas shoal, where the Salgado used to be, became a major destination for smuggling captives into Pernambuco after 1831. The latest reference we found to his involvement with slave trading dates from 1835, when he was the consignee of the Lial Portuense heading to Angola, at a time there was no relevant business between Pernambuco and Coastal Africa except for the slave trade.<sup>78</sup> With such a familiar tradition and experience in trading people, it was probably not random when José Ramos de Oliveira asked health agents to inspect the captives he had coming on board of the Dona Ana in 1825.<sup>79</sup> So they trusted the Office of the Provedor-mor's procedures, regardless of how minimum they may seem from a present-day, and therefore anachronistic perspective. Of 34 sick people admitted in that episode, only 4 died while under care.

The third time the trader himself asked for the Office of the Provedor-mor's help was the case of the brig *Imperador do Brasil*, which docked in Recife on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1827 with 439 captives aboard. 26 of them were sent to the Lazaretto, while 11 were handed to health guard Antonio Joaquim dos Santos, who sent them to the brig's own infirmary, as per "oral request" by Francisco Antonio de Oliveira. The guard would be in charge of those 11 captives until their recovery. Once again, it was the trader himself who decided to keep the sick in custody receiving medical care. In this case, on board of his own ship, but in custody of the health guard.

When Francisco Antonio de Oliveira asked the Office of the Provedor-mor for inspection agents, his name was not often found in sources about the Atlantic trade. However, between 1822 and 1831, no one would bring more captives to Pernambuco than him.<sup>80</sup> According to The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages, Oliveira brought 6,211 captives to Pernambuco in the 1820s.<sup>81</sup> He also joined in ventures to trade slaves with Angelo Francisco Carneiro (later Viscount of Loures and, according to Capela, "the biggest slave trader of his time in Luanda"),<sup>82</sup> Joaquim Ferreira dos Santos (later Count of Ferreira, based in Rio de Janeiro), and Elias Baptista da Silva, another major trader based in Pernambuco. Appointed Baron of Beberibe in 1853, Francisco Antonio de Oliveira is a character that can be relatively easily found in sources on the politics and society of Pernambuco in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For many years, he was a prominent member of the City Council of Recife, and later of the Provincial Assembly as well. Like Elias Coelho Cintra and José Ramos de Oliveira, he was an ally of the group that triumphed over the Confederation of the Equator led by the Cavalcantis – Araújo Lima and Francisco do Rego Barros, the Baron of Boa Vista. Afterward, probably with capital he accumulated with his slave ships, he got involved with the urban reforms of the 1830-40s. Among them was the *Companhia do Beberibe*, which provided piped water supply to the fountains in the city center and built the Santa Isabel Theater. Their *casarões*, grand sugar houses, were conspicuous in the city's landscape. One of them is now the Museum of the State of Pernambuco.<sup>83</sup>

After 1831, Francisco Antonio de Oliveira ran many legitimate businesses (and maybe some illegal as well) with his brother-in-law Angelo Francisco Carneiro (later Viscount of Loures), who, according to the

85  
APEJE, *A voz do Brasil*. Recife: January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1849.

86  
VAUTHIER Louis-Léger. *Journal Intime* (1840-1846). Paris: Michel Houdiard Editeur, 2009, p. 127. In his Brazilian version, Gilberto Freyre translated "M. Oliveira" as "Sr O." so as to avoid using the slave trader's name. He also translated mulâtre as "cor de azeitona" (the "color of olive"). FREYRE, Gilberto (org.), *Op. Cit.*, vol. 2, p 659-660. We thank Emanuele Carvalheira de Maupeou for sending us the excerpts from the original French version in which Vauthier talks about two major slave traders: Ângelo Francisco Carneiro and Francisco Antonio de Oliveira. About Francisco Antonio de Oliveira, refer to: GOMES. Amanda. *Op. Cit.*, passim.

87  
APEJE, *O guarda Nacional*. Recife: February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1844.

88  
HDBN, *Diário de Pernambuco*. Recife: February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1839.

89  
National Archives (London). Foreign Office vol. 84/584, *Slave Trade: Brazil Consular*, January to December, 1845, Mr. Cowper to the Earl of Aberdeen, Jun/11/1845, fls. 221-221 verso.

90  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 174 verso, 175 verso and 176 verso. *Slavevoyages*, ID n. 48.680.

91  
Even after 1831, more experienced traders would not sell captives who had recently disembarked and were sick right away. Ricardo Caires Silva listed a series of recounts by Africans who reported they were kept for several days near the disembarkation area recovering from the voyage before being sold. CAÍRES SILVA, Ricardo Tadeu. *Memórias do tráfico ilegal de escravos nas ações de liberdade: Bahia, 1885-1888. Afro-Ásia*, Salvador, vol. 35, p. 37-82, 2007.

English, was perhaps the biggest slave trader north of Bahia.<sup>84</sup> Francisco Oliveira apparently was a personal friend of the Baron (later Count) of Boa Vista, in whose administration public works boomed, and with which Francisco Oliveira probably became involved and certainly made a lot of money. After 1845, when the praieiros (members of the Praieira Revolt) were in office and he was the opposition, his opponents became more daring. In January, 1849, a reckless liberal published a commentary in the local newspaper about Francisco Antonio de Oliveira's relationship with the president of the province, calling him "the Baron's little girl" and a tango-mão ("slaver"), of course.<sup>85</sup> We also know about his personal life through reports by French engineer Vauthier, who was hired to take care of public works in the Baron of Boa Vista administration. Vauthier sometimes was reluctant with Oliveira and considered his son, Augusto de Oliveira, absolutely unbearable, yet gladly accepted every invitation to the slave trader's home for a feast. Francisco de Oliveira was the widower of his first wife at that time. One of his slave ships was named after his deceased wife, the schooner brig Maria Gertrudes. In a malicious piece of gossip, Vauthier said the woman with whom Francisco de Oliveira was involved after becoming a widower was 25 years old and "assez distinguée" (quite distinct), but had the hair of a "mulâtre" (mulatto woman).<sup>86</sup>

Francisco Antonio de Oliveira was an art lover, and according to the Guarda Nacional, when the Baron of Boa Vista didn't go to the theater, he used to make himself comfortable in the presidential box.<sup>87</sup> He was indeed a man with feelings. There is a touching ad he put in local newspapers in 1839 looking for his little white dog, which was "very skinny, of languid eyes, whitened-coffee-colored ears, slim belly, very thin, long legs." Its name was Petit.<sup>88</sup> We have no information on whether it was found. But we do know that, even though he often went to the theater, was friends with a French socialist intellectual and loved Petit, Francisco de Oliveira never lost his callousness when it came to slave trading. The English consul in Pernambuco reports that in 1845 a jewel was stolen from his house. Francisco de Oliveira, "probably the most wealthy man of this city [sic]," accused a house maid, who, terrified at the possibility of being tortured, jumped out of a window and died. Francisco de Oliveira was not happy and cut her belly open to look for the jewel, which was not there, to his disappointment.<sup>89</sup>

Back to Francisco de Oliveira's slave trading affairs, before 1831, of 11 sick captives who were receiving treatment on board of his brig Imperador do Brasil, 4 passed away. The surviving 7 were released to the vessel's pilot, his employee. They had better luck than the ones who were sent to the Lazaretto, where 17 of the 26 inmates didn't respond to treatment and died.<sup>90</sup>

So Elias Baptista da Silva, José Ramos de Oliveira and Francisco Antonio de Oliveira's interest in having health agents inspect their captives was genuine, as they had enough experience and means to know what they were doing. They were probably concerned about not getting people who had just disembarked together with so many others they must have had for sale without first having them undergo careful examination.<sup>91</sup>

But that was the traders' perspective. The captives' was different. They must have gone through troubles and tribulations in terrible conditions while in custody, because, should we be able to trust the Office of the Provedor-mor's documentation, of 2,912 people who were taken in for treatment, 713, or 24.48 percent – a quarter of them –, died. Not to

92

APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls 164. Four arrived dead on the Santo Antônio Realista (fls. 31) and two on the Primoroso Divino (fl. 43 verso), and there was one captive who passed away during inspections aboard the Conceição e Passos (fls. 32 verso).

93

KLEIN, Hebert. *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 86-87.

94

ELTIS, David; RICHARDSON David. *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010, p. 186. SILVA, Daniel Barros Domingues da; ELTIS, David, *The Slave Trade to Pernambuco, 1561-1851*. In: ELTIS David; RICHARDSON David (orgs.). *Extending the frontiers: essays on the new transatlantic slave trade database*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 113.

95

ELTIS e RICHARDSON. *Op. Cit.*, p. 17. About Pernambuco's slave trade, also refer to SILVA; ELTIS. *Op. Cit.*, *passim*.

96

ELTIS and RICHARDSON *Op. Cit.*, p. 17 & 39.

mention those who were found dead on the ship during disembarkation, or a "quasi-alive" one who disembarked and obviously passed away shortly after.<sup>92</sup> Slave mortality rate on land was indeed high. Notwithstanding, the morbidity rate during voyages from the western coast of Africa to Pernambuco was actually low, which, according to the mindset at that time, probably justified a relative negligence in dealing with the captives' health, or more substantial preventive measures against contagion. Oddly enough, the Office of the Provedor-mor's documentation rarely informs about morbidity during voyages. The section "Movimento do Porto" ("Port Activities") in the *Diário de Pernambuco* newspaper helps to solve this problem, as it reports on the number of deaths on 29 slave ships coming from Angola between 1827 and 1831, except for the year 1828, because its digital collection is very incomplete and access to the originals at the Pernambuco Public Archive is currently interdicted. It is worth mentioning that there was no interest in accurately reporting deaths during journeys. Any results we get about morbidity rates during voyages are always based on under-reporting. According to data collected from local newspapers, only 3.6 percent of captives aboard vessels passed away during their journeys.

That low morbidity rate is mostly related to the length of voyages from the Congo/Angola area to Pernambuco, which was shorter than to Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, and other ports in Northern Brazil or the Caribbean. The Atlantic's ocean current and winds favored journeys to Pernambuco. Herbert Klein's classic research tested several variables that could lead to higher mortality rates, such as overcrowding, for example, and found nothing had greater impact on mortality than the length of a voyage.<sup>93</sup> Of course, contagion would spread during the time it took to cross the Atlantic. The longer the voyage, the more diseases would spread and/or aggravate, and the higher the chances of running out of water and victuals or having them contaminated. A recent survey indicates that, between 1776 and 1830, voyages from Angola to Rio de Janeiro took on average 40.9 days, and to Bahia it took them 37 days, while to Pernambuco the average dropped as low as 26.7 days.<sup>94</sup>

The second reason why the mortality rate in slave trading to Pernambuco was low was the wide experience traders involved in the Pernambuco route had. The slave trade in the province dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when, according to Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages data, 54 percent of all Africans who came to Brazil and 12 percent of all Africans who came to the Americas arrived in Duarte Coelho's old captaincy. Overall, Pernambuco is only behind Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, and Jamaica in terms of slave trading.<sup>95</sup> Few places in the Atlantic world had slave trading activities as intense and continuous in the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as Pernambuco. So there was a local know-how, a well-rooted trading and sailing tradition. This is an expertise worth highlighting, because trading people in the coast of Africa and shipping the biggest possible number of captives on a sailing ship was not for amateurs. It was specialized, risky business. The experience traders who operated the Pernambuco route becomes clear as we verify that the province, in addition to being the 4<sup>th</sup> area receiving the most people from Africa, is 7<sup>th</sup> in equipping voyages for the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>96</sup> This information is even more significant when we observe Pernambuco was not at the forefront of the global sugar production since the Dutch occupation in 1630. Perhaps we should then flip our perspective and suggest it was that favorable position in slave trading that



made it easy for the province to survive as a player in the international sugar trade, despite fierce competition in other parts of the Americas and the relatively low capitalization of its growers.

Because voyages were faster, it is safe to assume that, in relative terms, malungos (fellow captives) probably didn't arrived in Recife as maimed as those who were subject to longer journeys. That may help to explain why health agents were relatively successful in some cases. The brig *Comerciante*, for example, brought 429 captives to Recife, of which 176, or 41 percent, were held by the Office of the *Provedor-mor*. We do not know what diseases affected those people. We do know, however, that they gradually recovered. By the end of their treatment, only 9 of 176 inmates passed away.<sup>97</sup> The brig *Príncipe Real* is another relatively successful case. The vessel arrived in Recife with 505 live African captives. Of 103 who were sick and sent to the *Lazaretto*, only 12 passed away.<sup>98</sup>

Despite cases of that kind, in which a cure was an actual possibility, some vessels were still real *tumbeiros*, or "undertakers," even when they were anchored in the city. One of the vessels recorded, the galley *Dom Domingos*, arrived in Recife on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1819 and carried the most people: 649. The book indicates there were also 7 dead people on the ship when it landed in Recife. Other 19 people were taken in for treatment and 18 passed away.<sup>99</sup> The brig *Vigilante Africano* also had dead people in its hold when it arrived. They found 8 bodies on the boat, along with the 389 survivors – 104 of which taken in for treatment. Not all of them were released that same day. The brig arrived on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1820. On July 11<sup>th</sup>, 46 recovered captives were released to the ship's owner. On July 27<sup>th</sup>, other 32 people were released as well. However, 45 didn't make it; that is, of 104 who were sick, nearly half of them died.<sup>100</sup> We know nothing about the diseases that afflicted the victims on board of the galley *Dom Domingos*, because of 191 entries about slave ships in the Office of the *Provedor-mor*'s book, only 85 list the diseases that stroke slave trade victims. We do know, nevertheless, that aboard the brig *Vigilante Africano* there were people with "pox, dysentery, and ophthalmia."

Once their treatment was over, survivors were released to their rightful owners. That is where we start to see details about businesses that could not be clear only by reading the names of owners and/or consignees. We know a lot of slave ships actually operated with a series of investments. Partnerships between parties who were interested in the operation were common. Obviously, these details are not always available in cases of ships on board of which few people were sick. But when there were a lot of people to be released to their owners, these stories emerge. In some cases, there were people to be released in batches to several owners. That was the case of the aforementioned *Imperador do Brasil*<sup>101</sup> and the *Comerciante*<sup>102</sup>. Another indication of these partnerships is the large amount of different brand marks on captives. The book is pretty graphic in this sense as it indicates cleared captives should be delivered to their owners according to their respective marks, which were meticulously drawn by the clerk. Unfortunately, while the book has these marks – dozens of them –, it does not states which trader each mark should identify. Nevertheless, it is clear that several of the inspected ships brought captives of different owners, each with their own batch of people to sell.

While the Atlantic slave trade was legal south of the Equator, the Office of the *Provedor-mor*'s documentation offersevidence of smuggling.

97  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 155 verso.

98  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 161, 162 verso, 163, 164.

99  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 27 verso.

100  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 62.

101  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 150 verso, 151, 151 verso and 152.

102  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 155 verso, 156, 156 verso, 157 verso.

103  
PEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 76 verso.

104  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", 129 verso.

105 APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 132.

106  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 175.

107  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 159.

108  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 34 verso.

109  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 34 verso.

110  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 36 verso.

111  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 54.

112  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 49.

113  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 72 verso.

114  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 64 verso.

One did not even have to be owner of a natural harbor with proper structure to receive slave ships, as was the case of José de Oliveira Ramos and his son, who, as we have seen above, could receive any ship up to 150 tons at the Salgado Mill. Sometimes a minor sloppiness of that kind happened in Recife in plain sight of port authorities. On February, 1821, there were suspicions about the unlawful disembarkation of at least two captives brought by the schooner *Minerva*, coming from Cabinda.<sup>103</sup> In February, 1824, nine Africans were arrested after "illegally" disembarking from the schooner *Santo Cristo dos Milagres*, which brought 289 enslaved people from Angola.<sup>104</sup> Those practices sometimes were discovered during a head count, as the number of captives did not always match what was recorded in the ship's passports. For example, two people were missing from the *Velhade Dio*, which brought 281 captives to Pernambuco in March, 1824.<sup>105</sup> The most curious case was the smack *Desengano*. It brought 289 captives from Angola in July, 1827. They did at least two head counts on subsequent days. Each time, someone was missing, because "different owners" took their slaves in spite of the Office of the *Provedor-mor*.<sup>106</sup>

On occasion, slave ships wound up at beaches north or south of the Recife/Olinda urban area, maybe due to a navigational error or unfavorable currents and winds, which happened a lot with sailing ships. Upon their arrival, captives were sent to Recife to be inspected by agents of the Office of the *Provedor-mor*. That might have been the case of the schooner *Dona Anna*, which had 321 captives disembarking in Goiana, near the Paraiba border, who then had to walk all the way to Recife.<sup>107</sup>

Nevertheless, disembarkation at other ports could also cover smugglers. In May, 1819, the sloop *Paquete do Rio* landed in Ponta de Pedras, a notorious natural harbor north of Recife, where a lot of people would illegally disembark after 1831. The sloop brought at least 311 captives, of which we only have information about 100 coming to Recife by *jangada*, a traditional sailing boat, to be inspected by the Office of the *Provedor-mor*.<sup>108</sup> Meanwhile, the 167 captives brought on board of the brig *Eliza* disembarked at Pau Amarelo, another notorious natural harbor outside Olinda, before going to Recife.<sup>109</sup> In April, 1820, the brig *São José Grande* landed in Paraiba. The 23 captives it supposedly brought from Angola went to Recife by *jangada* and on foot.<sup>110</sup> That small number of people disembarking is all the more curious when we realize, from the Office of the *Provedor-mor*'s documents, that the same *São José Grande* had brought 294 people to Recife a few months before that episode<sup>111</sup> and 455 a few months after that suspicious voyage with as few as 23 captives.<sup>112</sup> It is also odd that the owners of the brig *Cabragante* had traveled all the way from Quelimane to bring no more than 46 captives, who had to walk from Paraiba to the Port of Recife, especially because the Office of the *Provedor-mor*'s book says the owner had already sold 14 of those 46 slave trade victims.<sup>113</sup>

It is also relevant to notice that, in cases of disembarkation at beaches north or south of Recife, the captives who didn't get to the city to be inspected by the Office of the *Provedor-mor* by land had to sail by *jangada*, the same traditional marine fishing craft that was still used until very recently. Therefore, it is important to point out how *jangadeiros*, the fishermen who operate these rafts, were involved in that activity, which could earn them a few extra copper coins. After 1831, the *jangadas* would continue to be used in slave trading, as they would sail to high seas to get to slave ships and guide them back to the harbors where they were expected.<sup>114</sup>

115  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 118.

116  
APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 124.

Jangadeiros were not the only incidental workers in slave trading. When recovered captives were released, many other workers would come into play, including slaves who would receive the captives on behalf of someone else. Obviously, most captives were effectively handed over to their owners or agents, such as slave ship captains and masters, salesmen, and at least one "proxy." But there are records of people handed over to other less qualified agents, such as pilots, boatswains, the "interpreter" of the slave ship, the "woman in charge of bandages," and the "brig's chief steward," as well as at least two records of captives slave traders trusted enough to receive the new slaves after they recovered while in custody of the Office of the Provedor-mor. One of them was Anna, a slave owned by Elias Coelho Cintra, who received 14 people to take to her master.<sup>115</sup> Isidoro, a captive owned by Francisco Antonio de Oliveira, received 13 Africans following his master's orders.<sup>116</sup>

## Final Considerations

Investigation into documents from the Office of the Provedor-mor of Health, as well as other contemporary sources, shows that, even though the plans to implement a linear quarantine system for slave ships fell through, the Office of the Provedor-mor did in fact remain operative as long as it existed. Even English ships were inspected and at least after 1831 one of them, the brig Peruvian, was put in quarantine. Captives with diseases considered contagious at the time, such as scurvy, "pox," measles, dysentery, and "ophthalmias," were held in custody received medical care for as long as it was necessary for their full recovery. The minimum duration of treatment we found was one day, and the maximum was 56. The other captives were cleared and moved according to their masters' orders, to where supposedly they had the means to treat their assets who were afflicted with injuries from their journeys or diseases that were not considered contagious at the time. Thus, the health department followed a certain routine and its most important workers were quite stable in the period we analyzed, performing the same job for years.

It is also important to highlight that this collection provides relevant information about captive disembarkation locations in Recife during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which apparently were not completely random. That also makes sense not because there were serious concerns about the people disembarking from slave ships, but because they were valuable personal estate who required special attention. Surveillance was one of the things they demanded, not only to prevent them from running away, but also to prevent thefts, like what happened with one of the African captives brought on board of the cutter *Minerva da Conceição*, stolen in "night hours."<sup>117</sup> Because there were a lot of people and interests involved in slave trading, it is only natural that there was also room for other illegal activities, such as the smuggling of African captives at the port.

A certain tension between farmers and traders also transpires. It becomes clear that slave traders had more political leverage and were able to pressure against plans to implement a quarantine system for slave ships. It is important to highlight that the provincial government at least once tried to stand up for farmers in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. That happened when the cotton industry started to boom, and Pernambuco once again became a major importer of captives, even bigger than Bahia for a few years,

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APEJE, "Livro d'Entradas", fls. 121.

actually getting very close to Rio de Janeiro in terms of slave trading.

Even though the documentation we have from the Office of the Provedor-mor does not allow us to completely investigate all the years between 1813 and 1829, we observe that, in addition to the strong presence of major traders, like Elias Coelho Sintra (or Cintra), José de Oliveira Ramos and his son José Ramos de Oliveira, and Francisco Antonio de Oliveira, there were a lot of vessels carrying human cargo that was shared among several less conspicuous traders, something that also appears to have happened at other ports in the Atlantic world during slavery. The way slave trade activities spread shows how casual and natural this business was at that time and helps to explain, at the height of the slave trade, why the biggest share of slave property in Brazil was in the hands of small owners.

We also noticed that the slave trade used to employ a myriad of free workers, freed people, and even captives in all sorts of activities. And once again it is worth highlighting that, in this business, Pernambuco traders were very experienced and knew how to make good use of Atlantic winds and currents to reduce the duration of voyages from Africa, compared with other longer routes, such as Rio de Janeiro or even Bahia. That know-how turned out to be useful when they started to use the slave ships' own infirmaries to treat captives with diseases that were considered contagious in pre-germ theory terms, when scurvy, for example, was considered contagious, although it was sophisticated enough to know smallpox apart from measles, even if so many other diseases were diagnosed in general terms, such as "pox," dysentery, and "ophthalmias."

Finally, by defining disembarkation and treatment locations, as well as their respective buildings, warehouses, workers, and streets with names such as New Slave Quarters and Old Slave Quarters, this trade left a mark on the city's spatial distribution, with grand casarões where some of its biggest slave traders used to live.

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