

“THE GREAT INCREASE THAT HAD OCCURRED”: COLONIAL PRODUCTION, ATLANTIC CONNECTIONS, AND THE SLAVE TRADE TO PERNAMBUCO (BRAZIL, C. 1790–C. 1808)

“O GRANDE AUMENTO QUE HOUE”: PRODUÇÃO COLONIAL, CONEXÕES ATLÂNTICAS E O TRÁFICO DE ESCRAVIZADOS PARA PERNAMBUCO (BRASIL, C. 1790–C. 1808)

Filipe Matheus Marinho de Melo^a

^aDoutor em História pela UFPE, com doutorado sanduíche realizado na Universidade de Lisboa. Professor do curso de História EAD da Universidade de Pernambuco e bolsista da CAPES.
Contato: filipemarinho@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to present an overview of Pernambuco within the Atlantic economic system between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, linking the growth of agro-export production—especially cotton and sugar—to the increase in the arrival of slaves in Recife, the port of the captaincy. It argues that the process of “economic resurgence” experienced by Portuguese America in the second half of the eighteenth century contributed to the reintegration of the captaincy of Pernambuco into the wider Western economy, given its importance as a producer of colonial commodities. It further shows that this “resurgence” increased the demand for slaves, with Recife acting not only as a point of reception but also as an active center for their redistribution. Finally, it argues that, in the context of the flight of the Portuguese Royal Court, despite a temporary downturn, the economy resumed growth in the 1810s.

Keywords: Pernambuco; Economia Atlântica; Tráfico de Escravizados.

JEL Codes: N56; N76; N36.

Resumo

Este trabalho tem como objetivo apresentar um panorama de Pernambuco nas dinâmicas atlânticas entre o final do século XVIII e o início do século XIX, relacionando o crescimento da produção agroexportadora, sobretudo de algodão e açúcar, e o aumento dos desembarques de escravizados africanos no Recife, principal porto da Capitania. Argumenta-se que o processo de “ressurgimento econômico” pelo qual passou a América portuguesa na segunda metade do século XVIII contribuiu para que a capitania de Pernambuco se reintegrasse aos quadros da economia ocidental, devido à sua posição na produção de bens coloniais. Mostra-se que esse “ressurgimento” contribuiu para aumentar a demanda por escravizados africanos, sendo o Recife, além de receptor, também atuante na redistribuição desses escravizados. Por fim, argumenta-se que, no contexto de fuga da Corte portuguesa, apesar da retração temporária, a economia voltou a crescer na década de 1810.

Palavras-chave: Pernambuco; Atlantic Economy; Slave Trade.

Códigos JEL: N56; N76; N36.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century was shaped by a set of factors that contributed to what has been described as the “economic resurgence” of several captaincies in Portuguese America (Schwartz, 1988). Pernambuco benefited from this favorable conjuncture, which stimulated the dynamism of the agro-export sector. These developments were crucial in reinserting the captaincy into Atlantic circuits, since, prior to the Dutch occupation in the mid-seventeenth century, Pernambuco had been the most prosperous captaincy in Portuguese America (Silva, 2010; Lopes, 2018). The costs of this process were borne by the sweat and blood of the thousands of Africans who entered Pernambuco’s principal port: Recife.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Count of Oeiras and later Marquis of Pombal, implemented political and economic reforms across the Portuguese Empire, including the creation of institutions to regulate mercantile operations in Portuguese America. In Pernambuco, alongside the *Mesa de Inspeção*—a fiscal body responsible for regulating the prices and quality of colonial commodities such as sugar and tobacco—the *Companhia de Comércio de Pernambuco e Paraíba* was established as a monopolistic enterprise controlling the captaincies’ principal economic transactions. In addition to extending credit to support an already consolidated sector, particularly sugar production, the Company also encouraged new crops, most notably cotton, which would come to dominate Pernambuco’s export revenues from the late 1780s onward (Dias, 2014; Carreira, 1983). Regarding the slave trade, the Company oversaw the supply of enslaved individuals to Recife, obtained primarily from Angola (Menz, 2013).

The end of the company’s monopoly in 1780 and the subsequent rise of free trade coincided with what Hobsbawm (2012) termed the “Age of Revolutions”, whose repercussions were felt throughout the Atlantic world. Following the slave revolution in Saint-Domingue (1791) and the colony’s withdrawal from Europe’s commercial networks, Portuguese America expanded both sugar production for European markets and exports of cotton, cacao, and other commodities (Carrara et al., 2022). In the early nineteenth century, the arrival of the Portuguese Royal Court in Rio de Janeiro, fleeing Napoleon Bonaparte’s invasion at the end of 1807, led to the opening of colonial ports in 1808 and brought an end to what Pernambuco’s governor, Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro, described as the “system of colonial government”¹ (Pedreira, 2022).

Within this broader context, what historiography has conventionally termed an “economic resurgence” emerged, driven by rising agricultural output and commercial expansion. Pernambuco was deeply integrated into this process, becoming one of the principal ports receiving African slaves, as colonial production relied fundamentally on slave labor. Estimates indicate that Recife ranked third among the most important slave landing sites in Brazil, surpassed only by Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, underscoring its significance to the Portuguese imperial economy (Eltis; Richardson, 2010).

This study examines Pernambuco’s position within the Atlantic economy by assessing the relationships between colonial production, commercial exchange, and the slave trade. As a major exporter of cotton and sugar, Pernambuco was integrated into a wider Atlantic commercial network, much like other regions of Portuguese America (Arruda, 2022). Through Portugal, Recife’s merchants supplied commodities to European markets, particularly those linked to expanding manufacturing sectors, such as France and England (Mello [2004], 2014). At the same time, this commercial system contributed to the expansion of the transatlantic slave trade and the importation of enslaved Africans (Melo, 2026). The central argument advanced here is that, between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, rising

¹ Ofício do governador de Pernambuco, Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro, ao conde de Aguiar. 1809, March 18. Arquivo Público Estadual Jordão Emerenciano (henceforth APEJE), Correspondências para a Corte, book 18, f. 16.

colonial production played a key role in increasing the volume of slave landings.

For this reason, the selection of the period c. 1790–c.1808 is warranted by the fact that it was during these final years, when Portuguese America remained subject to the strictures of the colonial system, that several regions of the territory experienced phases of economic expansion, as has long been acknowledged by the specialized historiography (Pedreira, 2022; Carrara et al., 2022). Nevertheless, relatively few studies have examined Pernambuco's commercial and Atlantic realities within this context, particularly by situating them within the broader history of the African slave trade (Melo, 2017; Machado, 2021; Melo, 2026; Dias, 2014). The arguments advanced in this article seek to contribute to the further development of this field of inquiry.

Undoubtedly, sugar plantations were the primary destinations for slaves, but many also remained in urban areas, where they were employed in a range of activities (Carvalho, 2010; Reis, 2019). Nevertheless, relatively few studies have examined the role of slave labor in Pernambuco's cotton cultivation (Palacios, 2004; Melo; Martins, 2023; Santos, 2019; Ribeiro Jr., 1981). One reason for this lies in the scarcity and limited information of the sources—a situation that contrasts sharply with that of sugar production (Mello, 2012). Most colonial records are held at the Overseas Historical Archive in Lisbon and primarily deal with the administrative aspects of the cotton sector, such as taxation, fiscal institutions, and official appointments, rather than production levels. Export registers do provide quantitative data on the subject, but they are available only for a limited number of years, making sustained serial analysis difficult. Similar limitations characterize the sources preserved at the Public Archive of Pernambuco (APEJE) in Recife. Additional sources can be found at the National Archive of Torre do Tombo, in Lisbon, particularly within the records of the *Junta do Comércio* and in the account books of merchants such as Ângelo Gonçalves Aires and others (Dias, 2018).

For instance, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Gonçalves Aires maintained commercial partnerships with several merchants in Brazil, including the slave traders Elias Coelho Cintra and José Bento Moreira, both based in Pernambuco. Through these networks, he shipped cotton bags to England for merchants such as George Roach and John Theodore Koster (Melo, 2026).² Preserved within the *Livros dos Feitos Findos* collection, these account books offer promising avenues for future research on the commercial networks linking Pernambuco to European markets, particularly England. Their systematic examination, however, falls beyond the scope of the present study, which analyzes the relationship between the expansion of colonial production and the arrival of slaves in Recife.

What is currently known is that patterns of slave ownership became increasingly dispersed throughout the nineteenth century, with a growing number of small and medium-sized slaveholders, rather than the plantation model of large estates employing numerous slaves, predominating in the agro-export sector. As Versiani and Vergolino (2003; 2016) have shown, a significant proportion of these slaves was concentrated in productive semi-arid areas, particularly in the *agreste* and *sertão* regions of Pernambuco, where cotton cultivation was also widespread. The purpose of this study is to examine how the expansion of the captaincy's export economy contributed to the increase in the number of enslaved Africans landed in Pernambuco between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

However, any analysis of the increase in the number of the enslaved disembarked in Pernambuco cannot be carried out in isolation without some discussion of the captaincy's agricultural demand, particularly for cotton, given the limited number of studies on the subject. Regarding cotton production, it is important to highlight that at the end of the eighteenth century, Brazilian cotton was considered the second “most esteemed” by Manchester manufacturers, surpassed only by that produced in Asia (Pereira, 2017, 35). It

² Among Others, see: Copiador de cartas comerciais da sociedade de Ângelo Gonçalves Aires e José Bento Moreira. Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (henceforth ANTT), *Livros dos Feitos Findos*, book 210.

is known that, during the 1780s and 1790s, the diffusion of innovations, such as the water frame and the cotton spinning mule, contributed to a sharp expansion in British demand for raw cotton. Part of this supply originated from the West Indies and the Mediterranean, while Indian cotton, although still significant, increasingly faced growing competition from American fibers (Beckert, 2014; Pereira, 2017).

In the United States, the use of cotton gins in the early 1790s significantly boosted export production. However, as Pereira (2017, 57-61) demonstrated, the first reduction in U.S. exports resulted from the 1808 embargo, imposed by President Thomas Jefferson, and the War of 1812. Commercial relations between the United States and Britain were only reestablished in 1814. In the Caribbean, cotton was cultivated in several regions, not only in territories under British control, such as Jamaica and Barbados, but also in French colonies, as in the case of Saint-Domingue before the slave revolution (Beckert, 2014). However, despite the importance of the West Indies in British raw cotton imports, their share gradually declined due to the superior quality of Brazilian cotton, which came to occupy an important position from the late eighteenth century onward (Pereira, 2017; Beckert, 2014).

In this context, Brazilian cotton became increasingly significant within the Atlantic trade. Cultivated mainly in Maranhão and Pernambuco and exported through Portugal, it had circulated in British markets since the 1760s. However, it was from the 1780s onward that Brazilian cotton acquired greater prominence in European commercial networks—a development that was further reinforced by the opening of Brazilian ports in 1808. According to Pereira (2017), Brazilian cotton was particularly esteemed for its high quality, especially for its longer and more resistant staples, which were less prone to breakage during mechanized spinning. As Beckert (2014) likewise noted, this “long-staple variety” was “better suited to emerging factory technology”.

The expansion in demand for raw cotton and the intensification of colonial economies coincided with the increase in the number of Africans landed in Brazil at the turn of the nineteenth century; this process should be understood through a range of interrelated factors (Tomich, 2004; Beckert, 2014). Given the rise of the agro-export sector, this work assesses the volume of African landings by comparing, where possible, estimates from the Slave Voyages database with sources held in Brazilian and Portuguese archives. As will be shown, Pernambuco also acted as a redistributive hub within the slave trade, transferring the enslaved to other regions of Brazil while simultaneously expanding its export economy. Finally, the article demonstrates that the years preceding the arrival of the Royal Court in Brazil in 1808 were marked by a brief slowdown in export growth and slave landings due to conflicts and blockades in Europe, followed by renewed expansion in the 1810s, largely driven by the opening of ports.

The sources underpinning this article are diverse, consisting primarily of reports produced by colonial authorities on the production of cotton and sugar, as well as records documenting the numbers of disembarkations in Pernambuco and embarkations in Africa, particularly in Angola. Regarding the numerical data reported by colonial officials on the slave trade, information from the Slave Voyages database will also be used to compare the available evidence. As will be demonstrated, in the case of the slave trade to Pernambuco, significant gaps remain in the available figures, obscuring the full extent of the captaincy’s involvement, as Silva and Eltis (2008) have noted. This evidence is further complemented by the accounts of travelers who visited Pernambuco and documented various aspects of life in Recife, with particular attention to commerce and slavery.

This study adopts an “Atlantic perspective” to examine the relationships between colonial production and the slave trade that connected Pernambuco to different parts of the Atlantic World. In this sense, the “Atlantic” is understood as an analytical concept encompassing a set of commercial, institutional, and human relations that linked Pernambuco to various regions both within and beyond the Portuguese Empire (Ferreira, 2024; Armitage,

2002). As Bernard Bailyn (2005, 61) pointed out, Atlantic History “is the story of a world in motion”. However, this study does not aim to provide an in-depth analysis of these connections, but rather to focus on how they contributed to the disembarkation of slaves in Recife. From this perspective, the use of dispersed sources produced across different regions is crucial for reassessing Pernambuco’s position within the wider context of the Atlantic economy, transcending local boundaries and the constraints of sources produced in Recife.

2. BETWEEN COTTON AND SUGAR: COLONIAL EXPANSION AND SLAVE LABOR

In March 1806, the governor of Pernambuco, Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro, wrote to his overseas superiors what, in his analysis, was a very important observation to be highlighted about the captaincy. He reported “the great increase that had occurred”, mainly in exports, “which I consider to be the greatest that Pernambuco has ever made”. In the schedule of imports and exports that was attached to the letter, cotton, sugar, and hides occupied the main places in the “great increase” reported by the authority.³

Among these products, cotton had already stood out as one of the main products in the agricultural export sector, surpassing sugar, the long-standing staple of Recife’s export trade (Mello, [2004] 2014). It is unsurprising that, in the flag of the *Confederação do Equador* of 1824, a cotton branch appeared alongside a sugarcane stalk, both placed beneath a Masonic symbol. This imagery made explicit the agricultural, social, and politico-ideological connections of the leaders of the 1824 federalist episode. Notably, even during the Pernambuco revolution of 1817, no similar iconography had been adopted, although a flag had been designed on that occasion. But what is important to point out is that cotton exports grew substantially during the 1780s, by which time the *Companhia de Comércio de Pernambuco e Paraíba*, the principal promoter of cotton cultivation in the Mata Norte (wet coastal plain north of Recife) and interior dry zones of these captaincies, had already ceased its activities (Melo, 2017; Melo, 2026).

As early as 1777, the governor José César de Menezes noted growing interest in cotton cultivation in Alagoas, based on a report delivered by the *ouvidor* Francisco Nunes da Costa. The report identified the *Companhia* as the institution most committed to promoting the crop. Since Alagoas was then part of Pernambuco and lay far to the south of Recife, cotton cultivation was envisioned to counter what officials described as the “idleness” of the captaincy’s poorer inhabitants (Palacios, 2004). In this context, idleness was understood as a political and economic category embedded in the system of privileges attached to a particular social position. Thus, efforts to combat the idleness of the poor aimed to prevent Pernambuco’s lower social strata from adopting patterns of conduct traditionally associated with more privileged groups (Silva, 2010).⁴

As an agricultural commodity, cotton fell under the *Companhia*’s jurisdiction until its activities ended in 1780. Within this initiative, we find some of the earliest formal instructions on establishing cotton cultivation.⁵ Rather than taking root in the southern areas of Pernambuco, which were largely dedicated to sugar production, cotton spread across a belt running from Paulista through the Mata Norte, advancing into areas such as Limoeiro, Paudalho, and Nazaré, and extending further north into Paraíba and Ceará, beyond the territorial limits of the captaincy of Pernambuco (Koster, 1816).

In the 1780s, the *ouvidor* of Pernambuco, Antônio Xavier de Moraes Teixeira Homem,

3 Ofício do governador da Capitania de Pernambuco Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro ao secretário de estado visconde de Anadia. 1806, March 3. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (henceforth AHU), Pernambuco, box 259, doc 17380.

4 Efforts to combat idleness were also intended to curb what contemporaries perceived as “vagrancy”. For an insightful discussion of vagrants and socially marginalized groups, see: Souza, [1982] 1986.

5 Ofício do governador da Capitania de Pernambuco José César de Menezes ao secretário de estado Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1777, Feb 25. AHU, Pernambuco, box 126, doc 9561.

wrote that “cotton is becoming, in this captaincy, a commodity of great distinction [...] the finest in America, and even superior to that of India”. He did not conceal his forecast that “within a few years it will surpass the aforementioned [sugar]”, further asserting that “those who cultivate it [cotton] are more prosperous than sugar planters, especially in the lands already mentioned [the backlands of Ceará and Paraíba], one slave in this type of labor yields three times more than in the work of sugar cultivation”.⁶ In other words, what this authority indicated in 1787 was that the profits from cotton, relative to the costs required to establish its production, were greater than those generated by sugar, which relied on a well-established milling infrastructure.

In fact, the *ouvidor*’s prediction regarding the profitability of the fiber in relation to sugar proved correct. An import register from the city of Porto, for example, shows that in 1788 cotton had already surpassed sugar in value expressed in *réis*: 570,270\$000 for the fiber, compared to 404,698\$890 for white sugar and 7,052\$900 for muscovado—that is, sugar both refined and unrefined.⁷ By the early 1790s, cotton was already regarded as one of the most important export commodities, a prominence that continued into the early nineteenth century. Reflecting this, in 1798, governor Tomás José de Mello wrote that the production of the fiber “continues to grow, and it is impossible to calculate how far it may go”.⁸

Tomás José de Mello did not witness that growth, as he became the target of an investigation that exposed irregularities in his administration. He was replaced by a governing junta that included Bishop José Joaquim da Cunha Azeredo Coutinho. Nevertheless, the former governor’s forecasts proved accurate. Much later, in 1806, members of the *Mesa de Inspeção* reported that cotton had spread throughout the western interior of the captaincy.⁹ In effect, the cotton boom became integrated into the commercial relations between Portugal and the United Kingdom, where machines were producing yarn and textiles on an increasingly large and efficient scale (Melo, 2017). From Recife, but also from São Luís, cotton was exported in bags to the cities of Lisbon and Porto, and from there shipped onward to the ports of London and Liverpool, where Portuguese merchants had maintained contacts since the 1780s and where the fiber would contribute to the momentum of industrialization (Pereira, 2017; Arruda, 2016; Melo, 2026).

Portuguese industry itself indeed had as its principal market the overseas ports of the colonies, especially those of Portuguese America. Jorge Pedreira has noted that the Brazilian cotton boom also helped stimulate textile manufacturing in the metropolis and in regions such as Aveiro, Alcobaça, Porto, and Tomar, among others. However, until the late 1770s, Portuguese production did not manage to reduce the share of textiles that Brazil still had to import. As a relatively small share of Portugal’s exports, foreign manufactures, primarily from Asia and other parts of Europe, accounted for most of the textiles shipped to Brazil. As a result, a 1785 decree prohibited any manufacture of cotton textiles in Brazil to protect the metropolitan industry, alongside a series of fiscal concessions designed to stimulate trade with the colony (Pedreira, 1994).

The production of cotton textiles also stimulated trade with Africa, since the slave could be purchased in exchange for cloth (Ferreira, 2003). Indian textiles were preferred in many parts of Africa for their quality and vibrant colors. As Gustavo Lopes and Maximiliano Menz (2019, 111) observed, textiles “gradually replaced spices”. To better illustrate the impact of textiles in Luanda and the interior of Angola in the mid-eighteenth century, lists were compiled detailing which goods were considered essential for purchasing the enslaved in West Central Africa. According to one official report, “calicoes (*chitas*) and Damão blankets

6 Ofício do ouvidor da Capitania de Pernambuco ao secretário de estado Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1787, May 20. AHU, Pernambuco, box 159, doc 11475.

7 Mapa de exportação da Capitania de Pernambuco para Lisboa e Porto. ANTT, Junta do Comércio, book 455.

8 Ofício do governador da Capitania de Pernambuco D. Tomás José de Mello ao secretário de estado D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. 1798, Jan. 10. AHU, Pernambuco, box 199, doc 13658.

9 Correspondências recebidas das autoridades ultramarinas. ANTT, Junta do Comércio, bundle 10, box 38.

(*cobertas*) were among the principal goods in the revenues of Angola”, as they were used to acquire captives.¹⁰

In this way, a commercial circuit of exchange linked textiles and the enslaved. Imported from India, textiles were shipped to Portugal and then redirected to African ports to purchase captives. An accounting record, for example, shows that a *peça*¹¹ of Daman calicoes was sold in Lisbon for 1\$500; in Luanda for 3\$000; and in the interior of Angola for around 6\$000.¹² As Sven Beckert (2014, 43-44) observed, “European trade in cotton textiles tied together Asia, the Americas, Africa, and Europe in a complex commercial web [...] the beating heart of this new system was slavery”. As demand for the enslaved in the Americas increased, trade with India was likewise stimulated, setting a wide range of commodities in motion across the globe.

With the growth of the British textile industry, part of the cotton produced in Portuguese America was exported from Recife to the United Kingdom to supply textile manufacturing that would foster competition with Indian cloth in African and American markets. As Joseph Inikori has noted, the English textile industry developed “an import and re-export substitution industry” (2002, 428). Sven Beckert (2014) goes further, arguing that in Europe, the textile manufacturing sector was pressured to adopt Indian technologies to reproduce the quality and colors of its fabrics. Thus, to meet the demands of late eighteenth-century British industry, raw cotton was increasingly imported from the Caribbean and northern Brazil in the Americas, replacing supplies that had previously come from the Mediterranean (Beckert, 2014).

Keenly aware of the role played by Pernambuco’s cotton, the *ouvidor* Antônio Xavier de Moraes Teixeira Homem remarked on the quality of the fiber exported through the port of Recife: “the finest in America, and even superior to that of India”.¹³ Although the *ouvidor* sought to emphasize the superior quality of cotton produced in Pernambuco in comparison with that grown elsewhere, his assessment was not unfounded. According to Pereira (2018a), Brazilian cotton was widely regarded as high quality and preferred for the manufacture of finer textiles. Pereira further notes that, in 1822, Antônio Bernardino Pereira do Lago “stated that European markets preferred Pernambuco’s cotton to Maranhão’s” owing to its superior quality (Pereira, 2018a, 18).

Given the considerable potential of cotton cultivation in Pernambuco, the campaign against “idleness”, noted by the *ouvidor* of Alagoas in the late 1770s, aimed to render productive a portion of the poor population considered “idle”, as previously mentioned.¹⁴ Yet this idea was not new. According to Guillermo Palacios’ study (2004) on Pernambuco, cotton cultivation had already been incorporated into the plans of overseas authorities by 1759, with the intention of addressing the problem of marginalized poor people and the available labor force unable to find employment in urban centers or sugar mills. From this mid-eighteenth-century concern with idleness, Palacios (2004) argues that, rather than Africans, it was peasants who were most heavily recruited into cotton cultivation. This interpretation saw cotton as a “poor man’s crop” (Pereira, 2018b).

It is worth noting that cotton cost much less to cultivate than sugar. This was already recognized at the time. As governor Tomás José de Mello reported in 1798, “the

10 Memória escrita por Francisco Henrique Rubens e relativa aos principais gêneros que se costumavam enviar da cidade de Lisboa. 1780, Dec. 31. AHU, Angola, box 184, doc 13830.

11 *Peça*, or *peça da Índia*, functioned as a unit of measurement. Within the slave trade, it served as a fiscal standard, corresponding to an adult person of a specified height for taxation purposes. The term’s usage stemmed from an analogy with the measurement of cloth. In 1758, the *peça* was replaced by a new tax category known as *cabeça* (head).

12 Pauta dos preços que têm as fazendas, em Lisboa e em Luanda. AHU, Angola, box 183, doc 13711.

13 Ofício do ouvidor da Capitania de Pernambuco ao secretário de estado Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1787, May 20. AHU, Pernambuco, box 159, doc 11475.

14 Ofício do governador da Capitania de Pernambuco, José César de Meneses ao secretário de estado, Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1777, Fev. 25. AHU, Pernambuco, box 126, doc. 9561.

expenses of this commodity bear no proportion whatsoever to those of sugar”.¹⁵ With far fewer requirements, cotton shrubs adapted easily to the semi-arid environment and could be cultivated and harvested with minimal land preparation and care. On this matter, the historian José Ribeiro Júnior (1981, 237) described cotton cultivation as “democratic” in contrast to the “seigneurial culture” associated with sugar.

It did not take long for large landowners to take over cotton production, pushing small farmers aside, beginning with restrictions on land access. On this matter, Evaldo Cabral de Mello ([2004] 2014) draws attention to a process by which sugar-mill owners converted to cotton cultivation. This is evident in an official letter from the governor of Paraíba, dated 1787, in which he reported having ordered: “the sugar planters to continue planting cane as they had done before they were seized by the ambition for cotton.” This already reveals the place cotton production had come to occupy in relation to sugar. A similar message was also addressed to the sugar-mill owners: “that they do the same, informing me of those who comply or fail to comply with this order”.¹⁶

The context of this situation extended beyond cotton being preferred over sugar to include an emerging food crisis. Not only sugarcane but even manioc—the dietary staple of the population—began to be displaced by the cultivation of cotton. In an assessment made in 1797, governor Tomás José de Mello wrote that “the ruin of manioc planting in this captaincy dates from the same time as the introduction of cotton cultivation”.¹⁷ Within this broader context of conversion, highlighted by Mello ([2004] 2014), slave labor was employed as a productive force in cotton cultivation on lands little used by the sugar industry, demonstrating that cotton was not solely a poor man’s crop.

A land-use observation was made by the French merchant Louis-François de Tollenare, who was in Pernambuco in the 1810s. When he visited the Salgado sugar-mill estate, owned by the slave trader José de Oliveira Ramos, he noted the vast extent of the property, the portion devoted to sugarcane, and the large tracts left unused. Based on his account, the plantation measured “one league in one direction and two in the other,” yet only about 4.2% of the land was under cultivation, leaving roughly 95% unused: “in none of the other sugar mills I visited did the cultivated portion exceed the proportion I found at Salgado”, the merchant wrote (Tollenare, 1905, 72). In possession of such extensive lands, these large landowners were able to diversify their agricultural production while relying on the labor available to them, whether enslaved or not.

In addition to the diversification strategies adopted by sugar-mill owners, who cultivated cotton on lands not devoted to sugar production, a substantial share of Pernambuco’s cotton output was produced by small and medium-sized farmers in the captaincy’s western regions, particularly in the *agreste* and *sertão* (hinterland). According to Versiani and Vergolino (2003), who examined slaveholding patterns among landowners in these areas, roughly 30 to 40 percent of Pernambuco’s slave population was located outside the Mata Sul—where most sugar mills were concentrated—and Recife, the principal urban center. It was in the *agreste* and *sertão* that these slaves were largely employed. Among the inventories and wills analyzed by the authors, a considerable proportion of landowners were engaged in cotton cultivation and owned relatively small or medium-sized slaveholdings, corroborating what studies on the widespread distribution of slave ownership in Brazil have long demonstrated (Libby, 2020; Florentino, [1995] 2014).

The use of slave labor in Pernambuco’s cotton economy was also observed by the English traveler Henry Koster, who resided in Recife during the 1810s. In Maranhão, a captaincy

15 Ofício do governador da Capitania de Pernambuco, D. Tomás José de Melo, ao secretário de estado, D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. 1798, Jan. 10. AHU, Pernambuco, box 199, doc. 13658.

16 Ofício do governador da Paraíba, coronel Jerônimo José de Melo e Castro, ao secretário de estado, Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1787, May 28. AHU, Paraíba, box 30, doc. 2178.

17 Carta do governador da capitania de Pernambuco, D. Tomás José de Melo e Castro, ao secretário de estado, D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. 1797, Aug. 21. AHU, Pernambuco, box 198, doc. 13603.

that rivaled Pernambuco in the export of cotton, Koster reported having encountered large plantations employing between 1,000 and 1,500 slaves (Koster, 1816). Pereira (2017, 136) has argued that these figures were “highly improbable numbers” to have been accurate. Even so, they may indicate a greater concentration of slaves than in Pernambuco, where they were more widely dispersed among small- and medium-sized cotton producers (Versiani; Vergolino, 2016).

By the late eighteenth century, the use of slave labor in cotton cultivation was already well established, suggesting that the cotton-producing regions were not sustained solely by poor free laborers. Indeed, in the 1780s, Pernambuco’s *ouvidor* compared cotton cultivation favorably to sugar production, claiming that “one slave in this type of labor yields three times more than in the work of sugar cultivation”.¹⁸ Likewise, during the 1790s, Manuel Arruda da Câmara (1799, 55) offered practical advice on the management of slave labor in cotton production while emphasizing its profitability. As he noted, “with just 30 slaves I made a cotton field in four days, valued at 1,000 arrobas of cotton”. Taken together, this evidence indicates that, despite the relatively modest scale of slaveholding associated with cotton production, slave labor remained both a viable and profitable option in Pernambuco’s cotton-growing regions.

Despite the shift in agriculture from sugar to cotton, sugar was never abandoned. An import register from the city of Porto for 1789, for example, clearly shows that Pernambuco sugar was valued that year at a higher level than cotton.¹⁹ Over the years, cotton indeed came to dominate exports among colonial commodities, but sugar was far from being cast off. When members of the *Mesa de Inspeção* requested a salary increase in 1806, they justified it by stating that “the agriculture of this country has increased considerably in the commodity of sugar”.²⁰ In other words, the *Mesa de Inspeção*’s workload had kept pace with the rising volume of agricultural production. Moreover, it is also important to consider that in the early 1790s, the collapse of sugar production in Saint-Domingue contributed to the growth of exports from Brazil’s already well-established sugar plantations (Barickman, 2003).

In this way, the production that had previously belonged to Saint-Domingue (Haiti) helped stimulate the sugar sector of Portuguese America. Writing about Bahia, Stuart Schwartz (1988, 343) observed that with “the elimination of the island as a sugar producer, the price of this commodity rose tremendously in European markets”. Rising prices were synonymous with high profitability, as Barickman (2003, 71-73) noted. From Rio de Janeiro, in 1798, the viceroy José Luís de Castro, Count of Rezende, commented on the sugar produced in Campos dos Goytacazes, noting that it “circulates in the general commerce of all Europe”, especially “after Martinique suffered the great destruction occasioned by that same slavery”.²¹ In Pernambuco, in the late 1790s, governor Tomás José de Mello was asked to present an assessment of agricultural production. Even after elaborating at length on the importance and growth of cotton, he did not fail to state that the profitability of the fiber could only be compared to that of sugar, since sugar remained the principal export commodity.²² This became evident when Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro, the new governor of Pernambuco, wrote in 1806 about “the great increase that had occurred”. In the report sent to the metropolis, he presented export figures showing sugar at 702:065\$990 réis and cotton at 1.564:752\$340 réis.²³ It seems clear, therefore, that predictions of cotton surpassing sugar were well founded, even though sugar continued to occupy an important

18 Ofício do ouvidor da Capitania de Pernambuco Antônio Xavier de Moraes Teixeira Homem ao secretário de estado Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1787, May 20. AHU, Pernambuco, box 159, doc 11475.

19 Mapa de exportação da Capitania de Pernambuco para Lisboa e Porto. ANTT, Junta do Comércio, book 455.

20 Correspondências recebidas das autoridades ultramarinas. ANTT, Junta do Comércio, bundle 10, box 38.

21 Ofício do vice-rei do estado do Brasil, conde de Resende, ao secretário de estado, D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. 1798, Nov. 19. AHU, Rio de Janeiro, box 168, doc. 12475.

22 Ofício do governador da Capitania de Pernambuco, D. Tomás José de Mello, ao secretário de estado, D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. 1798, Jan. 10. AHU, Pernambuco, box 199, doc. 13658.

23 Ofício do governador da Capitania de Pernambuco, Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro, ao secretário de estado, visconde de Anadia. 1806, March 3. AHU, Pernambuco, box 259, doc. 17380.

place among Recife's exports.

Symptomatic of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century agro-export revival was the growth in the number of landings of Africans and the expansion of embarkation points, marking a genuine enlargement of the geography catchment area of enslavement. (Eltis; Richardson, 2010). While the expansion of agricultural production and the rising European demand for cotton and sugar contributed to the increase in the number of Africans forced to Recife, it is necessary to examine the connections that enabled this demand to be met. From the *Costa da Mina*²⁴ in West Africa to Mozambique in East Africa, new ports and new populations entered commercial relations with the ships that sustained the slave trade to Brazil. As a result of this process, it is possible to observe the diversity of African origins present in Pernambuco, such as Mozambique, Mina, and Angola (Melo, 2026).

3. THE SLAVE TRADE AND THE ROLE OF PERNAMBUCO

As numerous studies have already demonstrated, the majority of slaves sent to Pernambuco came from West Central Africa—especially from Congo and Angola (Melo, 2026; Eltis and Silva, 2008; Costa, 2021). Among the available sources for the 1790s is the case of the captaincy of Benguela in Angola. However, when compared to other destinations such as Rio de Janeiro, Recife received far fewer people from that port. Benguela was never a primary point of embarkation for captives bound for Pernambuco. Indeed, most arrived from Luanda and from ports farther north along the Angolan coast, such as Cabinda. Historiography has already demonstrated that Benguela's connections with Brazil were closer to Rio de Janeiro (Ferreira, 2006; Candido, 2013). Nevertheless, the surviving sources still allow recovery of figures for two years, 1792 and 1793.

According to an export register produced in Benguela, Pernambuco ranked behind Rio de Janeiro and Bahia in the number of Africans shipped from the port. In 1792, for instance, approximately 893 slaves were sent to Recife, whereas 5,988 were shipped to Rio de Janeiro and 2,029 to Bahia. The following year witnessed a sharp increase, with a total of 1,897 Africans transported to Pernambuco (see Table 1).²⁵ As previously noted, Luanda was the principal port of embarkation for captives destined for Recife. Yet in 1794, the governor reported that a “lack of rainfall, together with countless plagues of locusts, rats, leopards, and lions”, had hampered exports more generally. Even so, he observed that Benguela had performed better than other regions in terms of exports during those years of crisis.²⁶

Mariely Mello Felipe (2020) noted that an El Niño event caused a drought that affected both sides of the South Atlantic. Reports of severe drought emerged not only in Angola but also in Pernambuco. In a letter addressed to the overseas authorities in 1795, D. Tomás José de Mello referred to the difficulties of cultivating manioc to feed the population because of the “great droughts of three years, which began in ninety-one and ended in ninety-three”.²⁷ Although the main concern expressed in the letter was the supply of manioc flour, given its importance both as a staple food and as rations for paid troops, the drought may also have affected export agriculture.

In reality, the drought merely deepened a provisioning crisis that had been unfolding since the mid-1780s. As land previously devoted to manioc cultivation was converted to sugar and cotton production, cultivators became increasingly dependent on imports of basic

24 The *Costa da Mina* was a region that encompassed the Gold Coast and the Slave Coast.

25 Ofício do governador da capitania de Benguela, Francisco Paim da Câmara Ornelas, ao secretário de estado, Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1794, Jan. 19. AHU, Angola, box 81, doc. 6683.

26 Ofício do governador do governador e capitão general de Angola, Manuel de Almeida e Vasconcelos, ao secretário de estado, Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1794, March 3. AHU, Angola, box 81, doc. 6696.

27 Ofício do governador da capitania de Pernambuco, D. Tomás José de Mello, ao secretário de estado, D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. 1795, Sep. 15. AHU, Pernambuco, box 190, doc. 13117.

foodstuffs from places such as Bahia and Rio Grande de São Pedro in southern Brazil.²⁸ When Tollenare visited the Salgado sugar-mill, he remarked on the extent to which food supplies depended on imports. He noted not only that “dried meat comes from the southern provinces”, but also that “not all the manioc required is cultivated” (Tollenare, 1905, 75).

Having once exported livestock, including mules and horses, as well as meat, Rio Grande increasingly supplied the dried beef needed to feed the northern captaincies, whose economies had been affected either by the droughts of the 1790s or by the conversion of agricultural land to meet the demands of international markets. Reflecting these changing commercial ties, the municipal council of Porto Alegre petitioned for vessels departing from Rio Grande to be allowed to sail directly to Pernambuco and Bahia without first calling at Rio de Janeiro, a port to which the region had long been connected (Menz, 2009).²⁹ As Menz (2009, 175) has shown, between 1802 and 1821, Pernambuco became the third-largest destination for exports from Rio Grande, behind only Rio de Janeiro and Bahia.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, an increasing degree of specialization between export-oriented and domestic markets had emerged in Portuguese America. Rather than operating as separate spheres, the two were deeply intertwined and mutually reinforcing, as Rafael Cariello and Thales Zamberlan Pereira (2022) have argued. At the same time, it was Africa that supplied the labor on which the export economy depended. Thus, when colonial authorities sought to alleviate the effects of drought in Angola by requesting shipments of manioc flour from several Brazilian ports, the governor complained that the quantities received were insufficient because “only very small amounts arrived from those ports,” providing neither adequate relief for the population nor a solution to the crisis.³⁰ This was not only because imported meat and most flour were intended for local consumption, but also because such provisions were routinely carried aboard slave ships operating on the Pernambuco-Africa route.

Given the limitations of the available evidence, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the drought also affected the slave trade. The surviving records for Angola leave considerable room for uncertainty, particularly because export data for Luanda during the 1790s are largely unavailable, so we can only rely on those from Benguela. On the one hand, estimates from the Slave Voyages database suggest that disembarkations in Recife remained relatively stable, with some variations (see Table 1). On the other hand, the available evidence suggests that the actual numbers were higher. Records compiled in Benguela for 1793, for example, indicate a larger volume of slave exports than is reported in the database. For that year, Benguela records list 1,897 slaves shipped to Pernambuco, compared to 1,644 recorded in Slave Voyages. Since the database’s disembarkation estimates are derived from aggregate figures for all African ports from which slave ships departed, the fact that its estimate falls below the figure reported for a single port is revealing. It points to both the undercounting of arrivals and the broader uncertainties surrounding the slave trade to Pernambuco.³¹

Table 1 – Number of African Slaves Carried on Vessels to Pernambuco (1790-1795)		
Year	Disembarkations	Embarkations
	Slave Voyages	AHU, Angola
1790	972	No data available

28 Ofício da junta governativa da capitania de Pernambuco, ao secretário de estado, Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. 1800, Jan. 18. AHU, Pernambuco, box 214, doc. 14497.

29 Carta dos oficiais da câmara da vila de Porto Alegre à rainha D. Maria I. 1793, Nov. 16. AHU, Rio Grande do Sul, box 3, doc 284.

30 Ofício do governador do governador e capitão general de Angola, Manuel de Almeida e Vasconcelos, ao secretário de estado, Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1793, April 25. AHU, Angola, box 79, doc 6635.

31 Ofício do capitão e general do Reino de Angola, Manuel de Almeida e Vasconcelos, ao secretário de estado, Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1794, March 3. AHU, Angola, box 81, doc 6696.

1791	1,296	No data available
1792	1,453	893
1793	1,644	1,897
1794	324	No data available
1795	1,624	No data available

Source: Slave Voyages, accessed January 11, 2026; AHU, Angola, box 81, doc. 6683.

Despite the hardship faced in Angola, as reported by the governor in a letter describing the lack of rainfall, plagues, and animals, signs of improvement were already emerging in 1794. “This year”, he wrote, “has begun more favorably, although two ships are now departing, one for Rio de Janeiro and another for Pernambuco”.³² Unfortunately, Manoel de Almeida e Vasconcelos did not mention the name of the vessel, and although there is an entry in Slave Voyages referring to the *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, this ship is recorded as having departed in October (Voyage ID 8123), whereas the governor’s correspondence dates from March 1794. It is therefore possible that some voyages were not captured in the database, including direct routes between Angola and Pernambuco, without intermediary stops.

After the climate crisis had ceased, authorities in Angola began to report an abundance of Africans destined for the slave trade. Manoel de Almeida e Vasconcelos wrote in 1796 that “the competition for slaves among those barbarous countries is so great that there are not enough ships to transport them to Brazil”, pointing to the delays that hindered the return of vessels engaged in the Angola–Brazil trade.³³ A shortage of captives turned into a glut on the exporting coast. The governor noted that the delay may also reflect the activities of French privateers on the high seas. In 1799, the governor of Benguela reported that Portuguese vessels were under attack, which likely disrupted trade across both sides of the Atlantic, especially as there were also reports of French activity along the coast of Pernambuco (Secreto, 2016)³⁴.

Moreover, climatic crises, plagues, diseases, and even animal attacks likely triggered forced population movements, leaving many people vulnerable to kidnapping for the slave trade organized along the coast, especially among those who could not rely on the protection of the local chieftains of Angola (Miller, 1982). In addition, the available evidence suggests that the wars that occurred between the late 1780s and early 1790s also supplied slave trading ports with captives, as in the case of the war against Mossul (Carvalho, 2020).³⁵ In 1791, for example, as reported by the governor, the wars still “continue to produce greater vigor in trade, with a significant increase in the number of slaves”.³⁶ From situations such as these, it is possible to suggest that the numbers for the slave trade may have been slightly higher than those recorded in Slave Voyages, as shown in Table 2 for the second half of the 1790s.

32 Ofício do capitão e general do Reino de Angola, Manuel de Almeida e Vasconcelos, ao secretário de estado, Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1794, March 3. AHU, Angola, box 81, doc. 6696.

33 Ofício do capitão e general do Reino de Angola, Manuel de Almeida e Vasconcelos, ao secretário de estado, Luís Pinto de Sousa Coutinho. 1796, Jan. 23. AHU, Angola, box 84, doc. 6834.

34 Carta do governador de Benguela, Alexandre José Botelho de Vasconcelos, à rainha D. Maria I. 1799, July 1. AHU, Angola, box 93, doc. 7233.

35 Ofício do governador e capitão-geral de Angola, Manuel de Almeida e Vasconcelos, ao secretário de estado, Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1790, Dec. 30. AHU, Angola, box 76, doc. 6429.

36 Ofício do governador e capitão-geral de Angola, Manuel de Almeida e Vasconcelos, ao secretário de estado, Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1791, Aug. 1. AHU, Angola, box 77, doc. 6501.

Table 2 – Disembarkations of slaves in Recife (1796-1799)	
Year	Slave Voyages
1796	607
1797	1,559
1798	2,296
1799	636

Source: Slave Voyages, accessed January 11, 2026.

It is also possible to note that, from the disembarkations that took place in Recife, many slaves were redistributed to other captaincies, revealing how integrated the circuit of the Atlantic slave trade was. The role of Recife as a redistribution point or stopover for vessels transporting slaves to Maranhão and Grão-Pará is not clearly documented in the Slave Voyages database.

As David Eltis and David Richardson (2010) have noted, among Brazilian ports, Recife was the closest to Angola, with an average crossing time of approximately 26.7 days. Thus, the stopovers made in Recife before continuing toward the far north of Portuguese America may have served for the replenishment of provisions—and, naturally, for commercial exchanges. The sources consulted also indicate that Pernambuco played a role in supplying captives. For example, in a list sent in 1793 by the governor of Maranhão, Fernando Antônio de Noronha, the captaincy of Pernambuco appears among the places from which slaves were imported. Indeed, among Cacheu and Bissau in Africa, and Bahia, Rio Grande do Sul, and Aracati in America, Pernambuco itself led the list in terms of its role in the redistribution of slaves (Table 3).

Table 3 – Disembarkations of African slaves in Maranhão (1793)		
Vessel name	Port of origin	Number of Slaves
<i>Expediente</i>	Cacheu	164
<i>N.S. do Monte do Carmo</i>	Pernambuco	233
<i>Correio de Angola</i>	Pernambuco	211
<i>Senhora do Monte</i>	Pernambuco	47
<i>Piedade de S. Antônio</i>	Bissau	194
<i>N. S. da Apresentação</i>	Bahia	74
<i>São Jorge</i>	Bissau	253
<i>Amável Donzela</i>	Cacheu	314
<i>Corpo Santo</i>	Pernambuco	184
<i>São Macario</i>	Bissau	216
<i>São José das Almas</i>	Pernambuco	29
<i>Minerva</i>	Rio Grande	13
<i>S. Antonio Val de Piedade</i>	Bahia	274
<i>N. S. do Monte</i>	Pernambuco	108
<i>N. S. de Água de Lupe</i>	Pernambuco	24
<i>São José e Almas</i>	Aracati	13

Source: AHU, Maranhão, box 84, doc 7042.

Despite the database's immense contributions, there are still gaps regarding the slave trade to Recife that can be explored through more in-depth archival research. For example, based on the database, the *Correio de Angola*, a vessel owned by the Lisbon slave trader José António Pereira, is recorded as sailing from Benguela to Maranhão (Voyage ID 46803). Based on information from the governor of Maranhão, however, it appears that the ship first stopped in Recife before proceeding northward. Moreover, the reasons why slaves were transported from Pernambuco to Maranhão were related to the latter's own agricultural resurgence, as the captaincy had also become an important cotton producer — even though Pernambuco's fiber was more highly prized (Pereira, 2017).

Similar voyages also involved Grão-Pará. In 1790, for example, despite complaints about the sale of slaves labeled as “troublemakers” because they fled and formed quilombos (runaway settlements), authorities and merchants in Pará reported that these African captives arrived in “small vessels coming from the cities of Bahia, Maranhão, and Pernambuco”.³⁷ In 1794, ships bound for Pará often made stopovers in Pernambuco or Maranhão. This was the case of the *Pensamento Ligeiro*, which sailed north of Luanda to acquire slaves before proceeding to Brazil.³⁸ By 1799, according to the government of Pernambuco, the practice of stopovers was still in place, as ships disembarked slaves in Recife before continuing to Pará.³⁹ This is particularly evident in the example of the brig *Prudente Amigo*, which left Luanda bound for Pará but was expected to stop first in Recife, where it left “three hundred and fifty-four captives and sixteen children” in 1804.⁴⁰ The voyage is recorded in the database with its destination listed as Pará, but without mention of the stopover in Recife, which highlights some of the database's limitations in capturing the complexity of the slave trade involving the port of Pernambuco (Voyage ID 8116).

This redistributive role had already been denounced in the late 1790s by a member of the governing council, the bishop Azeredo Coutinho. In his criticism of the conduct of merchants, he argued that instead of supplying Pernambuco's internal market with Africans newly arrived from the coast, Recife traders were redirecting captives to other regions, including Maranhão and Grão-Pará. As a result, what remained available for the agricultural sector for sale in Recife were slaves whose prices, according to the bishop's complaint, reached as much as three times their original value.⁴¹

Moreover, beyond the connections with the far north (Maranhão and Grão-Pará)—and even the south, if one includes Rio Grande—there were also redistributive circuits that extended beyond the boundaries of Portuguese America. In the same context as Azeredo Coutinho's denunciations, in June 1800, the bishop revealed that in Pernambuco, there was already a practice of sending slaves to Montevideo, in the Río de la Plata.⁴² This was not a practice limited to Recife. A similar complaint was made by the president of the *Mesa de Inspeção* of Rio de Janeiro in 1798, when he wrote about the “great diversion of blacks to Monte Video; this pestilent contraband that robs us of labor [...] and has reached the point that one slave who, for example, was worth fifty thousand *réis*, is today worth one hundred thousand or more”.⁴³ In Rio, the price of one slave had thus doubled—whereas, as seen, in

37 Correspondências recebidas das autoridades ultramarinas. ANTT, Junta do Comércio, bundle 10, box 38.

38 Ofício do governador do governador e capitão general de Angola, Manuel de Almeida e Vasconcelos, ao secretário de estado, Martinho de Melo e Castro. 1794, Oct. 2. AHU, Angola, box 81, doc. 6723.

39 Ofício da junta governativa da capitania de Pernambuco ao secretário de estado, Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. 1799, Nov. 25. AHU, Pernambuco, box 212, doc. 14405.

40 Ofício do governador do governador e capitão general de Angola, D. Fernando António Noronha, ao secretário de estado, visconde de Anadia. 1804, Jun. 30. AHU, Angola, box 112, doc. 8074.

41 Ofício do bispo de Pernambuco, D. José da Cunha Azeredo Coutinho, ao secretário de estado, Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. 1800, June 6. AHU, Pernambuco, box 216, doc. 14657.

42 Ofício do bispo de Pernambuco, D. José da Cunha Azeredo Coutinho, ao secretário de estado, Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. 1800, June 6. AHU, Pernambuco, box 216, doc. 14657.

43 Ofício do desembargador que serve de presidente da Mesa de Inspeção, José Feliciano da Rocha Gameiro. 1798, April 28. AHU, Rio de Janeiro, box 164, doc. 12265.

Recife it could reach as much as three times its original value.

Even after the transfer of Colonia del Sacramento to Spanish rule, the movement of Luso-Brazilians throughout the region did not end, as social and commercial ties undoubtedly continued to bind them to that locality. Montevideo served as the principal port of call for vessels operating in the region. Most of these connections involved merchants from Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, but relations with these ports likely formed part of broader and more complex trading networks (Prado, 2015). Menz and Bohorquez (2018), for example, have shown how José Antônio Pereira, a Lisbon-based merchant whose commercial networks spanned the globe, relied on his contacts in Rio de Janeiro to gain access to the Río de la Plata market.

Beyond Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco may also have participated in the mercantile networks that linked Portuguese America to the southern reaches of the continent. Evidence for this can be found in the aforementioned letter sent in 1800 by bishop Azeredo Coutinho, which referred to the activities of Recife merchants and their trade with Montevideo. It is also worth noting that José Antônio Pereira himself maintained commercial agents in Recife (Melo, 2026). Despite these indications, significant gaps remain in our understanding of the commercial ties that Pernambuco merchants cultivated beyond the boundaries of Portuguese America. Future research may help clarify the extent of these connections and shed further light on the position of Recife merchants within these wider Atlantic and intercolonial trading networks.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the importation of slaves increased further (see Table 4). Although most of the men and women who embarked along the African coast and bound for Recife came from Angola, as previously noted, the favorable conditions in Brazil's agro-export sector likely encouraged overseas authorities to explore other regions, thereby contributing to the expansion of slave trade zones in Africa.

Table 4 – Number of African Slaves Carried on Vessels to Pernambuco (1800-1806)

Year	Disembarkations		Embarkations
	Slave Voyages	AHU, Pernambuco	AHU, Luanda
1800	984	No data available	No data available
1801	5,334	3,000	No data available
1802	5,095	4,000	No data available
1803	4,794	No data available	4,013
1804	5,061	5,529	3,325
1805	3,402	4,750	4,626
1806	3,782	4,863	No data available

Source: Slave Voyages, accessed January 20, 2026; AHU, Pernambuco, box 232, doc. 15638; box 241, doc. 16193; box 257, doc. 17268; box 259, doc. 17380; box 267, doc. 17828; AHU, Angola, box 111, doc. 8050; box 114, doc. 8181; box 117, doc. 8318.

In 1802, for example, the *Real Junta do Comércio* considered opening trade with Gabon, using the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe as a base of operations.⁴⁴ This trade was not only a European initiative, but was also encouraged by African authorities. As the governor of the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe wrote in 1801, it was in fact the “kings

⁴⁴ Ofício do presidente do Erário Régio, D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho, ao provedor da Junta do Comércio, conde de Vila Verde. 1802, Jan. 18. AHU, São Tomé and Príncipe, box 31, doc. 2305

of Gabon” who showed interest in trading with the Portuguese.⁴⁵ For the *Real Junta do Comércio*, this represented an opportunity to stimulate commercial activity in the islands, which were considered “ruined”, since they depended heavily on the slave trade conducted in West Africa and served as a support point for vessels departing from Brazil. To implement this initiative, the institution issued a public notice to the merchant community of Lisbon. José António Pereira, already mentioned, was among the merchants interested in trade in this part of Africa. He established a trading house in São Tomé that began transporting slaves from Calabar, Gabon, and Cape Lopo, not only from the mainland to the islands, but also sending vessels to Recife, where the captives were received by his agent, Simião de Souza.⁴⁶

Since the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe lay along the route to West Africa (*the Costa da Mina*), vessels involved in the traffic with Pernambuco also reached that region. Based on the Slave Voyages database, for example, the schooner *Alexandrina* purchased Africans on the Costa da Mina and made a stop at the island of Príncipe before returning to Pernambuco to disembark them (Voyage ID 46360). Unfortunately, the specific port of embarkation is not indicated, but it is possible to speculate that it may have been Ouidah (*Ajudá*, in Portuguese), given the importance of Dahomey in the slave trade in that part of Africa, or Porto-Novo or Lagos (Onim), since at the turn of the nineteenth century these ports were growing in importance in the trade and were the origin of captives taken in several wars among those populations. In the early nineteenth century, increasing numbers of slaves were embarked on from West Africa as a result of a series of ongoing conflicts, such as the fragmentation of the Oyo Empire and the wars between Dahomey and Porto-Novo for control of the slave trade (Silva Jr., 2022).

Beyond the African context of slave exports, there was also an Atlantic dimension that contributed to the increase in embarkations, particularly considering the Era of Abolition⁴⁷ and the Era of Revolution. With the French Revolution in 1789 and the uprising of the slaves in Saint-Domingue, the importation of captives by French vessels declined during the Napoleonic Wars from the 1790s onward (Miller, 1988). This resulted not only in the abandonment of trading posts along the Mina Coast (Silva, 2004) but also in a reduction in the number of vessels along the Loango coast, between the ports of Cabinda and Molembo, an area where the Portuguese reported arms smuggling (Martin, 1972).

On the British side, pressures from the growing abolitionist movement had been present since the late eighteenth century. In April 1790, an employee at Cape Coast, aware of the abolitionist debate and the decline of business in West Africa, reported that he had been informed of William Wilberforce’s political efforts to end the British slave trade (Verger, 1987). British politician Wilberforce was not only opposed to the slave trade but also a member of an abolitionist society that helped pressure for and achieve the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, although the abolition of slavery in British colonies was decreed only in the early 1830s.

What is important to consider about this context is that while the agro-export sector was expanding and generating greater demand for slave labor, the slave trade also depended on the interests of African trading elites, for whom commerce with Europeans was not only a source of revenue and access to imported goods, but also a demonstration of power (Thornton, 1998). Moreover, there was an ongoing campaign to abolish the trade, driven by British anti-slave trade propaganda. As a result, with the principal competitors to Luso-Brazilian commerce — the French and the British — reduced along the African coast, Brazil

45 Ofício do governador das ilhas de São Tomé e Príncipe, João Baptista e Silva, ao secretário de estado D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho. 1801, March 31. AHU, São Tomé and Príncipe, box 30, doc. 2265.

46 Requerimento de José Anónio Pereira ao secretário de estado, visconde de Anadia. 1802, Jun. 3. AHU, São Tomé and Príncipe, box 31, doc. 2322; Requerimento do negociante José António Pereira ao príncipe regente, D. João. 1809, Marc 17. AHU, São Tomé and Príncipe, box 42, doc. 2850.

47 For further discussion about “Era of Abolition” within the Portuguese Empire, see Ferreira, 2025; Marques, 2000.

came to absorb the surplus of slaves who would otherwise have been destined for English and French traders.

4. YEARS OF CRISIS AND THE RESURGENCE OF THE AGRO-EXPORT ECONOMY

That “great increase”, described by the governor of Pernambuco, Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro, turned into a three-year crisis that began in 1806, was felt more acutely in 1807, extended through 1808 and 1809, and whose signs of recovery would only become apparent from 1810 onward. In 1807, according to the governor, exports of cotton bags for the previous year (1806) had declined. The responsibility did not lie with production itself, but with exports, owing to the context of the “obstacles to European trade”, which, as he wrote, “influences the value of all colonial goods”.⁴⁸ The governor made it clear that the problem was not local but rather Atlantic- and European-scope. It stemmed from Napoleon Bonaparte’s actions against England, which drew Portugal into his sphere of influence following the confirmation of the 1793 alliance treaty (Pedreira, 1994).

A merchant in Lisbon who maintained an intense trade with Pernambuco confirmed the same situation. In a letter sent to his consignees in Recife in January 1807, Ângelo Gonçalves Aires wrote that “regarding these goods, I must inform you that, as a consequence of the war that has resumed, the [price of] Pernambuco cotton in this [Lisbon] market has fallen to 290, and even so with little demand”. Regarding sugar, he stated that “for now, it has low export, but I hope it will soon have greater circulation”.⁴⁹ Since Portugal acted as an intermediary between its colonies and European states, reduced imports hindered the export of colonial products to other markets. This affected not only the commercial chain but also the quality of the goods.

Coastal cities such as Lisbon, Recife, and Liverpool tend to be humid due to their proximity to large bodies of water, whose evaporation increases the relative humidity. For this reason, long-term storage of sugar and cotton in boxes or bags — especially after maritime transport — would likely degrade their quality. Sugar, far more perishable, was probably the most severely damaged in quality, although it would not spoil entirely. Cotton, on the other hand, despite the effects of mold and even pests on the raw fiber, would likely last longer before deteriorating, although its quality was closely related to the spinning process. This helps explain the reduction in its price on the European market, as well as the “low export” of sugar mentioned by the merchant.

If in January, Ângelo Gonçalves Aires wrote to Narciso José de Santa Anna and Joaquim Moreira dos Santos, his consignees in Recife, about the difficulties in marketing Pernambuco’s goods; this was undoubtedly a continuation of the previous year, 1806, as the governor of Pernambuco had likewise observed (Pedreira, 1994). Moreover, despite the broader context of prosperity at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the “great scarcity of slaves” was the subject of an official letter sent by the governor in March 1806. Unfortunately, the sources consulted provide no information regarding the arrival of slaves in that year. What the governor reported was that this scarcity put “the cultivators of sugarcane in great delay and decline, with debts and very few slaves, being further aggravated in the present year, in which, owing to the obstacles to European trade, sugars are being sold at six, seven, and eight tostões per arroba compared to the previous harvest”.⁵⁰

Indeed, the decline in prices and even reduced sugar sales directly affected production.

48 Ofício do governador da capitania de Pernambuco, Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro, ao secretário de estado visconde de Anadia. 1807, May 6. AHU, Pernambuco, box 267, doc. 17828.

49 Copiador de cartas comerciais da sociedade de Ângelo Gonçalves Aires e José Bento Moreira. ANTT, Livros dos Feitos Findos, book 210.

50 Ofício do governador Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro a Luís de Vasconcelos Sousa. 1806, March 27. APEJE, CC, book 15, fl. 18.

Complaints about the shortage of slaves and their high prices among colonial authorities and sugar-mill owners were not new. Such reports can be found in correspondence dating back nearly a century, as when Felipe Paes Barreto, in the 1720s, noted the shortage of slave labor because many were being redirected to Minas Gerais for gold extraction.⁵¹ What distinguishes this moment from others is that the importation of slaves had declined excessively and was embedded in a context directly related to the so-called “obstacles in Europe”. After years of continued expansion of export agriculture, the supposed shortage of slaves resulting from reduced imports would have affected the productive process itself, from land preparation to planting, cultivation, and harvesting. The abrupt decline in the arrival of slaves should not be understood as affecting only sugar production but also cotton production.

It may be that the limited outflow of goods affected European ports far more than Recife — at least in relation to cotton. This is precisely why the governor of Pernambuco wrote about the “obstacles of Europe”. The problem was not that conditions of production and cultivation had been impaired, but rather the export of these goods, due to reduced European imports. In the case of sugar, the situation was indeed more dramatic, even resulting in the alleged ruin of plantation owners mentioned by the governor in Pernambuco.⁵² From the perspective of revenue collection, according to Governor Miranda Montenegro, during the first years of the three-year crisis, there was a “great reduction in customs duties, which, having yielded 152 contos in 1807 and produced only 82 [contos] in 1808”. He further added, regarding sugar, that “not a single arroba was sold in the past year [1808], and only recently [already in 1809] were eight hundred boxes sold”, all amid “a shortage of slaves, and in great delay and decline”. The consequence of the reduced outflow of goods from Portuguese ports was, evidently, the decline in sugar imports and, to a lesser extent, in bales of cotton.⁵³

Tollenare’s data indicate that sugar exports in boxes had indeed declined. For instance, while records show approximately 9,237 boxes exported in 1804⁵⁴ and 13,265 in 1805⁵⁵, the figures reported by the Frenchman for 1808 represent a drop of more than half, totaling 4,271 (see Figure 1). In the case of cotton, the governor’s data compiled in Recife showed that the only year with a major decline in fiber exports was 1808, the year France occupied Portugal and the Royal Court fled to Rio de Janeiro (see Figure 2). Once Portugal was blockaded by British vessels, goods that would normally have been imported through Lisbon or Porto were sent directly to England. Aware of this shift, in 1808 January, Ângelo Gonçalves Aires asked a business partner in London to “receive everything of ours that is sent to the ports of England”.⁵⁶ As the charts below demonstrate, even when the figures for 1808 are taken into account, the reconfiguration of foreign trade did not compromise cotton exports as severely as it did sugar.

Figura 1 - Recife’s exports in boxes of sugar (1804-1816)

51 Carta do capitão-mor do Cabo de Santo Agostinho, Felipe Paes Barreto, ao rei D. João V. 1726, Sep. 19. AHU, Pernambuco, box 34, doc. 3159.

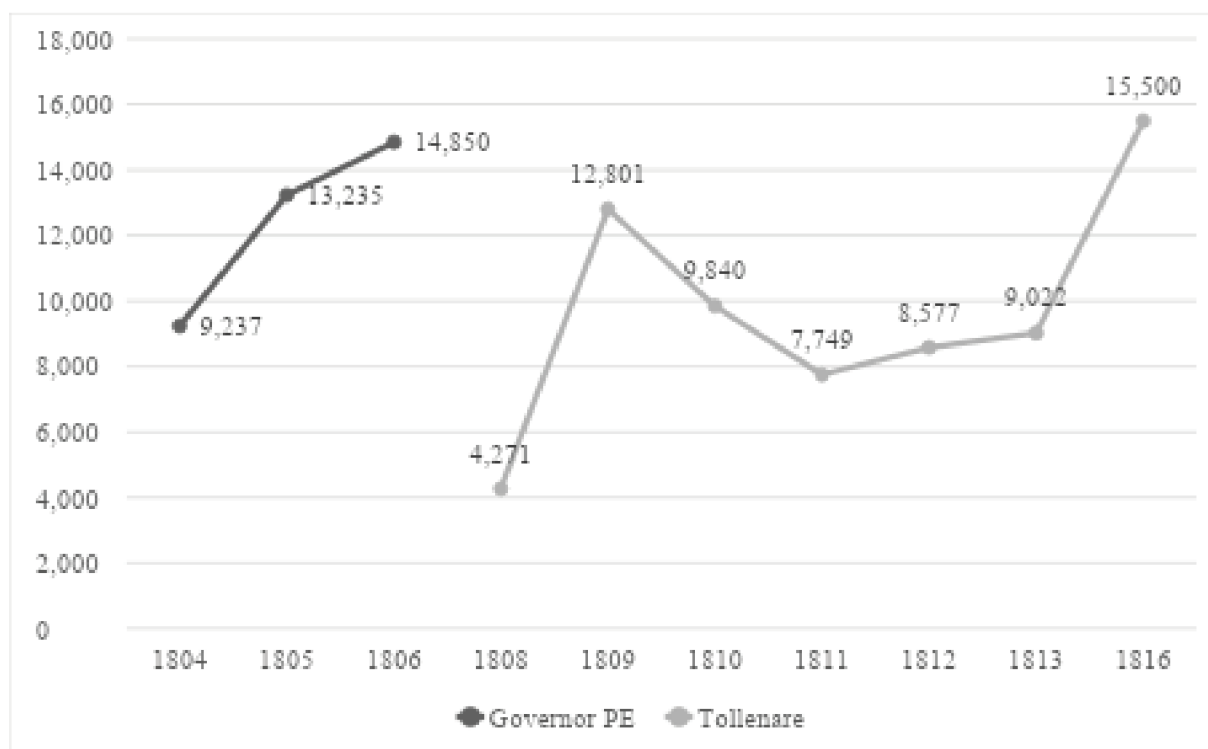
52 Ofício do governador Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro a Luís de Vasconcelos Sousa. 1806, March 27. APEJE, CC, book 15, fl. 18.

53 Ofício do governador Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro ao secretário de estado, conde de Aguiar. 1809, March 18. APEJE, CC, book 18, f. 17; Ofício do governador Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro ao secretário de estado, conde de Aguiar. 1810, July 2. APEJE, CC, book 18, f. 50.

54 Ofício do governador da capitania de Pernambuco, Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro, ao secretário de estado, visconde de Anadia. 1805, Nov. 15. AHU, Pernambuco, box 257, doc. 17268

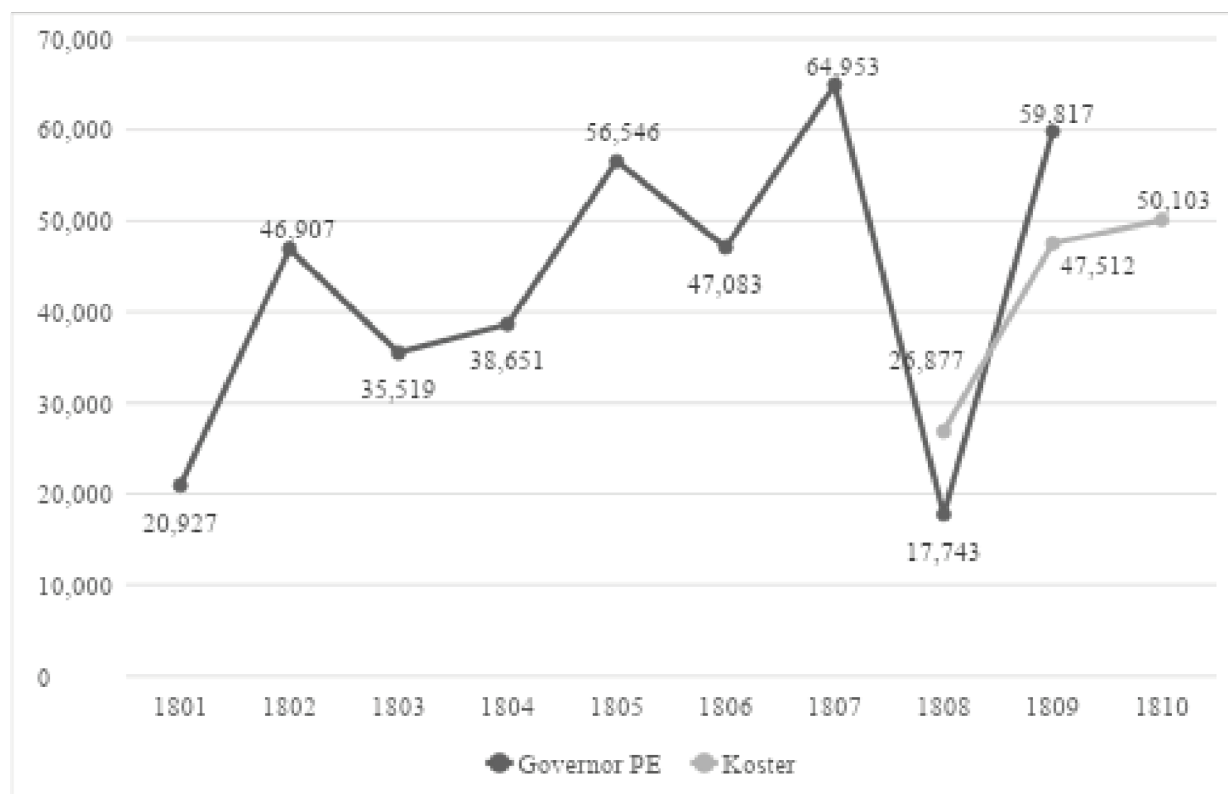
55 Ofício do governador da capitania de Pernambuco, Caetano Pinto de Miranda Montenegro, ao secretário de estado, visconde de Anadia. 1806, March 3. AHU, Pernambuco, box 259, doc. 17380.

56 Copiador de cartas comerciais da sociedade de Ângelo Gonçalves Aires e José Bento Moreira. ANTT, Livros dos Feitos Findos, book 210.



Source: AHU, Pernambuco, box 257, doc. 17268; AHU, Pernambuco, box 259, doc. 17380; AHU, Pernambuco, box 267, doc. 17828; Tollenare, 1905, 164.

Figura 2 - Recife's cotton sacks exports (1801-1810)



Source: APEJE, CC, book 18, f. 57; Koster, 1817, 173.

The arrival of slaves was closely tied to the agro-export sector, as previously noted. Given the ongoing “commercial obstacles in Europe” that hindered the outflow of goods and disrupted communication between Pernambuco and Portugal, the decline in the importation of captives had a clear underlying cause. It can therefore be affirmed that, on the eve of

the opening of the ports in 1808, these markets were fundamentally interrelated. In this context, Pernambuco’s agro-export production was deeply entangled with European markets, suffering from their setbacks and triumphs alike.

Examining these established foreign trade connections does not, of course, negate the existence of internal mercantile relations that contributed to the interconnection of various places in Portuguese America, as previously noted. In this regard, the case of Recife and its position as a slave redistribution center is an example. Joseph Miller (1988, 503) long ago suggested such an interpretation, asserting that the shipment of slaves to the far north of Portuguese America was a sign of the dominance of Recife. Furthermore, there were connections with Rio Grande for the procurement of meat, with the Rio de la Plata, and even voyages to the Indian Ocean, as was the case with the vessel *Espada de Ferro*. It remains noteworthy that until the transfer of the Portuguese Royal Court to Rio de Janeiro, Recife maintained intense connections with Portugal, structured through a network of consignment relations (Melo, 2026; Pedreira, 2022). Neither fully “autonomous” nor entirely isolated, Pernambuco’s commerce must be analyzed within its specific nuances.

Due to the prevailing conditions in the agro-export sector, the arrival of African slaves in Recife declined between 1807 and 1809, recovering only from 1810 onwards. Data from the Slave Voyages database, for instance, shows that the slump in slave imports during the three-year crisis was most pronounced in 1809—likely the year when Pernambuco felt the most direct impacts of the conflict. Once again, the figures from the database may include unregistered voyages. As authorities in Luanda noted, exports from that port in 1809 exceeded the Slave Voyages data by just over a thousand people (Table 5). Nevertheless, whether considering departures from Luanda or arrivals in Recife, the figures presented in the table fell short of the peaks recorded in previous years, when Pernambuco received large numbers of slaves and subsequently re-exported many of them to other regions.

Table 5 – Number of African Slaves Carried on Vessels to Pernambuco (1807-1810)		
	Disembarkations	Embarkations
Year	Slave Voyages	AHU, Angola
1807	1,840	No data available.
1808	1,757	No data available.
1809	1,534	2,573
1810	4,724	1,297

Source: Slave Voyages, accessed January 30, 2026; AHU, Angola, box 123, doc. 8742; box 124, doc. 8872.

In conclusion, what appears to have occurred between the late 1790s and the arrival of the Royal Court in Rio de Janeiro in 1808 is that the growth in agro-export production (sugar, cotton, and other commodities) drove an increased demand for Africans. In this light, one may even interpret the rise in export revenues and the surge in African arrivals as a compensatory response to downturns during periods of crisis—such as the drought of the 1790s and the “European obstacles” between 1807 and 1809. A clear correlation existed between the expansion of the slave labor force and the growth of colonial exports, particularly sugar and cotton.

CONCLUSION

In 1808, a new phase also began in Brazil. While foreign trade in Portugal “continued to face serious obstacles”, as Jorge Pedreira has noted, owing to the reorientation of colonial commerce during the Napoleonic invasions, Brazil’s ports were opened to foreign navigation and commerce (Pedreira, 1994). This proved particularly important for the economic growth of Portuguese America, as the opening of the ports fostered closer commercial ties between Brazil and Europe and greater cooperation with merchants in Africa, despite the discontent of Portugal’s mercantile community.

A letter from 1825 revealed the dissatisfaction of Lisbon’s mercantile community over the opening of the ports. Its authors wrote: “as a consequence of successive causes, powerful and decisive, all arising after the conflagration through which Europe recently passed, which compelled the Royal Court to establish its residence in Rio de Janeiro, its trade has suffered considerable losses to the interests of the loyal vassals of these Kingdoms”. They further noted that, due to this transfer, “trade came to be entirely relocated to Brazil, where the relations then fostered by the new Metropolis doubly attracted it there”.⁵⁷

After the relations between Portuguese America (and, after 1815, the Kingdom of Brazil) and England had been consolidated, it is likely that—just as had occurred in Portugal—foreign trading houses were established in the three principal commercial centers (Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, and Pernambuco, and later elsewhere in Brazil). This development enabled foreigners to circulate in these capitals and to deal directly with local merchants, without the need for the intermediary role previously played by Portugal within the colonial trading system. In this way, the transfer of the Royal Court from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro, with all its consequences, also strengthened the economies of Brazil’s main commercial centers. This broader context directly affected the number of African arrivals. According to Eltis and Richardson’s estimates (2010, 23), more than one million slaves disembarked in Brazil between 1801 and 1825, a period that coincided with one of the most dynamic phases of Brazil’s economy.

In summary, this study has shown that, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, colonial production, the Atlantic market, and the slave trade formed a single, integrated economic system that was fundamental to the growth of the Portuguese American economy, as specialized scholarship has long demonstrated. The purpose of this paper has been to examine how Pernambuco was embedded within this system through the expansion of its agro-export economy, its participation in the slave trade, and its role in the circulation of African slaves both within and beyond Portuguese America through the commercial networks linking the captaincy to Africa and Portugal.

The intensification of agro-export production, driven by both cotton and sugar and reinforced by connections to European markets, reshaped Pernambuco’s position within Atlantic commercial networks. Linked to this process was the growth in the number of slaves disembarked in the captaincy, underscoring the centrality of coerced labor to both sugar cultivation and cotton production. This study has also demonstrated that Recife operated not only as a major port of arrival but also as a center for the redistribution of slaves to other regions of Portuguese America and to the Río de la Plata.

By highlighting these dynamics, this study has sought to challenge classic interpretations in Brazilian historiography that portrayed the regions of Brazil as “isolated systems” or “economic archipelagos” with little or no interaction among them (Furtado, 2007; Galvão, 2021). Far from constituting a peripheral or disconnected economy, Pernambuco was deeply integrated into the broader dynamics of Portuguese America and the Atlantic world.

⁵⁷ Representação dos negociantes e fabricantes da praça de Lisboa ao rei D. João VI. 1825, Dec. 14. AHU, Angola, box 155, doc. 11220.

REFERENCES

- ARMITAGE, David. Three concepts of Atlantic History. In: ARMITAGE, David; BRADDICK, Michael J. (eds.). *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002, p. 11-27.
- ARRUDA, José Jobson de Andrade. O algodão brasileiro na época da Revolução Industrial. *Am. Lat. Hist. Econ.*, vol 23, n. 2, 2016, pp. 167-203. https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1405-22532016000200167
- ARRUDA, José Jobson de Andrade. *Planos para o Brasil, projetos para o mundo: o novo imperialismo britânico e o processo de independência (1800-1831)*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2022.
- BAILYN, Bernard. *Atlantic History: concept and contours*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- BARICKMAN, Bert. *Um contraponto baiano: açúcar, fumo, mandioca e escravidão no Recôncavo, 1780-1860*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2003.
- BECKERT, Sven. *Empire of cotton: a global history*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014.
- CAMARA, Manuel Arruda da. *Memória sobre a cultura dos algodoeiros, e sobre o methodo de o escolher, e ensacar, etc.* Lisboa: Officina da Casa Litteraria do Arco do Cego, 1799.
- CANDIDO, Mariana P. Os agentes não europeus na comunidade mercantil de Benguela, c. 1760-1820. *Saeculum: Revista de História*, vol. 29, pp. 97-124, 2013. <https://periodicos.ufpb.br/index.php/srh/article/view/19811>
- CAPELA, José. *O tráfico de escravos nos portos de Moçambique, 1717-1904*. 2ª ed. Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2016.
- CARIELLO, Rafael; PEREIRA, Thales Zamberlan. *Adeus, Senhor Portugal: crise do absolutismo e a independência do Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2022.
- CARRARA, Angelo Alves, et al. The Brazilian economy during the old regime crisis (c. 1750 – 1807). *Revista de História Económica / Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History*, 41 (1), pp. 119-146, 2022. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/revista-de-historia-economica-journal-of-iberian-and-latin-american-economic-history/article/abs/brazilian-economy-during-the-old-regime-crisis-17501807/5027D893B0610EFE2A22AF4AC9030AEE>
- CARREIRA, António. *As Companhias Pombalinas: de Grão-Pará e Maranhão e Pernambuco e Paraíba*. Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1983.
- CARVALHO, Ariane. Guerras nos sertões de Angola: sobas, guerra preta e escravização (1749-1797). PhD dissertation – Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2020. https://sucupira-legado.capes.gov.br/sucupira/public/consultas/coleta/trabalhoConclusao/viewTrabalhoConclusao.jsf?popup=true&id_trabalho=8854225

- CARVALHO, Marcus J. M. de. *Liberdade: rotinas e rupturas do escravismo no Recife, 1822-1850*. Recife: Ed. Universitária da UFPE, 2010.
- COSTA, Valéria Gomes. *Ôminira: mulheres e homens libertos da costa d'África no Recife (c. 1846-c. 1890)*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2021.
- DIAS, Érika Simone de Almeida Carlos. “As pessoas mais distintas em qualidade e negócio”: a Companhia de Comércio e as relações políticas entre Pernambuco e a Coroa no último quartel de Setecentos. PhD Dissertation – Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisboa, 2014.
- DIAS, Thiago Alves. A casa comercial de João da Costa Soares em Recife: instituições mercantis e negociantes ultramarinos no século XVIII. *História*, São Paulo, v. 37, 2018, pp. 1-26. <https://www.scielo.br/j/his/a/6YxhW5GFJRGVfw65ybqsTJg/abstract/?lang=pt>
- ELTIS, David; RICHARDSON, David. *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010.
- FELIPE, Mariely de A. Mello. “E a natureza os entregou ao jogo dos tempos”: a seca de 1791 na Capitania de Pernambuco e suas anexas. Master Dissertation – Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2020. <https://teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/8/8137/tde-05112020-204341/fr.html>
- FERREIRA, Roquinaldo. *Transforming Atlantic Slaving: trade, warfare and territorial control in Angola, 1650-1800*. PhD Dissertation – University of California, Los Angeles, 2003.
- FERREIRA, Roquinaldo. Biografia, mobilidade e cultura atlântica: a micro-escala do tráfico de escravos em Benguela, séculos XVIII-XIX. *Tempo*, Rio de Janeiro, 10 (20), pp. 23-49, 2006. <https://www.scielo.br/j/tem/a/xpW7v4xTNYmq4D8LyxK7Tmt/?lang=pt>
- FERREIRA, Roquinaldo. Um rio chamado Atlântico: atlanticidade como paradigma. *Afro-Ásia*, Salvador, 70, pp. 524-533, 2024. <https://periodicos.ufba.br/index.php/afroasia/article/view/65869>
- FLORENTINO, Manolo. Em costas negras: uma história do tráfico de escravos entre a África e o Rio de Janeiro (séculos XVIII e XIX). São Paulo: Editora Unesp, [1995] 2014.
- FURTADO, Celso. *Formação econômica do Brasil*. 34 ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2007.
- GALVÃO, Olímpio José de Arroxelas. Comércio inter-regional no Brasil: do fim do arquipélago econômico a uma integração assimétrica – 1943-2006. *Revista Política e Planejamento Regional*, vol. 8, n. 2, 2021, pp. 297-319. <http://www.revistappr.com.br/conteudo.php?m=NDA1&l=tx>
- INIKORI, Joseph. *Africans and the industrial revolution in England: a study in international trade and economic development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- KOSTER, Henry. *Travels in Brazil*, vol. 1. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown 1816.
- KOSTER, Henry. *Travels in Brazil*, vol. 2. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown 1817.

LIBBY, Douglas Cole. *Nos limites do seu estado: a vida em família, rumos econômicos e jogos identitários (São José do Rio das Mortes, séculos XVIII e XIX)*. Belo Horizonte: Odisseia, Miguilim, 2020.

LOPES, Gustavo Acioli. *A fênix e o Atlântico: A Capitania de Pernambuco e a economia-mundo europeia (1654-1750)*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2018.

LOPES, Gustavo Acioli; MENZ, Maximiliano. Vestindo o escravismo: o comércio de têxteis e o contrato de Angola (século XVIII). *Revista Brasileira de História*, vol. 39, n. 80, pp. 109-134, 2019. <https://www.scielo.br/j/rbh/a/g9zDPLdxF47DX9CmYkTLPFL/?lang=pt>

MACHADO, Estevam Henrique dos Santos. *Jogo de loteria: o corpo do comércio do Recife e suas dinâmicas e socioeconômicas (c. 1780-c. 1808)*. PhD dissertation – Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, 2021. <https://repositorio.ufpe.br/jspui/handle/123456789/43569>

MARQUES, João Pedro. Portugal e o abolicionismo. In: ALEXANDRE, Valentim (coord.). *O império africano, séculos XIX e XX*. Lisboa: Edições Colibri, 2000.

MARTIN, Phyllis. *The external trade of Loango Coast, 1576-1870: the effects of changing commercial relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

MELO, Felipe de Souza. *O negócio de Pernambuco: financiamento, comércio e transporte na segunda metade do século XVIII*. Master's Dissertation – Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2017. <https://teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/8/8137/tde-28082019-143032/pt-br.html>

MELO, Felipe Souza; MARTINS, Diego de Cambraia. Reassessing the productivity of enslavement on large-scale plantations and small farms in Brazilian cotton production (c. 1750-c. 1810). *Historical Research*, vol. 96, issue 272, pp. 193-221, 2023. <https://academic.oup.com/histres/article-abstract/96/272/193/7128231>

MELO, Filipe M. Marinho de. *Entre traficantes e traficados, o Recife: redes de comércio, diáspora africana e trajetórias globais na Era da Abolição (c. 1790-c. 1822)*. PhD Dissertation – Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, 2026.

MELLO, Evaldo Cabral de. *A outra independência: o federalismo pernambucano de 1817 a 1824*. São Paulo: Ed. 34, [2004] 2014.

MELLO, Evaldo Cabral de. *O bagaço da cana: os engenhos de açúcar no Brasil holandês*. São Paulo: Penguin-Companhia das Letras, 2012.

MENZ, Maximiliano M. *Entre impérios: formação do Rio Grande na crise do sistema colonial português (1777-1822)*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2009.

MENZ, Maximiliano. A companhia de Pernambuco e Paraíba e o funcionamento do tráfico de escravos em Angola (1759-1775/80). *Afro-Ásia*, Salvador, 48, pp. 45-76, 2013. <https://www.scielo.br/j/afro/a/WY9sptMHsDDVLCK8NgNgPBD/?format=html&lang=pt>

MENZ, Maximiliano; BOHORQUEZ, Jesus. State contractors and global brokers: the itinerary of two Lisbon merchants and the slave trade during the Eighteenth Century. *Itinerario*, vol. 42, n. 3, pp. 403-429, 2018. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/itinerario/article/abs/state-contractors-and-global-brokers-the-itinerary-of-two-lisbon-merchants-and-the-transatlantic-slave-trade-during-the-eighteenth-century/5E0842D8C65BEBA5EB2FE711D125CD4C>

MILLER, Joseph C. The significance of drought, disease and famine in the agriculturally marginal zones of West-Central Africa. *The Journal of African History*, vol. 23, n. 01, pp. 17-61, 1982. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/181270>

MILLER, Joseph C. *Way of death: merchant capitalism and the Angolan slave trade, 1730-1830*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.

PALACIOS, Guillermo. *Campesinato e escravidão no Brasil: agricultores livres e pobres na Capitania Geral de Pernambuco (1700-1817)*. Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 2004.

PEDREIRA, Jorge M. *Estrutura industrial e mercado colonial: Portugal e Brasil (1780-1830)*. Lisboa: Difel, 1994.

PEDREIRA, Jorge M. Por força das circunstâncias. Guerra, comércio e a separação do Brasil. In: STUMPF, Roberta; MONTEIRO, Nuno Gonçalo (eds.). *1822: das Américas portuguesas ao Brasil*. Alfragide: Casa das Letras, 2022.

PEREIRA, Thales A. Zamberlan. *The cotton trade and Brazilian foreign commerce during the Industrial Revolution*. PhD Dissertation – Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2017. <https://teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/12/12140/tde-17082017-091648/pt-br.html>

PEREIRA, Thales A. Zamberlan. The rise of the cotton trade in Brazil during Industrial Revolution. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, v. 50, n. 4, pp. 919-949, 2018a. https://repec.eae.fea.usp.br/documentos/ThalesPereira_09WP.pdf

PEREIRA, Thales A. Zamberlan. Poor's man crop? Slavery in Brazilian Cotton Regions (1800-1850). *Estudos Econômicos*, São Paulo, vol. 48, n. 4, pp. 623-655, 2018b. <https://www.scielo.br/j/ee/a/dtfdLgbRGxskmwp7bG58G9q/?lang=en>

PRADO, Fabrício. *Edge of Empire: Atlantic networks and revolution in Bourbon Río de La Plata*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.

REIS, João José. *Ganhadores: a greve negra de 1857 na Bahia*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019.

RIBEIRO JÚNIOR, José. A economia algodoeira em Pernambuco. Da colônia a independência. *Revista Brasileira de História*, São Paulo, n. 1, vol. 2, 1981. https://www.snh2017.anpuh.org/resources/download/1241645114_ARQUIVO_joseribeirojr.pdf

SANTOS, João Henrique Pereira dos. *Do sertão ao litoral: a economia algodoeira como elemento integrador da capitania de Pernambuco (1780-1820)*. Master's dissertation – Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, 2019. <https://repositorio.ufpe.br/handle/123456789/44950>

SCHWARTZ, Stuart. *Segredos internos: engenhos e escravos na sociedade colonial, 1550-1835*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1988.

SILVA, Alberto da Costa e. *Francisco Félix de Sousa, mercador de escravos*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira; EdUERJ, 2004.

SILVA, Daniel Barros Domingues da; ELTIS, David. The slave trade to Pernambuco, 1561-1851. In: ELTIS, David; RICHARDSON, David (eds.). *Extending the frontiers: Essays on The New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008.

SILVA, Kalina Vanderlei Paiva da. *Nas solidões vastas e assustadoras: a conquista do sertão de Pernambuco pelas vilas açucareiras nos séculos XVII e XVIII*. Recife: CEPE, 2010.

SILVA JR., Carlos da. A Bahia e a Costa da Mina no alvorecer da Segunda Escravidão (c. 1810-1831). *Afro-Ásia*, Salvador, v. 65, pp. 91-147, 2022. <https://www.periodicos.ufba.br/index.php/afroasia/article/view/45157>

SECRETO, Maria Verónica. Territorialidades fluidas: corsários franceses e o tráfico negreiro no Rio da Prata (1796-1799). Tensões locais-tensões globais. *Topoi*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 17, n. 33, pp. 419-443, 2016. <https://www.scielo.br/j/topoi/a/vkvzbnTkTs5BcvMRMnbgbtbh/?format=html&lang=pt>

SOUZA, Laura de Mello e. *Desclassificados do ouro: a pobreza mineira no século XVIII*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal, [1982] 1986.

TOMICH, Dale. *Through the Prism of Slavery: labor, capital, and World economy*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004.

THORNTON, John. *Africa and Africans in the making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

TOLLENARE, L. F. *Notas dominicais tomadas durante uma residência em Portugal e no Brasil nos anos de 1816, 1817 e 1818*. Recife: Imprensa do Jornal do Recife, 1905.

VERGER, Pierre. *Fluxo e refluxo do tráfico de escravos entre o golfo do Benin e a Bahia de Todos os Santos dos séculos XVII a XIX*. São Paulo: Editora Corrupio, 1987.

VERSIANI, Flávio Rabelo; VERGOLINO, José Raimundo Oliveira. Posse de escravos e riqueza no Agreste e Sertão de Pernambuco, 1777-1887. *Est. Econ.*, vol. 33, n. 2, pp. 353-393, 2003. <https://www.scielo.br/j/ee/a/CNhhm5fBWDsBSfwPSrz3wsk/?format=html&lang=pt>

VERSIANI, Flávio Rabelo; VERGOLINO, José Raimundo Oliveira. Estrutura de posse de escravos em Pernambuco. In: VERSIANI, Flávio Rabelo; NOGUERÓL, Luiz Paulo Ferreira (org.). *Muitos escravos, muitos senhores: escravidão nordestina e gaúcha no século XIX*. São Cristóvão: Editora UFS; Brasília: Editora UNB, 2016, pp. 147-162.