

Chicongue

Inhangá

há

45 25 68  
pla Choué

pla Spenhunari

Ria de Inhachidé

pla Kodene

pla Chicoguane

Baixos de Vimbi

I. Xezine

I. de Magaruque

pla Mtondo

Descobre quasi todo no  
na baixamar deixando a  
penas alguns canuletes

pla Cheringome

I. Bangué

I. Chrundira

C.S. Sebastião  
ou Singundine

Molungu

Zuene

Ria de Inhamanhane

pla Tchambure

I. Tumbulene

I. Bo

I. Cham



# África em debate

Uma herança identitária:  
o trabalho forçado



*J. W. Lawrence*

LORENZO MAROUZ  
and BROS.

# Mariners-Slavers and slave ships in Atlantic, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries: the perspective of captives and the slaveholders logic

Jaime Rodrigues\*

p. 175-190

The meanings of freedom for the slaves and slaveholders were many and varied, as taught by Eric Foner, among others authors (Foner, 1983). What is most striking in these men actions is the pursuit of autonomy – in other words, the desire of numerous freed from not employ for salary in the same type of activity they had when they were slaves. For many former-slaves, access to land and subsistence farming seemed more attractive than employment in the lands of their former holders. The cities also were attractive to former-slaves especially in the post-abolition and mobility in the space became a strategy of freedmen to escape the stigma that could suffer if they remained in the same region where they had been slaves (Silva, 2001; Silva, 2002). In the southern United States or the provinces of Brazil in the second half of the XIX century, the slavery end opened new perspectives in the fruition of freedom. Likewise, we must understand the struggles and strategies of freedom in previous contexts in which the general release was not in the horizon. In this framework, the exchange of a master for a boss can be seen as a meaning of freedom for the slaves and evasion by the sea can be a sign of that. It is on this type of escape that I will deal with here. Upon leaving the physical security of the land by the instability of the sea, literally and symbolically, the slaves were willing to take risks in search of freedom, getting rid themselves of a master which they did not want to continue to serve. The ship as a medium and the sea as escape route did not open the same perspective of autonomy enjoyed by a former slave who became small landowner or the relative freedom and guarantee of livelihoods in a *quilombo*, for example. But the ships sheltered other possibilities. There, a communitarian life could be constructed in which the explicit label of slavery had less. In the ships, master domain exchange was given to it and there is a chance to exert a new work or at least concurrently required knowledge and valued synchronicities as professional attributes – as much for freemen as for slaves. The world of work at sea was admittedly exercised by men endowed with reason and skill, which was not always remembered in the tillage environment, domestic tasks or urban labors little valued and performed by slaves. If maritime evasion did not mean freedom pure and simple, it enhanced the autonomy

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degree in the lives of mariners-slaves or slaves who, although not well-trained sailors, were willing to put themselves to service different masters from which already they knew and thereby face a new life.

I centered the analysis on the experiences of those men linked to the transatlantic slave trade and maritime work, without the concern in labeling the Atlantic with the nomenclatures used recently to assign the ocean as a space to be transposed by ships, news, loads and identities (Gilroy, 1993; Silva, 2003; Chambouleyron, 2006). Besides being all this, the Atlantic was the place of learning of slavery and freedom, as well as the reinvention of the latter – a freedom that was not necessarily created there, but in which the passage or the prospect of crossing was a central part.

I glimpse a possible relation between the crossing and the construction of liberty even that, mostly, the Atlantic journey meant the opposite of that – *i.e.*, uprooting and loss of freedom to about 9.5 million Africans between the XV and XIX centuries, in the accounts of Philip Curtin (Curtin, 1969, p. 168).

Freedom as individual achievement to be enjoyed personally was present in the places of origin of Africans. While it is not enlightenment, freedom and slavery as antonyms were part of the world view of African peoples. The ways to reach freedom had transformed during and after the knowledge made by Africans with European cultures (in Africa, America and at sea) as well as the experience of living as a slave in America.

In the last few decades, historians have brought to light numerous regional and temporal specificities of slavery. I have contributed to the debate and the creation of new approaches to the subject (Rodrigues, 2000; Rodrigues, 2005). I've been insisting that the modern slavery, beyond the local specificities, also varied during the long process by which the African became the object of commercial transactions – a process that I prefer to call enslavement, referring to a social dynamic whose outcome was not the same for all involved ones. Enslavement was composed in different stages and here I'm particularly interested in those in which Africans switched the masters in a short period of time – therefore involving several domains for several transitory masters. In each one of these phases, slaves and masters were adopting attitudes and strategies consistent with the situation where they were. Africans in enslavement process developed different forms of consciousness from its experience in various phases: the territorial uprooting and understanding of its meaning, the dissolution of community and family ties, the transit for long months on land and at sea, the imprisonment while they expected for a slave ship, the strange food intake to their original cultures, the impact resulting from contact with men of different colors carrying firearms and managing large sea vessels anchored off the coast.

It is very difficult to penetrate the hearts and minds of Africans who have become slaves of white people in America, especially if we stop at the first phase of this experience represented by the traffic. Almost no aspect of this process experienced deeply in Africa or on the slave ships was registered in accessible sources to historians more accustomed to written documents. Even the personal memories (the “*slave narratives*”) which became a literary genre widely consumed in the English-speaking countries between the XVIII and XIX centuries were crossed by filters, mainly linguistic and religious. This brings difficulties in dealing with autobiographies of Africans who narrated their lives in a foreign language (English, for instance) and from the conversion to Christianity.

Retrieve the (re)construction of freedom in the thinking of uprooted Africans turned into slaves and objects of commercial transactions is hard work. But the analysis of some attempts

to obtain freedom can help us to compose a panel of struggles strategies developed by slaves in the last years of the XVIII and early XIX century, focusing on marine life and slave trade. It is a period in which the ruling legislation, more broadly, the social environment of Portuguese America and imperial Brazil did not allow to glimpse the conquest of freedom in a collective way. Nor therefore it was left to try this conquest in some different form. Initially, the evasion by the sea may seem a little rational strategy to dissolve the slaveholder domination. To prevent any analogy that I do not intend to grow, to clarify, this is not supposed to invent a “maritime gap”. There is evidence that the evasion by sea was attempted by slaves with some labor experience in shipping and they could use it with other masters by proving their skills in dealing with naval equipment and, above all, claiming to be free men.

I believe that’s what they did in 1822, “seis pretos” (“six black men”) claimed by the Portuguese consul in Gibraltar to the Spanish government. The six men, whose names were not registered on consular correspondence, belonged to João Alves da Silva Porto and they worked in the garrison of a ship of his property – the galley *Viscondessa do Rio Seco*. From this boat, they were taken by the crew of the privateer *Heroína* (it is questionable whether they were actually taken, as wrote the consul, or fled of their own volition). After a passage from Bahia (Brazil) for the corsair ship repairs, the men went to Spain “aonde os prenderam e conduziram à cadeia de Algeciras juntamente com outros marinheiros brancos portugueses” (“where they were arrested and led to the jail of Algeciras with other white Portuguese sailors”). The consul reported that the six found themselves on board the frigate *Pérola* and the Secretary of the Navy responded that once the slaves were found they will be returned to its owner<sup>1</sup> – leaving us in doubt whether the men were still trapped or whether they had escaped from the Andalusian prison. The passage of these six men in three vessels in one year is a clear sign that they were slaves experienced in the maritime world of work, even if we do not know what function they fulfilled in naval chores.

We have no precise data on forms to enlist free sailors to work in slave ships in Brazilian ports. In the case of mariners-slaves, the enrollment could be due to these men profession since the fact that they are captives did not hinder them from being too skilled. Slaves and/or Africans were members of numerous slave crews and at least in a brig – the *Feliz Americano* – they made up the crew’s total, excepting the officers<sup>2</sup>.

Considering the Atlantic merchant navigation of long-haul, Marcus Rediker affirms to be difficult to determine whether the crew specialized in routes, trades or types of ships in particular but suppose, from the moment where they developed contacts and learn the specific methods in regional businesses, foremen and chief tended to be employed in trade routes where they have gathered some experience (Rediker, 1989, p. 86). In studying the slave trade to Brazil, I worked with the hypothesis that there was specialization, that is, crew members (free or slaves) were engaged for long periods in these vessels, probably because the slave trade required specific skill or familiarity related to how to negotiate the buying, selling and dealing with the carried “merchandise”.

1 Correspondence from consul Antônio Cerqueira de Carvalho to Secretary of the Navy, July 29 and October 2, 1822. Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo (Lisboa), *Fundo Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros (Correspondência recebida do governo, dos ministérios e de outras instituições)*. Correspondence from Secretary of the Navy, box 1 (1821-1826), n.º of order 379.

2 Seized in New Haven in 1812, the *Feliz Americano* had 12 captives’ crew members (two coopers and ten sailors). *Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty, Processos da Comissão Mista Anglo-Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro) (henceforth AHI), box 15, packet 4, sub-packet 2.

Judging by the testimony of crew members during the trials of slave ships seized in the XIX century, the accumulation of experience in business made them men specialized in the slave commerce. In many vessels were captives in the crew which also denotes a specialization among the slave workers. The presence of slaves in the slave equipages was mentioned by John Luccock in the 1820s, which drew attention to the defections/escapes of these mariners-slaves docked in Rio de Janeiro (Luccock, 1820). Perhaps the seamen desertion in this port was really frequent as reported by the captain of the Portuguese brig *Liberator*, anchored on November 12, 1833 after sailing 51 days from Angola. According to the captain, the crew of 28 men, eleven had deserted with nine of them were slaves<sup>3</sup>.

When they did not think about evade *motu proprio*, the mariners slaves could be encouraged by freedmen. This is what happened to Vincente Ferreira, Ambrósio Roque, Manuel Pereira, Ventura Soares and Caetano José, slaves of the trader Manuel Gomes Cardoso, established in Rio de Janeiro in 1779. The slaves went to Lisbon on the ship *N. S. do Rosário e Santo Antonio e Almas* “para se ocuparem no serviço e manobra da mesma embarcação com destino de voltarem nela para o porto de Benguela” (“to carry the service and maneuvers of the same vessel bound to return it to the port of Benguela”). Cardoso arrived in another boat in Lisbon harbor knowing that their slaves had received “conselhos e sugestões de alguns pretos libertos desta cidade” (“advice and suggestions from some black freedmen of this city”) to “descativar-se” (“release from captivity”) from their masters. He insisted, saying the slaves “foram sinistramente induzidos e aliciados a subtraírem do poder e autoridade de seus respectivos senhores, e a procurarem todos os meios de conseguir a liberdade” (“were induced and eerily attracted to circumvent the power and authority of their respective masters and to seek all means to achieve freedom”) using “arrojadamente” (“sassily”) to the “afetado pretexto de sevícias de escravidão” (“affected pretext of slavery abuses”). The slaves filed their claim of freedom in Lisbon justice. The request was described by Cardoso as “uma falsa e cavilosa narrativa, [repleta de] imaginárias vexações e calamidades que sofriam da crueldade e despotismo de seus senhores contra todas as leis da razão e da humanidade” (“a false and deceptive narrative, full of imaginary vexations and calamities that have suffered from the cruelty and their masters despotism against all laws of reason and humanity”).

Cardoso and his partners wanted to recover their enslaved properties but had a special interest in these five escaped slaves because they were “necessários e indispensáveis (...) no uso da navegação e comércio de Benguela e de toda a costa de África, por lhes servirem de língua [intérpretes] aos pretos boçais que se costumam extrair daqueles domínios” (“necessary and indispensable (...) in the use of navigation and trade of Benguela and the entire coast of Africa, for them serve as languages [interpreters] to the black nipples usually drawn from those areas”). The case was for the order of Queen Maria I who ordered to verify the fairness of the five slaves’ petition while the group was arrested at Portuguese Arsenal Royal Navy awaiting the authorities’ opinion that would judge their request.

At that time, the strategy began to show poor results. One reviewer said he have heard the slaves at Arsenal and wrote to the Visconde de Vilanova da Cerveira on August 6, 1779, saying he was convinced that the argument of abuse suffering was false:

3 “Relação de navio” (“Ship relation”), sign by Manoel Moreira de Castro, Secretary of the Health. November 12, 1833. *Arquivo Nacional* (Rio de Janeiro), packet IS 4 3.

“(…) sendo certo que os suplicantes (...), enquanto esta embarcação navegava do Rio de Janeiro para Benguela, eram contentes de seu cativo e tratados como o são todos os mais negros marinheiros que andam em semelhantes viagens. Porém, vindo a Lisboa, influídos por outros pretos, e vendo o melhor tratamento que aqui têm, entraram a desobedecer o sobredito capitão, provocando-o a romper no castigo”<sup>4</sup>.

The petitioners went to Lisbon enrolled on the small corvette crew,

“(…) que vem aqui buscar fazendas para ir a Benguela ao resgate de escravos e dela ao Rio de Janeiro, em cuja navegação é indispensável haver alguns marinheiros negros para sofrerem o maior trabalho destas viagens e para entenderem a língua dos negros brutos que conduzem e os tratarem”<sup>5</sup>.

In the interrogation, perhaps perceiving the fate that was being sketched the captives said they did not want to be slaves in Brazil but only in the Kingdom of Portugal, “temendo já alguma vingança do dito e do capitão” (“fearing already some revenge of the mentioned and of the captain”). The final legal opinion said that slaves should go back to their masters notwithstanding noting the difficulties that their resistance required the domain’s maintenance: “estando aqueles tão iludidos pelos pretos de Lisboa, é certo que sem coação se não reduzirão ao que deve ser (...)”<sup>6</sup>.

Mariners’ slaves acquired professional specializations and relied on the mobility inherent to maritime voyages. Sometimes they could try to turn these two experiments in freedom or at least in exchange for his former master for whom it offered some advantage. It seems to be the case of Angolan André that “se foi alistar por marinheiro, a título de forro” (“who was to sign up for sailor, as manumitted”) in the Portuguese boat *Maria Carlota*. In 1845, his master, Antonio José Gomes Moreira wrote several petitions to the Brazilian emperor Pedro II claiming ownership rights to André and complaining about the disrespect that the British officers who had apprehended *Maria Carlota* treated his appeals to return the slave. The problem was that the crew members of this slave smuggler boat had been arrested and most of them obtained their release, except for “dois ou três pretos” (“two or three blacks”), one of them being André. These slaves were kept in the prison-ship stationed in the Bay of Guanabara, in Rio de Janeiro, serving to the British without their masters were paid for it. Moreira demanded an indemnity of 20 thousand réis per month for the André’s work since the ship apprehension (September 1839) or the payment of its full amount by the imperial government - as already gets Antonio Gonçalves da Luz, master of another slave arrested in the same situation. Besides these two, the boat crew had the slave Jacob, who was also in the English prison-ship without its owner - the native of Pernambuco Vincente Tomás dos Santos - could reco-

4 “(...) being certain that the petitioners (...), while this vessel sailed from Rio de Janeiro to Benguela, were contents of his captivity and treated as the very same black mariners who go on similar voyages. However, coming to Lisbon, influenced by other blacks, and seeing the best treatment they have here, went to disobey the aforesaid master, causing him to break the punishment. Petition of Manuel Gomes Cardoso. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (henceforth AHU, Lisbon), *Documentos avulsos do Rio de Janeiro*, box 120 (july to september, 1779), doc. 27.

5 “(...) coming here to get fabrics to go to Benguela to rescue slaves and then to Rio de Janeiro, in which navigation is indispensable to have some black sailors to suffer these voyages greatest work and to understand the language of crude black leading and treat them”. *Idem, Ibidem*.

6 “(...) being those so deluded by blacks in Lisbon, it is certain that without coercion they will not reduce themselves to what should be”. *Idem, Ibidem*.



ver it back<sup>7</sup>. We do not know if Jacob and the not named slave of Antonio da Luz used the same artifice to impersonate as manumitted to be incorporated into the crew of the slave ship *Maria Carlota*. The simple fact of their masters did not mention the strategy does not mean that slaves have not been using it.

The strategy of pleading nautical knowledge to become a sailor should be familiar to many captains who did not mind to check if these men were free or slaves. Port authorities also knew identify this type of subterfuge – even if they were the ones who had to deal with complaints of masters whose slaves are illegally employed in other people’s ships pretending to be free mariners. Some steps to prevent this type of ploy have been taken in Luanda (Angola) since the early XIX century. An example is the administrative rule published by the local judge of Customs in 1801 forcing the transatlantic crews to return to the port of origin and determining that the board of registration of vessels and crews not embark anyone “sem ouvir primeiramente os senhorios dos navios em que tiverem vindo (...), para assim, antes que proceda a fazer a matrícula, concluir exatamente (...) se deve admitir ou não a ele as pessoas que se lhe apresentarem, providência esta mais necessária para prevenir fraudes de que resultam litígios inoportunos (...)”<sup>8</sup>.

Nor was it impossible for cunning slaves made to pass for loutish to try to obtain freedom after the first law that banned the transatlantic traffic to Brazil in 1831. Some masters complained to the judges of the Anglo-Brazilian Commission from Rio de Janeiro, as Helena Rosa de Jesus, the alleged owner of benguela Joaquim, “o qual por ser de profissão marítima, o tem alugado a alguns mestres de embarcação para diferentes viagens, o que fez ultimamente ao mestre do brigue *Brilhante*, que deste porto seguiu para a Costa da África”<sup>9</sup>. Given to the judge of orphans as a rough African captured on board, Joaquim made no effort to demonstrate his knowledge of Portuguese language before any authority in Rio de Janeiro where the brig was seized in 1838. If he were even loutish, as witnesses said he was, Joaquim could know the 1831 law terms’ that banned the slave trade from Africa to Brazil and freed Africans who were smuggled – at least that’s what it says in the legal text, although we know that things were not exactly so. Being rough was one of the main signs that defined the newly-disembarked condition, therefore, worthy of freedom. The Joaquim’s strategy has not worked and he was returned to Helena de Jesus. A Joaquim’s companion on the same trip, the black José Rebeca tried another way to achieve freedom. Affirming his status as a slave of maritime profession he sent a request to the judge of orphans saying that he employed himself in the smuggler ship by his master order, to whom he was obliged to obey “sem que lhe fosse permitido recusar no embarque, e mesmo entrar na análise da negociação a que se dirigia o brigue”. His master had died between the departure and the seizure of *Brilhante*- reason that made Rebeca to believe to be able to fully enjoy Freedom<sup>10</sup> (Rodrigues, 2005, p. 160-161).

7 AHI, box 20, packet 3 (*Maria Carlota*, 1839-1845).

8 “without first hearing to the ships landlords where they will have come (...), for thus before being able to do the registration, concluding accurately (...) if should admit or not to it the people who submit, providence this more necessary to prevent fraud arising from inopportune litigations (...)”. AHU, Angola, box 100 (1801), doc. 16, april 22, 1801.

9 “this for being of maritime profession has hired to some masters of boats for different voyages, which made the late master of the brig *Brilhante*, who went from this port for the Coast of Africa.” AHI, box 4, packet 3, sub-packet 1 (*Brilhante*, 1831-1839).

10 “no to be allowed to refuse the embarkment, and even enter into an analysis about the negotiation that was directing the brig”. *Idem, Ibidem*.

Some judges (the British in particular) of the Anglo-Brazilian Commission from Rio de Janeiro seemed willing to create problems for those masters who employed slaves as seafarers. In some cases, even after they released the entire white crew of a slave-ship seized, the judges kept imprisoned blacks rogues<sup>11</sup>.

Judges of other instances were unwilling to defend freedom under any pretext especially if they were based on verbal agreements or customary right. Let's see how a judge of orphans from the village of Sorocaba, São Paulo province, dealt with the demand which was taken by a group of seven free Africans. Employees at the Ipanema Iron Factory, near the village, the free Africans went to the judge's chambers, the judge called Vicente Eufrásio da Silva e Abreu. The course of the episode revealed both the behavior of judges and these Africans experience that though they were manufactory workers at that time, had a previous experience in seafaring.

The meeting between the judge and the Africans took place in 1849. Arguing that they went to town to buy straw to make hats the Africans had delivered to the judge of orphans a petition for freedom written by them (Rodrigues, 1998, pp. 38-39; Florence, 1996). The Africans, seized around 1833 in the Engenho Cabrito (in Recôncavo Baiano), claimed to have been contracted by the Arsenal Navy of Bahia to work during 10 years, and since then 16 years had elapsed. They served as slaves and were not willing to continue like this because considered themselves as free men. In 1849, however, in Brazil there was not a legal definition of the stated period by which free Africans should provide services. Only in December 1853 it was stipulated in 14 years the time of service of African apprehended in smugglers seized ship, under Decree N.º 1303 terms. These Africans were not in Sorocaba to claim the application of a law that does not exist. They were, instead, demanding what was promised in the Navy Arsenal of Bahia. Apparently the director's transfer to the Arsenal to Rio de Janeiro made the verbal agreement established between them fall down. Prevented from filing their petition the Africans returned to the Ipanema Factory. The factory director said that these Africans did not suit to the fabric work "por serem quase todos marinheiros, exigentes e mal acostumados" ("because they are almost all sailors, demanding and badly accustomed"). Worse: the existence of another Africans over 10 years of service in the Factory could expand the claim, therefore almost 200 free Africans worked there. The mariners Africans who wrote the petition to the judge of orphans seemed to have the ability not only to write but also to articulate groups with convergent interests. Realizing this possibility, the Ipanema Factory director's ordered to arrest them in the capital jail where we lose their track (Mamigonian, 2000).

We hear of other slaves with experience in maritime work involved in an evasion attempt again without success. In short, the evidence of their story began on December 15, 1850, in the village of Itapaboana, province of Rio de Janeiro, where the schooner *Americana* was seized by the English warship *Riflemant*. The schooner has on board some black and no white officer or mariners when the ship was seized and brought to trial in the Anglo-Brazilian Commission from Rio de Janeiro. With the proclamations' publication convoking the ship owners to defend themselves in court, a man named Antonio Gomes Guerra presented himself telling what had happened to his vessel. Farmer in that village, Guerra had built the schooner in Campos dos Goitacazes six years before to employ it in the coastal trade

11 As the three that were part of the crew of *Feliz*, seized in Rio de Janeiro just after Christmas 1838. Cf. AHI, box 15, packet 4, sub-packet 1.

between the coast of Rio de Janeiro and Rio da Prata. On November 15, 1850, the *Americana* was firmly anchored in the port of São João da Barra and tied with two guard sailors on board, waiting to exit the next day toward Itabapoana to make regular trade. Everything went as Guerra's planned until the next morning, the vessel master, who had slept in land, went to the beach and did not find the schooner. Local residents then told him that they saw it sailing by the inlet apart without knowing by whom she was going manned. The skipper concluded that runaway slaves from nearby farms – some of them sailors – had seduced or threatened the guards and seized the boat. The legal process ended at that point, the slaves in custody were not questioned and were returned to their masters. If they had told the reasons for the unprecedented attempt to win the sea perhaps we knew they had tried to go elsewhere on the Brazilian coast or even return to their homeland by crossing the Atlantic in the opposite direction (Rodrigues, 2005, pp. 250-251).

After all, for the slaves, what is the attraction of life at sea, besides the aforementioned spatial mobility? Cultural skills coming of different parts of Africa certainly interfered in this appeal. The *Cabinda*, for example, had been employed by Portuguese officers on cabotage ships in Angola in the XVIII century. The *Kru*, who inhabit the coast of today's Liberia and Ivory Coast since at least the XV century, were rowers, sailors, shippers and suppliers of viands in the British slave trade between the XVIII and XIX centuries as well as helping the traffickers to moor – although systematically refused to vend slaves to those dealers (Pélissier, I, 1986, p. 54; McGowan, 1990, p. 9; Silva, 2000b, p. 67). These people are mentioned in the British documentation from XVIII and XIX centuries with a specific denomination (*kroomen*) and references to their professional skills as seamen: “it seems conscription and work with the vessels stand out enough to be recognized namely, which also indicates a longer time to work next to the British crew” (Santos, 2008, pp. 11-12). Information from a source of the XVIII century allows a further step into the survey of the African matrices in the specialization of some ethnic groups in the maritime work. This is an official letter of 1798, sent by Miguel Antonio de Melo (in Luanda) to Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho (in Lisbon). In the letter, Melo stated that since the mid-seventeenth century the Portuguese punished the *Muxilundas* for their support to the Dutch invasion in Angola, in XVII century. The punishment was to take advantage of this people services retracing to a dating back practice of the King of Congo to take them as servants and use their skills as fishermen. *Muxilundas* supplied the markets of Luanda and some ports of Brazil with fresh and salt fish. Moreover they learned about life at sea and experience in handling boats, even small ones. The fishy islands where they lived, however, led to the product devaluation and instead of receiving the 1.200 réis monthly customarily paid for the product many *muxilundas* chose to employ as mariners in the royal vessels in exchange for wage of 30 thousand réis, out the daily ration. The result, continued Melo,

“têm sido despovoarem os *muxilundas* as ilhas [mais especificamente a Ilha de Luanda], abandonarem as pescarias, serem elas hoje tão escassas que muitas vezes não há peixe, em outras haver tão pouco que não chega a todos, e por último ser o preço tão crescido que por 600 réis se não compra agora o que em outro tempo se achava pela duodécima parte do que atualmente custa”<sup>12</sup>.

12 “Have been depopulated *Muxilundas* the islands [more specifically the island of Luanda], leaving the fishery, they are now so scarce that there is often no fish, in others so little that does not reach everyone, and finally be the price so grown that for 600 réis if not buy now what another time he was the twelfth part of which currently costs”. AHU, Angola, box 88, doc. 68, April 26, 1798.

It appears that the governor was a connoisseur of the fish delicacies caught by *Muxilundas* believing that with some Crown encouragement these men would leave the long-distance navigation and return to their traditional activity. In the end, according to him, they were the “únicos negros que mostram algum aferro à terra em que nasceram e se criaram, custando-lhes muito serem tirados dela, e desertando das ilhas unicamente porque os obrigam as largas navegações”<sup>13</sup>.

Melo did not explain why other groups who inhabited the Luanda’s environs could not take on fishery. Above all, he did not attempted for the experience in fisheries as an attribute valued by the Portuguese captains when employing sailors of this ethnicity. The “aferro à terra que nasceram” (“grasp to the land where they were born”) could not be greater in this people than among others who compulsorily had been turned into slaves. The difference here is that the *Muxilundas*’ maritime skills had turned them into coveted men to handle ships and to guide European officials through African waters.

Other groups also held navigation abilities. An example can be found between Cape Verdeans that since the XVI century dedicated themselves to the illicit trade in the rivers of Guinea and became known as “lançados” or “tangomaos” in the Portuguese legislation (Zeron, 1998). In the Congo-Angola, the *Vili* of Loango were recognized as men skilled in the manufacture and management of fishing and transport boats on the coast. Between the XVI and XIX centuries this quality was helpful in slaves supply sold in Cabinda and other ports in the region while imprisoned in far away places. The *Vili* deliberate detachment in relation to the Portuguese and the commerce they did with other Europeans took failure to Portuguese plan to concentrate captives’ trade in Luanda (Thornton, 1993; Thomas, 1997). Referring to the bays and “Rios da Guiné” (“Rivers of Guinea”), now Guinea-Bissau lagoons, John Thornton argues despite the navigation in rivers and near the maritime coast provided an commercial network that preceded the European domains attempts in the early XVI century: cheaper transport by water allowed the movement of large amounts of goods and contributed to the formation of extensive networks of market (Thornton, 1993). Besides the effects on trade, language and culture as a whole, can not escape us that the creation of such networks presupposed the know-how of a parcel of men skilled in small vessels management. To fulfill their duties, they developed knowledge related to the ports and the risks they presented for embarkment and disembarkment. They also know that the depth of ports, the winds system, tides, rain and other climatic factors that interfered with coastal and inland navigation. Maritime professions even not over the long haul or in large vessels were part of the people experience from different parts of African continent. Given the experience at sea, we must try to understand the reasons why African slaves engaged themselves in slave ships when they were distant from their homeland. A document found inboard on the slave ship *Maria Carlota* in 1839 can give us more clues as to what attracted the slaves to these ships. These are about the “Obrigações Especiais” (“Special Obligations”) sort of regulation that established obligations and duties of the ship crew members, also invoking apparatus referred to the Portuguese Commercial Code. The “Special Obligations” provided the obedience rules to the officers and refraining the sailors’ “brawls and drunkenness” and to spending the night outside the ship without captain’s permission. The captain’s power has encompassed such items as punish defectors (if he

13 “the only blacks who show some grasp to the land they were born and reared costing them a lot to be taken from it, and deserting the islands solely because the compelling of broad navigations”. *Idem, Ibidem.*

could find them again), failing to pay the concerted wage. The evaluation of skilled labor by the captain opened an enticing door for the slaves:

“O capitão poderá despedir, e pôr em terra antes da partida, e sem obrigação de pagamento de soldadas, todo o indivíduo da tripulação que se ajustar em qualidade que não é capaz de preencher, e dar a este indivíduo a qualidade e soldadas que julgar a bem, se a incapacidade só for descoberta depois da partida do navio”<sup>14</sup>.

This expedient guarantees the captain's appreciation. But it also created the possibility of integrating the crew within men who did not have to prove their sailors' skills before boarding - which seems to have occurred with a lot of slaves claiming to be free or freed, as well as skilled sailors, even though none of the statements needed to be proven. When the captive condition was discovered after the ship set sail nothing more could be done to return the slave to his master. If the slave had no skill, but that was only discovered on the high seas, the payment would be lesser. Anyway, was freedom that was sought, the goal was closer than the existing condition in land before boarding. The defection in one of the scales or at the final destination was an exciting attraction.

Articles transferred from the Portuguese Commercial Code and attached to the *Maria Carlota's* “Special Obligations” foreseen the officers and crew members union before a foreign attack or a natural disaster, reinforcing the idea that all were “together in the same boat” regardless of each individual social status. Among those rights that do not depend on social condition were the special cares of those who get sick during the voyage, the salary payment during the days when the worker fell ill and a compensation for mutilation suffered at work, in addition to payment of ¼ of wage over the voyage course. Free and slave were equal to those seafarer's rights.

Exerting sailor's functions some enslaved Africans were able to find unusual freedom opportunities. Amongst the many I met, surprises me the case of Pedro Caetano, Roque, José Ferreira, João, Miguel, Joaquim, José and José de Cambondo - eight slaves pertaining to Minerva galley's crew that taken by French pirates in Benguela in 1799 was recovered by Bernardo Lourenço Viana, ship and the slaves owner due to the these men action. The recovery was thus described by the Luanda's magistrate (*juiz de fora*): “(...) matando como mataram quatro brancos e ferindo dois, passaram o resto a ferros, que vinham a ser três brancos e seis pretos franceses, dirigindo-se com prudente cautela para este porto, [o] que não puderam conseguir, até que foram dar no do Ambriz, de nação amiga”, where they found English ships<sup>15</sup>. Félix Correa de Araújo, the judge, awarded the African reconquers with freedom or “manumission declarations” as stated in the document. His intention was to make more: pay 1/5 the ship value and its belongings to those slaves so as soon as the galley was sold at auction. He was only dissuaded of this intention when the governor of Angola claimed to be unfair to do this with the ship owner.

14 “The captain will be able to dismiss, and put ashore before departure, and without obligation to pay wage every individual of the crew that fit in quality that is not able to fill, and give to this individual the quality and wage it deems the well, if the inaptitude is discovered after the departure of the vessel only”. AHI, box 20, packet 3. *Maria Carlota*, 1839-1845.

15 “(...) killing as they had killed 4 white men and wounding 2 whites, they had passed the rest the chaineses, which came to be 3 white and 6 black French, speaking with a wise caution to this port, [what] they could not obtain, until they were arrived in Ambriz, a friendly nation”. AHU, Angola, box 93A (1799), doc. 22.

I argued that enslavement was a process full of stages, comings and goings. In the master's view, although the final result was one only - to transform African into slaves - this might not be the way the captives face the process. For the slaves or at least for those we can retrieve experience fragments, the process contained fighting possibilities for freedom before and after becoming property of a master who bought and put them to work. Examples are the mariner's slaves or those who passed themselves off as men experienced on the sea without being in effect. Their peculiar escapes (sometimes spectacular), their transit to unknown places and their ability to convince the ship officers' to use them, made them slaves who did not fall within the categories of rebels but among the negotiators who have faced plus disruption in their lives, facing the difficulties of a profession full of risk and which put them in touch with other men whose tradition seemed to be the constant quest for autonomy

Historians as Rediker and Peter Linebaugh pointed to freedom as an ideal for which the culture of free sailors always fought (Linebaugh, 1982; Rediker & Linebaugh, 2001). We should not discard the possibility that a communication network that included solidarity has been created in the slave trade between free and enslaved sailors considering that most of the slave traffic crews consisted of Africans. In studies that relate to the years 1780 to 1863, I found data about 1.972 crew members of slave ships including officers and common sailors. Of these, 346 were Africans from different regions representing a significant percentage of approximately 17.5% of crews.

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I discussed, until here, the slave perspective of enrollment in the maritime crews, emphasizing the spatial mobility as a decisive factor in the pursuit of freedom or bigger autonomy. However, if the slave's logic includes the possibility of achieving freedom and greater autonomy through maritime work, the slaveholders logical also did not exclude the mariners-slaves of their horizon. The slaveholders logical included them from the work perspective, the necessity for communication and business operation of captives purchase and selling in Africa.

As I said, there was a demand for men who could handle the ship and its equipment - which meant that officers tended to accept the engagement of men, free or slave in these tasks. On the other hand, the masters who lived in land owned specialized slaves in maritime occupations could also rent their services to the officers or owners of merchant ships, including slave ships.

Regarding slave ships officers' the acceptance of slaves and / or Africans as sailors disclose an important face of the slave trade organization in the coast of Africa. Rediker and Linebaugh reported the case of an English slave ship that between 1651 and 1652, contracted a pilot on the island of Cape Verde, then another at the Gambia River mouth and a third one a *grometta* called Jacus the latter next to the "lançados" community - Luso-Africans metis who acted as intermediaries in commerce on West Africa coast. After a few incidents Jacus left the crew. What should be noted in the episode, as did Rediker and Linebaugh, is the importance of this sailor embarked in the African coast to the trade completion. It would be the linguistic skills? For the knowledge of the region? The skills of a sailor? Or would the transatlantic knowledge of American slavery, which could prove dangerous to British interests in the region? (Rediker & Linebaugh, 2011).

I have argued elsewhere that it could have different reasons to explain the enrollment of African slaves working as mariners on slave ships (Rodrigues, 2005, p. 185). One of the strongest arguments was precisely the necessity to create and maintain a form of communication between the crew and the newly captured slaves, so that the crew knew what the ones jailed in the basement murmured or machinate. If the African mariners and / or slaves were able or willing to fulfill this function, we know little, but it can be said that their presence on board was part of the seigniorial logical. Also among Africans the ethno-linguistic diversity was enormous, but it is plausible to assume that an African from diverse ethnic backgrounds (and enemy) of those who were in the basement may have been very helpful to the slave ship crews. Conversely, an African from any origin may have been an important nexus in the solidarity net among slaves shipped as mariners against the treatment meted out to them by the rest of the crew. Similarly, I believe there was a linguistic manner of communication between the crew members and Africans considering four situations in which would have established contacts and opportunities tied to mutual understanding through words.

At first was the handle with the business of buying and selling the slaves' parcels. Often, negotiations between officers and suppliers (Portuguese, African, Brazilian, Luso-Africans and Luso-Brazilians, in the case of Angola) were long, which accounted for the crew waiting for varied time, possibly months. Meanwhile, the crew was not confined on board, whether or not averse to trafficking and even fearing the dangers of disease on the African coast, it is true that there were many chances for these men go to land until the business was closed. In these excursions it was unlikely that they did not have some contact with the region inhabitants. If they were African slaves, those sailors could have a potentially more intense contact.

Another situation involving mariners and captives can be classified as the most radical: crew members (blacks and whites) and Africans crossed the ocean together for a time that in the XIX century could vary from thirty to ninety days (considering travels to Angola and Mozambique respectively, to Rio de Janeiro) if everything goes normally, without calmnesses or other unforeseen events that delayed the voyage. Apparently, it was too short a time for the European language speakers' to learn the rudiments of another language, but the fact is that seamen for many years engaged in the same slave routes could be more familiar with different verbal expressions of their national languages. Although the sailors are on deck and the slaves in the basement they shared the ship places in different circumstances, but in all way frequently: of a side, the slaves left the basement in groups to stretch out, sunbathe or to do services on the deck; in turn, had crew members responsible for the confined African's treatment feeding them and serving them water during the crossing, even though such cares were restricted to open and close the hatches. There were yet the inevitable revolts on board, an extreme experience from which everyone involved certainly drew lessons about their opponents.

We can not forget the already mentioned presence of Africans from various ethnic groups in the slave ships crews (just over 17% of the total) that, by virtue of its origin, knew one or more African languages. They were also present in coastal navigation in Brazil since the late XVIII century, a period in which employed about ten thousand slave sailors in this trade (Klein, 1986). Elias Antônio Lopes, one of the biggest *carrioca* (native of Rio de Janeiro) dealers when the Portuguese royal family arrival in 1808,

owned four slave vessels with nineteen mariners slaves<sup>16</sup> (Cunha, 1969). As I said, the presence of Africans members on the slave ships could be due to the need for a communication link between the crew and the captives, to know what the slaves jailed in the basement murmured and then prevent revolts. This hypothesis counts on the testimony of a English slave ship captain active in West Africa which made some complained for having carried through a voyage “without interpreters to assist in the necessary intercourse with our slaves. There were no on board who knew a word of their dialect”. The absence of a member who fulfilled that role and the whip indiscriminate use as a badge of discipline on board ended up teaching the saddest lessons to the captain: soon after the departure he had to face with bullets a slave revolt (Mayer, 1968, p. 272). Fulfilling or not a role in the prevention of slave revolts, the fact is that the mere presence of African jack-tars on board certainly made possible cultural contacts with other European and American crew members who also composed the group of sailors and the officers corps.

Finally, there is the fact that mutual understanding between these two groups was not restricted to the waiting time on the Africa’s coast, travels or the presence of African seamen on board. In all ports where the traffic of Africans was made, it was impossible to fully control other activities that involved slaves and sailors. We rely on reports such as Alcide D’Orbigny’s and other travelers over Rio de Janeiro, and observe that there were ideal places for contacts of this nature: the *bica dos Marinheiros* (*the Sailors tap*), built at the time of the viceroy Gomes Freire de Andrade in the former beach Braz de Pina and demolished by Luis de Vasconcelos e Sousa (XVIII century), place “onde vinha a maruja dos navios surtos no porto (...) fazer provisão d’água” (“where did the sailors of the anchored ships in the harbor (...) make water provision”) (Fazenda, 1920; Costa, 1958), or the Chafariz do Largo do Paço (“fountain in the Palace Square”), where “vão se abastecer os navios ancorados na baía, ao mesmo tempo que inúmeros mulatos e negros ali se acotovellam para embarcar e desembarcar mercadorias” as noted by the same French traveler<sup>17</sup> (D’Orbigny, 1976, p. 165). Also the Swedish Gustave Beyer noted that around the fountain next to the Palace (Palace of the Brazilian Emperor dispatches) “sempre se encontram bandos alegres, cantantes e barulhentos de negros que aí vêm buscar água” (“always are happy black flocks, singing loud and that come here to fetch water”) use that did not escape to the attention of police because the “aglomeração constante desta gente” (“constant agglomeration of this people”) (Beyer, 1907, p. 277). In the same line, the historian Julius Scott found evidence of trade contacts and cultural exchanges between sailors and slaves in the Caribbean of the XIX century: the crews hungry for fresh fruit and vegetables after a long stay at sea was a good consumer market for the slave’s subsistence farming. And judging from the reports by Irish James Kelly on the Jamaica of the early XIX century, the relationship between them was very cordial. The contact between sailors and blacks in the Caribbean could not fail to take cultural consequences: according to Scott, many songs of work at sea, scattered around the world by British mariners in the XIX century, are remarkably similar to the Caribbean slave songs. In fact, there is considerable evidence to show that many songs may have originated from the interaction of the sailors and

<sup>16</sup> Arquivo Nacional (Rio de Janeiro), Códice 789 - *Inventário dos bens da casa do finado Conselheiro Elias Antonio Lopes*.

<sup>17</sup> “Where the anchored ships in the bay go to supply, while many blacks and mulattos crowded there to embark and disembark goods”.



black of the docks on the West Indies islands. A theory of the origin and development of *pidgin* and Creole languages in the Caribbean emphasizes contact between European sailors and African slaves (Scott, 1986, pp. 64-65).

Also the Brazilian and Portuguese mariners had for habit to work with the sound of their own songs. The fact that the record of none of them have come to us does not mean they did not exist. Entries in the dictionaries of seamanship, for instance, we found evidence that they were often sung. These songs were called “saloma” and, lately, “celeumas,” defined as “cantiga ou gritaria que fazem os marinheiros quando alam algum cabo” (“song or cry that the sailors do when pulling a cable”) or “cantoria com que a gente do mar acompanhava as fainas que exigissem grandes esforços. Costumava ser primeiramente entoadas só por um homem e depois em coro pelos restantes. Cerimonial, com vozeria acompanhada por toques de trombetas, pífaros, tambores etc. (...). Barulho” (“singing which the seafarers used to fulfill the labor that require great efforts. It used to be primarily sung only by a man and then in chorus by the others. Ceremonial, with uproar accompanied by touches of horns, fifes, drums etc..(...). Noise”).

By dictionaries we still have the precious information that “salomear” or “celeumar” was forbidden on Portuguese navy ships board at least since the late XVIII century. Related to the merchant ships, however, there is no reference to the prohibition<sup>18</sup> (Campos, 1823, p. 93; Leitão & Lopes, 1963, pp. 117-118 and 360), nor is there no reason to suppose that these sailors would no longer uproar, despite the absence of records.

All these situations disclose high probabilities of contact between the seamen and the Africans as shown in maritime language, but not limited to it. Consider these probabilities are one of the few ways that the historian has to overcome the absence of direct contact record.

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Related aspects of the work process, hierarchy and forms of sailor’s payment have established networks within the crew, which made vertical relations and were part of these men identity. The precise definition of tasks, the obligatoriness of the proper vessel functioning at risk (such as imminent shipwreck, facing enemies or storms), the possibility of professional ascension through learning and payment according to assessing tasks performances created – within the group of seafarers – ties that may have placed them in an opposing field to the embarked Africans. Though sometimes they were sympathetic with the slaves and witnesses of atrocities committed against them, the crew members (especially those who were not officers) do not necessarily translate that feeling into systematic actions to improve the fate of the slaves shipped in the basement.

I understand that the tradition of freedom of the seamen’s culture has been forged in the sailors daily struggles against repressive officers, but I think also that the slave’s fight disposition against the captivity and in favor of autonomy or freedom found a reinforcement in this environment, as well as helped to build a tradition of autonomy and freedom of free workers from the sea.

<sup>18</sup> The prohibition was set by Chap. I, article 74 of *Regimento Provisional para o serviço e disciplina das esquadras e navios da Armada Real, que por ordem de S. M. deve servir de Regulamento aos comandantes das esquadras e navios da mesma senhora, novamente reimpresso por ordem de S. M. o Imperador, de 20 de junho de 1796*. Reprinted later (in 1825, 1835, 1841 and 1868) without changes, the *Regimento* prevailed throughout the Brazilian imperial period.

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