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Family Connections: Slaveholding among African and Afro-descendent Women in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Brazil

The enormous and consequential surge in women's and gender studies over the last few decades inevitably has impacted virtually all fields of history, not least those dealing with enslavement over time and space. Women, of course, were always subject to enslavement and, therefore, to the various psychological, social, cultural, and physical rigor entailed in imposing large scale systems of bondage. More focused investigations, however, have demonstrated that enslaved women could be and often were treated differently than their male counterparts. Such differences can be considered favorable or detrimental to women and scholarly disagreements here are part of a debate that clearly fits within the framework of global enslavement. Less emphasis has been placed on women as slaveholders in their own right – i.e. not as co-owners along with their husbands or partners. Would it be reasonable to assume that women developed distinct patterns of relationships with their chattel, patterns perhaps more imbued with familial paternalism than the rigid patriarchal order identified with slave masters? Again, this question raises issues best addressed in a comparative and global context. It will be argued here that in a fully consolidated slave society such as Brazil's, gender distinctions in slave ownership led to specifically feminine contributions to the prevailing slave society. For example, women, and especially Africans and those of African descent, seemingly encouraged family formation among their chattel, resulting in modest levels of natural increase that played a role in perpetuating small-scale holdings. Given the direct or indirect slave past of so many of these women, it comes as no surprise that they could be relatively generous in granting manumissions. Unexpected, however, is evidence pointing to the intertwining of enslaved families with those of their owners – above all, by way of fictive kinship formed through godparenthood. Could some of the phenomena investigated in the course of this text serve as yardsticks for measuring how gender affected enslavement, slave ownership, and the overall slave culture?

From the inception of women's studies as an important prism through which to study Brazilian slave society scholars noted the inevitable presence of women as slaveholders. Even when focusing on women engaged in street vending or basic urban services slave ownership turned up with relative frequency.[1] Widows generally

1 One of the earliest of such studies examines the city of São Paulo in the nineteenth century. Although relations between mistresses and their slaves are not investigated, the sources reveal that slave ownership was fairly common among small businesswomen. Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias, *Quotidiano e poder em São Paulo no século XIX* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1984): 25, 49–51, 83–128. Also:

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inherited considerable portions of their husbands' estates that among well off families almost universally included sizable slave holdings. Much emphasis has therefore fallen on women of wealth, partly because they are much more visible and easier to trace in surviving inheritance documentation.[2] An eighteenth-century example of such emphasis is evident in a mythical figure of color, who, thanks to marriage, was propelled into the upper echelons of colonial society. During the prolonged absence of her noble Portuguese husband the renowned mulatto, Chica da Silva, judiciously administered the couple's properties in Brazil, obviously including a large slave labor force.[3] These studies of upper class or parvenu women slaveholders tend to emphasize the relative ease with which their protagonists were able to assume the reigns of managing large estates and slave forces, a complex task usually attributed to men. Yet, no particular effort is made in attempting to discern approaches to dealing with slaves that might be considered, at least to some extent, gender specific.

In recent years, scholars have sought to investigate more thoroughly the notably diverse social make-up of the Brazilian slaveholding "class." To be sure, individuals considered to be white doubtless constituted a majority of slave owners and certainly controlled the largest shares of slave property. Nevertheless, individuals designated as being of color figured prominently as slaveholders and, although they seldom owned more than a few captives, their unwavering support of the slave regime contributed to the remarkable vitality of the institution of slavery in Brazil even as the international abolitionist movement triumphed throughout much of the western world.[4] Indeed, not a few ex-slaves, including African freedmen, became slaveholders in their own right and occasionally amassed considerable fortunes thanks to their acumen and the labor of their chattel. Frank develops a detailed examination of the post-liberation life in the city of Rio de Janeiro of Antônio Dutra who probably arrived in the colonial capital during the 1810s. Dutra was sold as a *Congo* slave, but appears to have gained his freedom during the first half of the decade of 1820 when he had

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Eni de Mesquita Samara, *As mulheres, o poder e a família* (São Paulo: Editora Marco Zero/Secretaria de Estado da Cultura de São Paulo, 1989): 80–86, 105–13.

2 Sandra Lauderdale-Graham, *Caetana Says No: Women's Stories from a Brazilian Slave Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 131–145; Miridian Britto Falci, "Parentela, riqueza e poder: três gerações de mulheres," *Gênero* 6, no. 1 (2005): 201–11.

3 Júnia Ferreira Furtado, *Chica da Silva e o contratador dos diamantes: o outro lado do mito* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003).

4 During the entire Brazilian slave regime, small and medium sized holdings of up to twenty bondsmen far outnumbered large plantation style holdings and, in most regions and time periods, also contained a majority of the slave population. Even in the wake of the reallocation of slave labor that followed the termination of the Atlantic slave trade to Brazil that configuration of the distribution of slave property remained in place. See: Renato Leite Marcondes, *Diverso e desigual: o Brasil escravista na década de 1870* (São Paulo: FUNEC Editora, 2009): 171–84.

already formed a family.[5] This African freedman went on to become what Frank terms a good example of middling wealth holders in the first half of the nineteenth century. On his death in 1849 this surgeon barber and musician owned thirteen slaves – a rather large holding given its urban setting.[6] The author's compelling narrative of Dutra's experience thus serves to underscore just how profoundly Africans and Afro-Brazilians played a part in perpetuating the slave system at least up to the mid-nineteenth century. Robert Guedes offers a number of similar examples during the same time frame, but located in the interior of the captaincy/province of São Paulo. Guedes' scrupulously researched analysis reveals a reality in which liberation from the bonds of slavery often led to the ownership of slaves and the attendant generational social mobility, including a rather bewildering kaleidoscope of color labelling over the decades.[7]

Although Frank and Guedes squarely elevate middling slaveholders – among them Africans and those of African descent – a social, economic, and political force that can no longer be ignored by scholars of Brazil's slave past, their works largely ignore women as slave holders. The topic of women of intermediate social standing and their slaves remains largely unexplored in the already vast and ever-increasing literature dealing with diverse facets of colonial and nineteenth-century slave society. An exception to this dearth of studies is an excellent Master's Thesis by D.F. Sbravati presented about a decade ago.[8] The thesis deals with women slaveholders in the city of Desterro – the capital of the province of Santa Catarina (and modern day Florianópolis) – during the second half of the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding the reduced size of the holdings in question, Sbravati convincingly demonstrates the importance of family formation among the slaves, of the sentimental ties that bound together the lives of owners and chattel, and of the role such ties played in guaranteeing a measure of comfort for mistresses as they aged. A fair number of grants of freedom also turn up in the wills and testaments examined. Desterro lay on the periphery of the Brazilian slave system, the final decades of slavery were marked by a greatly diminished presence of slaves in urban centers, and the author's sample is rather small. Just the same, her research has not received the attention it deserves. In pointing to the complex intertwining of mistress/slave and familial relations, Sbravati hits upon a phenomenon that may well highlight certain gender differences in slave ownership and stewardship.

5 The term "Congo" referred to slaves coming from the vast territory defined by the Congo River and its tributaries.

6 Zephyr L. Frank, *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

7 Roberto Guedes, *Egressos do cativeiro: trabalho, família, aliança e mobilidade social (Porto Feliz, São Paulo, c. 1798–c. 1850)* (Rio de Janeiro: Mauad X/FAPERJ, 2008).

8 Daniela Fernanda Sbravati, "Senhoras de incerta condição: proprietárias de escravos em Desterro na segunda metade do século XIX" (master's thesis, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2008).

Interpretations of the slave family have moved well beyond the notion that, above all, family formation served to sustain and keep the peace on large holdings, thus almost exclusively benefitting owners of large plantations linked to the agricultural export sector.[9] Today the slave family is widely acknowledged to have been a fixture throughout the entire period of slavery among holdings of all sizes and dedicated to diverse productive activities.[10] The slave family and community are seen as vital repositories of African traditions and culture and, therefore, the principal locus of autonomous slave social life. Debate often revolves around the varying degrees of owner interference in establishing and maintaining families, on the weight of slave agency in arranging marriages (formal and informal), or in managing daily family affairs. Some of these issues will be taken up later, but the principal focus here is on slaveholding women of color who appear to have promoted family formation among their slaves as well as intimate relations among all members of the households they headed.

Located in southeastern Brazil, the town of São José do Rio das Mortes, early on a gold mining center but increasingly a farm town catering to the demands of an agricultural sector geared to the domestic market, constitutes the focal point of the present investigation. The time frame extends from the late eighteenth century to the early decades of the nineteenth century, although some of data from both before and after this period is also examined. Women of color, both freeborn and ex-slaves, and their slaves are the principal objects of analysis. It will be argued that the experiences of these women, all of whom were marked by past connections to slavery – some immediate, others further in the past – played a decisive role in the ways they dealt with their own slaves, ways that invariably involved family formation and frequently the granting of freedom to both children and their mothers. Whether directly or indirectly, these women had benefitted from acts of manumission and some, if not all, grew up and lived as adults in households that included two or more generations of owners and slaves. Indeed, the apparent economic and social stability of these small or middling slaveholdings seems to have grown out of a constant intermingling of generations of owner and slave families. What emerges is a pattern in which manumissions from the past were reproduced in the present, usually conditioned upon further services that ensured aging owners a fair degree of comfort as they approached the end of their lives.

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9 Manolo Florentino and José Roberto Góes, *A paz das senzalas: famílias escravas e tráfico atlântico, Rio de Janeiro, c. 1790 – c. 1850* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1997). In the antebellum South such benefits included the maintenance and growth of slave forces through natural increase. Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Slavery*, vol. 1 (Boston: Little Brown, 1974): 126–44.

10 Robert W. Slenes, *Na senzala, uma flor: esperanças e recordações na formação da família escrava – Brasil, Sudeste, século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1999).

Over the past few years this author has been engaged in intersecting data from diverse sources in order to gain a better understanding of daily life in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century São José. One of the principal strands of this approach to social history is family reconstitution, a part of which has allowed for the elaboration of narratives based on the experiences of families of Africans and their descendants during roughly a century and a half of the slave regime in Brazil. The sources include parish registers, nominal list census material, some inheritance records, notarial registers, documents produced by the local municipal council, including fiscal records, as well as papers originating at higher ecclesiastical and civil administrative levels, among others.[11] Perhaps the most noteworthy result of this research effort is the reconstitution of seven generations of a family "founded" by a slave couple originating from West Africa that will be examined shortly.

Let us begin, however, with the story of Rosa, an ex-slave who had probably arrived in São José from West Africa in the 1730s. She stood out as by far the largest slaveholder among all freedmen, freedwomen, and the freeborn of African descent in the parish at the turn of the eighteenth century. According to the *Rol de São Jozé*, seventy-five-year-old Rosa Moreira de Carvalho, inscribed as a single *Mina forra*, headed a large and complex household.[12] A total of thirty-seven slaves resided there, constituting a large holding by mineiro standards. Rosa was part of a group of less than three percent of parish slaveholders possessing thirty-one or more bondsmen, a privilege that obtained for only three Sãojoseense women whose chattel was not jointly owned along with a spouse.[13] In fact, twenty-one of the enslaved listed as part of Rosa Moreira de Carvalho's household actually belonged to her, another fourteen were held by her single *Parda* daughters, and two were under Rosa's temporary employment.[14]

11 Centro de Documentação, Arquidiocese de São João del Rei, Arquivo Paroquial de Santo Antônio de São José do Rio das Mortes (APSASJRM), "Livros de Batismo, Livros de Casamento, Livros de Óbito" (Manuscript); Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de Tiradentes, "Rol dos Confessados desta Freguesia de Santo Antonio de São Jozé do Rio das Mortes neste prezente anno de 1795" (Manuscript); Arquivo Público Mineiro, Seção Provincial, "Listas nominativas da década de 1830," organized by the Núcleo de Pesquisa em História Econômica e Demográfica do Centro de Desenvolvimento e Planejamento Regional/Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, "Listas de 1831 e Listas de 1838" (Manuscript). Escritório Técnico do Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico-São João del Rei (ETIPHAN-SJR) (Manuscript); Arquivo Municipal de Tiradentes (AMT), "Fundo Câmara de São José" (Manuscript); Arquivo Eclesiástico do Arquidiocese de Mariana (AEAM), "Processos matrimoniais/dispensas" (Manuscript).

12 Mina was a generic reference to West African origin that was widely used in Minas Gerais during the eighteenth century and beyond. Forra referred to Rosa's condition as manumitted.

13 Both the other two women were white widows. Dona Ana Maria da Conceição possessed a total of forty-five bondsmen, while Rosa Maria Bernardes de Almeida Lara and her daughter-in-law held a total of thirty-six slaves.

14 The term "*Pardo*/*Parda*" was a reference to mixed origin, often applied, as was the case here, to those of African/European ancestry, but it could cover a wide range of mixtures, origins, colors, and social positions.

How did an African freedwoman and her family manage to amass an impressively large slaveholding? The findings point to hers as a "typical" case of slave women who profited in a number of ways through their liaisons with free men, often whites, of varying degrees of wealth. Examples of African and Afro-descendant women who gained manumission and the freedom of their children, upward social mobility, and financial security through relationships maintained with men of social position have become prominent in studies of the Brazilian slave society.[15] In 1755, described as a Mina forra, Rosa baptized her youngest, namesake daughter.[16] Although the infant Rosa was considered *natural*, i.e. born out of wedlock, her father was listed as Antônio Moreira de Carvalho.[17] This native of Lisbon, although never formally married to the African Rosa, openly assumed the paternity of the seven children he fathered with her.[18] The couple began having children around 1740, when Rosa Moreira de Carvalho probably gained her freedom. Antônio Moreira de Carvalho likely began giving slaves as presents to his consort around this same time. Rosa, for example, appeared as the owner of an adult Mina whose 1752 baptismal act was among the earliest of those surviving in the parish registers.[19]

The São José parish registers leave no room for doubt that Moreira de Carvalho was a major slaveholder. From 1753 to 1782 he and his estate figured as the owners of no fewer than 109 bondspersons buried in São José.[20] During roughly the same period (1753–1780) only twelve slave infants born to Moreira de Carvalho or his estate were

15 Furtado, *Chica da Silva*; Eduardo França Paiva, *Escravos e libertos nas Minas Gerais do século XVIII* (São Paulo: Annablume, 1995), and Eduardo França Paiva, *Escravidão e universo cultural na colônia – Minas Gerais, 1716–1789* (Belo Horizonte: Editora da UFMF, 2001); Mariana R.L. Dantas, "Pai branco, mãe negra, filho pardo: formação familiar e mobilidade social na Comarca do Rio das Velhas," in *História da família no Brasil (séculos XVIII e XIX e XX): novas analises e perspectivas*, ed. Douglas Cole Libby et al. (Belo Horizonte: Fino Traço, 2015): 99–127; Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva, *História da família no Brasil colonial* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1998): 87–94.

16 APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fl. 54.

17 At least in the São José parish registers it was not common for the father to be named in these circumstances. The "natural" label was construed as indicating that, although the parents were not joined in Church-sanctioned matrimony, no impediments existed for such a union to take place. When the parents did marry later their children were automatically considered legitimized.

18 In his burial record Antônio Moreira de Carvalho was identified as a native of Campo Grande parish in Lisbon, although neither his age nor his marital status were given. APSASJRM *Livro 80*, fl. 28v. Manuscript.

19 APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fl. 19. Manuscript.

20 APSASJRM, *Livro 76*, fls. illegible, illegible, 119, 121v, 124v, 126, 128; *Livro 77*, fls. 55, 79v, 91, 107 (double entry), 121.155v, 166, 168, 169, 169v (triple entry), 170, 171, 173v, 187v, 194, 194v, 195 (double entry), 203v, 213v; *Livro 78*, fls.218v, 220v, 222, 223, 227, 226v, 234v, 234v, 235, 240v, 242v, 264v, 2894v, 307v, 308, 308v, 364 (double entry), 382, 384, 384v, 385, 394v, 396, 423, 407, 444; *Livro79*, fls.454, 465, 468, 529; *Livro 80*, fls.illegible, 13v, 14 (double entry), 19v, 23, 24, 24v, 30, 39, 42, 42v (double entry) 43, 46, 47, 52 (double entry), 54, 63v, 77, 80, 80v, 87v, 88, 90v, 91v, 92v, 107, 107v, 110, 111, 117, 129v, 132, 136v, 143, 143v, 145v, 150v, 157v, 158, 158v, 170, 178, 180. Manuscript. Given that burial registers were notoriously incomplete, these 109 entries mean that Moreira de Carvalho's slaveholding was truly enormous by

baptized.[21] Consequently, this was hardly a self-reproductive slave force and, indeed, it could not have been. Only seven of the burials referred to women – two of whom were infants. Despite this gender imbalance clearly resulting from Moreira de Carvalho's heavy dependence upon the slave trade in order to build up and often restock his large holding, the evidence suggests that the profile of his consort's holding was quite distinct and characterized by a degree of natural increase.

The 1795 *Rol de São Jozé* shows that Rosa Moreira de Carvalho was the owner of three West African Minas, five West Central Africans (*Angolas* and *Benguelas*), and thirteen native-born *Crioulos* or *Cabras*, nine of whom were children or young adults of up to twenty-five years of age.[22] This make up of Rosa's holding in which Africans adults were a minority suggests that she and her slave force were part of a generalized late eighteenth-century trend in Minas Gerais that saw dependency upon the transatlantic slave trade diminish, while the reproductive capacity of the slave population increasingly contributed to overall demographic growth.[23] Parish registers recorded Rosa as the owner of two baptized African adults in the 1750s and of five mothers giving birth to twelve infants who received the sacrament between 1756 and 1784.[24] Of those twelve infants, eight appeared in the *Rol de São Jozé*. The indications are that Rosa encouraged family formation among her slaves, although only two of the mothers were formally married when baptizing four of the infants.

Most of Rosa's slave infants counted upon slaves and freedmen/freedwomen as godparents, but, in 1784, when the Crioula Pascoa baptized the last of seven children, Rosa's Parda daughter Ana Moreira stood as godmother.[25] Three decades earlier,

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the standards of Minas Gerais. Apparently, the settlement of his estate was a prolonged process since it was considered the rightful owner of chattel buried between 1763 and 1782.

21 APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fls. 13, 34, 38, 45, 84, 92, 167, 173, 203, 211, 460v; *Livro 8*, fl. 14v. Manuscript.

22 "Angola" was a general reference to slaves embarked at Luanda, while "Benguela" was a generic term for captives sold to slavers at the southern Angolan port of the same name. Crioulo/Crioula was a label normally used to designate native born blacks whether parental origins were African, native, or both. The actual purity of African ancestry implied by the term was doubtless questionable in many cases, however. "Cabra" was an ambiguous description that, in strictly chromatic terms, indicated those of mixed black and mulatto origins. In the context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Minas, the Cabra designation signaled mixtures that are not easily defined.

23 There are indications that imports of Africans fell to very low levels from roughly 1780 to 1812, in many ways contributing to a tendency toward natural increase. Douglas Cole Libby, "O tráfico negreiro internacional e a demografia escrava nas Minas Gerais: um século e meio de oscilações," in *Sons, formas, cores e movimentos na modernidade atlântica. Europa, Américas e África*, ed. Júnia Ferreira Furtado (São Paulo: Annablume, 2008): 457–80.

24 APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fls. 19, 79, 85, 115, 245, 286, 289, 380, 431 486v, 586; *Livro 8*, fls.102, 140, 129; *Livro 9*, fls.498–498v, 566. Manuscript. These last two baptismal acts refer to infants born in 1796 and 1797, the latter belonging to Rosa's estate.

25 APSASJRM, *Livro 8*, fl. 129. The baptismal register shows that Pascoa, who in the Rol de São Jozé was inscribed as 43 years of age, gave birth to her first child in 1769 when she was married to the Crioulo José, also a slave belonging to Rosa Moreira de Carvalho. In 1773 and 1775 the couple went on

when Rosa baptized the adult Mina Ignácia, the godfather was Manoel Fernandes dos Santos who appeared in the *Rol de São Jozé* as the spouse of Victoriana Moreira Rosa, Rosa's oldest daughter[26] So, notwithstanding longstanding historiographical consensus claiming that owners and their families systematically avoided standing as godparents for children born into their holdings, the evidence here shows that members of slave owning families could, at least occasionally, stand as sponsors for infant family slaves.[27] All five of Rosa's daughters appearing in the *Rol de de São Jozé* were either slave holders in their own right or co-owners along with their husbands. In 1795 these women held some twenty-nine bondspersons – seventeen enslaved Africans and twelve native born captives. From 1764 to 1803 Rosa's daughters appeared in twenty-one baptismal acts in which their slave women figured as mothers.[28] This group of slave mothers and children would span three generations by 1803, so a pattern of natural increase can be discerned here, although slaveholding family members apparently did not figure as godparents in any of the respective baptismal entries, nor did any manumissions turn up in the sources. Unfortunately, members of the third generation – Rosa Moreira de Carvalho's grandchildren – simply do not appear as adults in the São-joseense parish registers, nor in those of neighboring São João del Rei, so there is no way of knowing how they and their slaveholdings fared as the local slave society progressed toward the termination of the international slave trade in 1850 and final emancipation in 1888. They and their slaves may have been part of a general, nineteenth-century southwesterly migration into other parts of the Comarca do Rio das Mortes and the so-called West of São Paulo (Oeste Paulista), but that is mere speculation.[29]

On the other hand, the descendants of José Fernandes da Silva and Quitéria Moreira de Carvalho have been much easier to trace and, indeed, I halted the genealogical reconstitutions on reaching the seventh generation that spans the turn of the nineteenth

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to have two additional children. However, from 1778 to 1784 Pascoa – designated neither as a widow nor as married – produced four more children. Sure enough, in June of 1775, José, clearly identified as the husband of Pascoa (and both as slaves belonging to Rosa), was buried in the churchyard of the parish Mother Church. APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fls. 286, 431, 486v, 586; *Livro 8*, fls.14v, 79; *Livro 79*, fl. 496. Manuscript.

26 APSASJRM *Livro 7*, fl. 19. Manuscript.

27 Gudman and Schwartz's 1984 essay on the subject created a consensus that has seldom been questioned. Stephen Gudman and Stuart B. Schwartz, "Cleansing Original Sin: Godparenthood and the Baptism of Slaves in Eighteenth-Century Bahia," in *Kinship Ideology and Practice in Latin America*, ed. Raymond T. Smith (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984): 35–58. It perhaps bears noting here that, without considerable efforts at family reconstitution, these Moreira de Carvalho family members/godparents would not likely have been identified.

28 APSASJRM *Livro 7*, fls. 68, 155, 196, 250, 285, 288, 352, 380, 439, 497; *Livro 8*, fls. 46, 147, 259; *Livro 9*, fls. 388, 399v, 491v–92, 493, 567, 573v; *Livro 10*, fls. 104, 153. Manuscript.

29 See, for example, Maísa Faleiras da Cunha, "Estudo das migrações internas no norte de São Paulo, primeira metade dos Oitocentos," *Anais do V Simpósio Nacional de História da População (Caldas Novas GO)* (Belo Horizonte: ABEP, 2013): 1–19.

century. José and Quitéria were West African, Mina slaves who probably arrived in São José sometime around 1740. Quitéria belonged to none other than Antônio Moreira de Carvalho, while it is not certain who Jose's owner may have been. The fact that they belonged to separate owners contributed to the couple's inability to marry in the Church until both were manumitted sometime between 1757 and 1762. From sometime around 1748 Quitéria and José maintained a consensual union. Their son Severino was inscribed in the 1795 *Rol de São Jozé* as forty-seven years of age and, therefore, would have been born in 1748.[30] In 1754 and 1756 a "single" Quitéria, still a slave belonging to Antônio Moreira de Carvalho, baptized her daughters Ana and Antônia.[31] In June of 1759, however, Quitéria was listed as a single freedwoman when baptizing her second son, Joaquim [Moreira da Silva]. In fact, little Joaquim's godmother was Rosa Moreira de Carvalho, suggesting a certain degree of intimacy between Quitéria and the consort of her former owner.[32] In January of 1764 the formally married, freed couple José Fernandes da Silva and Quitéria Moreira de Carvalho baptized an infant boy named for his father.[33] No sources relating to their respective manumission processes were found, but the fact that Quitéria and José only entered into Church-sanctioned matrimony after gaining their freedom is suggestive of how difficult formal marriage was for slaves in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Brazil.

I strongly suspect that Quitéria engaged in vending wares in the town of São José and that José practiced a trade, although no definite evidence backs up my postulations here. What is known is that, by way of exchange for two newly arrived Africans, Quitéria purchased the freedom of her daughters Antônia and Ana in 1767 and 1769, respectively.[34] At least formally, these manumissions were paid for only by Quitéria, perhaps meaning that they had been the object of previous negotiations with Antônio Moreira de Carvalho himself or with the executor of his estate. In 1775, however, José and Quitéria purchased their son Severino, then about 27 years old, and immediately registered his letter of freedom.[35] How the couple came up with the money necessary for effecting these manumissions remains unclear; certainly all freed family members worked hard to achieve that goal. Earlier, in 1772, José figured as the owner of Josefa Mina when she baptized her daughter Tereza.[36] So, even before obtaining Severino's freedom the couple had begun investing in slaveholding as a way of assuring their ability to accumulate the resources necessary for acquiring Severino and to improve

30 Very few parish registers dated earlier than 1752 have survived.

31 APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fls. 34, 92. Manuscript. No mention was made of their father, José, in these registers.

32 APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fl. 131. Manuscript.

33 APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fl. 205. Manuscript.

34 ETIPHAN-SJR, São José, *Livro de notas 1773–1775*, fls. 10–11. Manuscript. The notarization of these two letters of freedom dated from 1774.

35 ETIPHAN-SJR, São José, *Livro de notas 1773–1775*, fl. 126. Manuscript.

36 APSASJRM, Livro 7, fl. 387. Manuscript.

the family's level of material comfort. In 1779 José again appeared as the owner of a slave mother, Joana Angola, when she baptized her son Joaquim.[37] And, in 1783 Josefa gave birth to another daughter, Francisca.[38] By the 1780s, then, the Moreira da Silvas were firmly established as small slave holders. The transition of this family from slavery to liberty, then to the status of slaveholders was not linear. It constitutes a complicated story that mirrors the complexity of Minas slave society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As will be seen, part of that complexity was the incessant intermingling of owner and slave families.

When the *Rol de São Jozé* was elaborated José Fernandes da Silva was dead and Quitéria was inscribed as a widowed, seventy-five-year-old Mina freedwoman who headed a household. The latter included her Crioulo bachelor son Severino, 47, the Angola slave Joana, 34, the Crioulo Joaquim, 14, Pedro Benguela, 45, and the Mina *quartada* Josefa, 45. Note that Joana and her son Joaquim continued as slaves belonging to Quitéria. Josefa Mina, on the other hand, was in the process of purchasing her freedom as the *quartada* label indicates, but her daughters were absent from Quitéria's domicile. In the household of Pedro da Silva Lourenço and Ana Moreira da Silva – Quitéria's oldest daughter – among the three family slaves was the Crioula Tereza, 22. In re-examining the 1772 baptismal entry of the Mina Josefa's first daughter, it turns out that Tereza's godmother was Ana Moreira, Crioula – undoubtedly the daughter of owners José and Quitéria.[39] So, according to the *Rol de São Jozé*, Tereza belonged to her godmother and the latter's husband. It thus comes as no surprise that in 1795 Josefa's youngest daughter, Francisca, lived with Joaquim Moreira da Silva and Genoveva Maria de Santana – the former José and Quitéria's son – and that this couple – at the time engaged to be married – had sponsored Francisca when she was baptized in 1783.[40] It is remarkable the degree to which the lives of members of slaveholding families were intermingled with the lives of their slaves who were also organized into families, even though no formal marriages were recorded among the Moreira da Silva chattel. At the same time, it is not difficult to imagine that everyone was part of a single family, one that was not characterized, however, by the patriarchal and aristocratic traits championed by Gilberto Freyre.[41] This wider family may have reflected African cultural patterns, but that must remain a mere hypothesis for now.[42]

37 APSASJRM, Livro 7, fl. 595. Manuscript.

38 APSASJRM, Livro 8, fl. 103. Manuscript.

39 APSASJRM, Livro 7, fl. 387. Manuscript.

40 APSASJRM, Livro 7, fl. 595. Manuscript.

41 Gilberto Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala*, 20th ed. (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1980).

42 As Sweet points out in a recent article, African concepts of families could reach far beyond the realms of biological or spiritual delimitations prevalent in European oriented cultures. Moreover, such African family grouping could include both owners and their slaves. James H. Sweet, "Defying Social Death: The Multiple Configurations of African Slave Family in the Atlantic World," *William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2013): 251–72.

Let us return for a moment to Quitéria Moreira de Carvalho's household as depicted in the *Rol de São Jozé*. As just seen, her slaveholding was marked by family formation, although there is no way of knowing if the African adult male who belonged to Quitéria in 1795 was part of one of the slave families. Thanks to slave family formation, resultant natural increase, and the intimacy of relations linking owner and slave families this African ex-slave appears to have enjoyed a good measure of material comfort as she reached her old age. Quitéria was surrounded by a family that included her children, a daughter in law, two sons in law, grandchildren – and, before long, great grandchildren – as well as by bondspeople who had been with her for decades and who very likely were considered part of a wider family. Three of José and Quitéria's children appeared in the sources as married adults and as small slaveholders.[43] The three couples were duly tallied in the 1795 *Rol de São Jozé*. Altogether, they held eight bondsmen – five Africans and three Crioulas.[44] From 1790 to 1799 these couples baptized four slave infants and at least half of the respective sponsors at the baptismal font were members of the Moreira da Silva or affine families.[45] Again, here is important evidence that spiritual kinship connected slave owning families and their chattel in ways that remain unexpected and undetected in current scholarship on Brazilian slavery. Obviously, one cannot generalize on the basis of these examples, but it does appear that during the so-called golden age of small holdings there were significant links of intimacy among slaves and owners with a slave background or ancestry.

Sources pertaining to a grandson and two granddaughters of Quitéria and José Fernandes continue to confirm the presence of slave families among the three respective holdings, although no signs of fictive kinship through godparenthood turn up. For example, in 1804 granddaughter Esméria Martins dos Passos and her husband João Patrício Lopes baptized Gervásio, the son of their *Ganguela* slave Juliana.[46] In the event, the godparents do not appear to have been in any way related to the owners. When this baptism took place Esméria was engaged in some kind of commercial activity according to local records, while later records reveal that João Patrício was both a tailor and held minor positions in municipal government.[47] In 1802, 1805, 1806, and

43 Ana and Antônia were wedded in a period for which no marriage registers have survived. Joaquim Moreira da Silva married Genoveva Maria Santana in 1786. As a widower, Joaquim would remarry in 1812. APSASJRM, *Livro 25*, fls. 25, 291. Manuscript.

44 In 1790 the Alferes Joaquim Martins de Sousa and Antônia Moreira da Silva baptized Alexandre, the son of their Angola slave Maria. Neither appeared in the *Rol*, but the boy still would not have been confessing in 1795. At any rate, it is possible that they owned four, rather than three slaves in 1795. APSASJRM, *Livro 8*, fl. 319. Manuscript.

45 APSASJRM, *Livro 8*, fl. 319; *Livro 9*, fls.446, 530v, 592v–593. Manuscript.

46 APSASJRM, *Livro 10*, fl. 141. Manuscript. "Ganguela" was a term used to describe the origin of certain slaves coming from the interior of West Central Africa.

47 Arquivo Municipal de Tiradentes [AMT], Fundo Câmara da Vila de São José, Listas de Vendas, *Livro 1*, fls. 1v., 2, 2v., 3, 3v., 4, 4v., 5, 5v, Lançamentos de Fianças, Autos e Contratos e Arrematações,

1808 Esméria gave birth first to a daughter and then to three sons.[48] Whatever other domestic tasks she may have performed, it seems inevitable that Juliana, the West Central African in question, served as wet nurse to her owners' children. That means wet nurses were not a monopoly of the affluent, but appeared in the households of modest slaveholding couples such as João Patrício and Esméria.[49] It also implies a fundamental deepening of interfamily relations in the context of small slaveholdings. This third generation Crioulo couple figures in sources right up to the mid nineteenth century, but never again as slaveholders

Although no sources have come to light as to his preparation for the priesthood, José and Quitéria's grandson and Esméria's brother, Manoel Martins Coimbra, began appearing as a priest in the São José parish registers in the mid-1820s. In 1831 Coadjutor Manoel figured as the head of a complex household.[50] Residing with the priest were his sister Quitéria Maria de Sousa and his niece, Bárbara Patrícia Lopes (daughter of João Patrício and Esméria).[51] Seven slaves, four Crioulos and three Africans, comprised the household slave force. As coadjutor Manoel was obliged to travel throughout the far-flung parish of São José and it appears that spinster Quitéria Maria de Sousa (listed as forty-six years of age in 1831) was the principal administrator of their joint household. Most of the slaves probably were rented out to perform diverse services within the confines of the town of São José or on nearby farms.[52] Father Manoel died in November of 1832 and his estate papers clarify a number of things about his properties and those of his sister (and namesake of grandmother Quitéria Moreira de Carvalho).[53] Manoel was the owner of five slaves figuring in the nominal tally: a formally married Crioulo couple in their thirties, a 42 year old Crioulo carpenter given to over imbibing, a twenty-eight year old Congo, and a Crioulo boy of ten.[54]

Livro 1, fls. 2, 3, 4, 6, 11v., 12, 13v., 16v., 19, 20v., 22v., 24. Manuscript; "Listas de 1831" and "Listas de 1838." Manuscript.

48 APSASJRM, *Livro 10*, fls. 48, 162, 229, 281. Manuscript.

49 The practice of wet nursing is only now beginning to attract the attention of scholars in Brazil. Mariana de Aguiar Ferreira Muaze, "Maternidade silenciada: amas de leite no Brasil escravista, século XIX," in *Do tráfico ao pós abolição: trabalho compulsório e livre e a luta por direitos sociais no Brasil*, ed. Regina Célia Xavier and Helen Osório (São Leopoldo: Oikos, 2018): 360–91.

50 *Lista de 1831*. The rank of coadjutor was equivalent to adjunct to the sitting parish priest.

51 Bárbara's story is a complicated one. She never formally married, but her relationship with a member of the local white elite resulted in the birth of eight children who would perpetuate a burgeoning Pardo branch of the Moreira da Silva family.

52 For studies on urban slavery and urban slave society in Brazil see: Mariana L.R. Dantas, *Black Townsmen: Urban Slavery and Freedom in the Eighteenth-Century Americas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 79–80; Frank, *Dutra's World*: 47–50; Ian Read, *The Hierarchies of Slavery in Santos, Brazil, 1822–1888* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012): 106–13.

53 APSASJRM, *Livro 84*, fl. 68v. ETIPHAN-SJR, São José, Cartório JO, *Caixa 512*, fls 6–7. Manuscript.

54 As it turned out this boy was the son of Efigênia, the only female slave belonging to Father Manoel. She was married to Antônio Crioulo, but the boy, Victoriano was never identified as his son. Having finally obtained his freedom, Victoriano was married in 1854. In the marriage register Victoriano

Thus, the other two African slaves, Manoel, 30, and Maria, 20, belonged to Quitéria Maria de Sousa. Sisters Quitéria and Esméria were to benefit from the services of the four of the priest's slaves who were manumitted contingent upon varying years of service to the heirs. The problematic carpenter was willed only to Quitéria, along with Manoel's half of their jointly owned townhouse.

By the 1838 nominal tally, of the conditionally freed slaves, only young Victoriano remained in the service of spinster Quitéria (and Esméria). Quitéria's two African slaves were also still listed as part of the household.[55] In 1842 Quitéria's Maria gave birth to a daughter baptized as Felipa.[56] When their owner died in 1852, Maria and Felipa were granted their freedom conditional to many years of service to Bárbara Patrícia, the niece who, along with a veritable raft of her children, still lived with her aunt in the Três Cantos townhouse.[57] The townhouse itself was left to various of Quitéria's great nieces and great nephews, although it was to remain under the tutelage of Bárbara Patrícia until all of them had come of age. Fourth generation José Vieira – one of Bárbara Patrícia's three brothers – married a second cousin named Maria Josefa and the couple went on to have three children from 1830 to 1834.[58] In the *Lista de 1831* José was described as a goldsmith and Maria Josefa as a seamstress, so theirs was a family of modest means. Nevertheless, they owned a slave, the African Catharina, who gave birth to a boy in 1833.[59] The 1838 nominal tally included the widower José, his three children, and the slave mother and son. Once again, it seems almost inevitable that Catharina served as a wet nurse to one or two of her owners' children, thus binding the two families together in a way at least as complex as that found in the classically paternalistic culture of the Old South, complete with its mammies and missuses.[60]

Except for Bárbara Patrícia's tutelage of her aunt's former slaves, this is the final chapter of the Moreira da Silva family slaveholdings – fittingly so, since it is widely thought the number of urban holdings dwindled after the extinction of the international slave trade in 1850. What stands out the most in the case of the Moreira da Silvas is the constant presence of slave families – mostly informal – despite the diminutive size of the holdings and the implications these dimensions had for social relations within households, the extended family, and the local community. Generally speaking,

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Martins Coimbra was inscribed as the natural son of Efigênia, forra, and clearly identified as the former slave of Manoel Martins Coimbra. APSASJRM, *Livro 27*, fl. 164. Manuscript.

55 Victoriano's mother Efigênia had obtained her freedom by then, but her husband Antônio must have passed away since his conditional service period was stipulated as ten years.

56 APSASJRM, *Livro 14*, fl. 230. Manuscript.

57 ETIPHAN-SJR, São José, *Testamento 138*, 1852; Cartório JO, *Caixa 271*, 1855. Manuscript.

58 APSASJRM, *Livro 14*, fl. 9v; *Livro 15*, fls. 55, 111v; *Livro 27*, fl. 7. Manuscript.

59 APSASJRM, *Livro 14*, fl. 143v. Manuscript.

60 For example, Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1976): 113–158; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1988): especially chapters 1, 2, and 3.

the reconstitution of trajectories of Afro-Brazilian families is anything but an easy task, less so still when members remained enslaved. The Moreira da Silvas are an unusual exception to that rule. Just the same, a few outlines emerge from the São José sources and they tend to corroborate findings pointing to female owners' penchant for cultivating family formation among their slaves and, thus, the complex intertwining of the lives of both bondspeople and slave holders.

For example, although nothing is known about her past, the single Parda, Ana Mendes Ribeira, 45, appears in the *Rol de São José* as the owner of Mariana, Angola, 42, and of two Cabras: Tereza, 15 and Francisca 12. Two foundlings, a white boy of eleven and a white girl of seven, also resided in Ana's household and it is certain that she received payment from the local council for caring for the two of them. No baptismal entry referring to Tereza has turned up, but there is an entry registering the 1783 baptism of Francisca, daughter of the Angola slave Mariana.[61] On the assumption that the foundling boy was taken in by Ana Mendes Ribeira shortly after his birth, it seems very likely that he was breast fed by Mariana Angola. The same is probably true for the foundling girl, but there is, of course, no evidence to back up such speculation. Patterns already discerned are repeated here: slave women serving as wet nurses and the perpetuation of a slave family. As to the latter, it should be noted that in 1802 the Cabra slave Tereza gave birth to a Pardo boy, meaning that Ana Mendes Ribeira's tiny slave holding stretched out over three generations.[62] No further traces of Ana or her bondspeople have been found so there is no way of knowing what sort of continuity, if any, may have marked the trajectory of this slave family, much less what may have been the fate of the two foundlings. One can only wonder about the multifarious ties of affection that may well have characterized the complex household depicted in the *Rol de São Jozé* and the parish registers.

Another "single" Parda figuring in the *Rol* as head of a household was Ana Maria de Jesus, 41 years of age. Four slaves were also listed: Ana, Cabra, 20, Izabel, Crioula, 19, Miguel, Congo, 20, and Rosa, Crioula, 4. In fact, Ana Maria's slave holding may well have been almost double the size apparent in the *Rol*. In 1789 Ana Cabra gave birth to twins and in 1791 baptized a daughter.[63] Had they survived to 1795 these children – not having reached seven years of age – would not have been counted as confessing parishioners. The respective baptismal entries reveal that these children were sponsored by Ana Maria de Jesus' son, João Rodrigues, and by Ana Maria herself. These ties of spiritual kinship established at the baptismal font forcefully denote the strength of the bonds that united the two families – owner and slave. In 1797 and 1799 Ana Cabra gave birth to two more children and, once again, Ana Maria de Jesus stood as godmother at both baptisms, although available sources do not allow for identifying the respective

61 APSASJRM, *Livro 8*, fl. 87. Manuscript.

62 APSASJRM, *Livro 10*, fl. 94v. Manuscript.

63 APSASJRM, *Livro 8*, fl. 252 (entrada dupla); *Livro 9*, fl. 324. Manuscript.

godfathers as family members or not.[64] More significant still, both infants were declared as liberated from the bonds of slavery, although the baptismal entries do not clarify whether the manumissions were gratuitous, contingent upon future services or purchased. In 1803 Izabel Crioula baptized her daughter Senhorinha.[65] Yet again owner Ana Maria de Jesus served as godmother while the godfather appears not to have been her relative. This time, however, the entry stipulated that "the anointed is granted conditional freedom from her mistress under the obligation to serve her while she lives." It is quite probable that the previous two manumissions were subject to the same conditions as that of Senhorinha. Thus, at the same time that Ana Maria prized her slave family and surely cultivated affection for the children, the perpetuation of her holding by way of family formation served as a guarantee that she could count upon her bondspeople to fulfill her needs right up to the end of her life. In 1804 and 1806 Ana Cabra gave birth to two more children. The 1804 entry makes no mention of godparents and in that of 1806 only the godfather was named (apparently meaning that their owner did not sponsor either of these infants). Nothing referring to manumission appeared in the 1804 entry, but that of 1806 confirmed the liberation of little Francisco, once again contingent upon service during the rest of Ana Maria's lifetime.[66] Finally, in 1819 Senhorinha gave birth to a daughter who, despite the conditional freedom of her mother, appeared within the format of the baptismal entry as a slave.[67] While it is possible that the presiding priest – and, by extension, the local community – considered the freedom of this slave infant as self-evident in light of the conditional manumission of her mother, it is more likely that she simply remained in bondage. Children born to mothers who were still serving their masters as a condition for future liberation or were in the process of purchasing their freedom were customarily deemed to have been born into slavery.[68] At any rate, the godparents appearing in this final baptismal act do not appear to have been related to Ana Maria de Jesus. The complexity of this partial reconstitution of Ana Maria's household is remarkable at the same time that it suggests the existence of longstanding practices among female owners of color that included the encouragement of family formation, medium and long-term perpetuation of slaveholdings and grants of freedom for selected slave family members. In adhering to these traditions, women such as Ana Maria could be assured of a lasting level of material and emotional comfort, as well as some measure of prestige within the local community.

64 APSASJRM, *Livro 9*, fls. 613v, 618v. Manuscript.

65 APSASJRM, *Livro 10*, fl. 103v. Manuscript.

66 APSASJRM, *Livro 10*, fls. 138, 205. Manuscript.

67 APSASJRM, *Livro 12*, fl. 106. Manuscript. By examining only this baptismal entry, one would conclude that both mother and daughter were slaves since no mention was made of Senhorinha's conditional manumission.

68 Márcio de Sousa Soares, *A remissão do cativeiro: a dádiva da alforria e o governo dos escravos nas Campos dos Goitacases, c. 1750–c. 1830* (Rio de Janeiro: Apicuri, 2009): 144–45.

According to the *Rol de São Jozé*, in 1795 the Parda widow Maria Alves Fontes, 45, headed a household that, at this point, might be thought of as typical. Two sons lived with their widowed mother as did seven slaves: three Angola men, a Mina woman, and three native born bondspeople. Going back to 1768, the baptismal entries relative to the three Crioulo/Cabra slaves reveal that the mother of two of them was the Mina female inscribed in the *Rol*.[69] The youngest of the native slaves, Margarida, was born in 1772. In 1797, 1804, and 1807, still as a slave belonging to Maria Alves Fontes, Margarida baptized two daughters and a son.[70] For the next twenty years the sources tell us nothing about the widowed Parda or her bondspeople, but in 1829 when she was thought to have been 90 years of age Maria Alves Fontes was buried at the São João Evangelista chapel, located in the town of São José.[71] In 1831 the Pardo cobbler, Joaquim Gomes Carvalho, Maria Alves Fontes' youngest son, resided in São José with his Crioula wife, a granddaughter, and three native born slaves, among them Maria Cabra, almost certainly Margarida's youngest child, baptized in 1807.[72] So, during a period of some sixty years, at least two generations of owners of slave ancestry lived side by side with three generations of slaves. Once again, the very survival of small holdings would seem to have depended upon the cultivation of multigenerational slave families.

The Parda freedwoman Joana de Sá first turns up in the parish registers in 1754 when baptizing a son along with her husband, André Rodrigues de Oliveira.[73] Between 1757 and 1776 the couple would baptize another nine children.[74] From 1763 to 1777 ten slave infants, all born to "single" mothers and belonging to André Rodrigues de Oliveira (and Joana de Sá) were baptized in the Mother Church of São José.[75] From 1784 to 1795 another seven slave infants were baptized, all of them born to "single" mothers belonging to the widow Joana de Sá.[76] All of these seven children were second-generation Crioulos whose mothers had been baptized in 1763, 1766, and 1773. Moreover, five Pardo children (from 18 to 33 years of age) also resided with their widowed mother in 1795. The *Rol* lists all of the widow's confessing slaves as natives and the baptismal entries for five of them survive in the parish registers. It should be recalled here that Joana de Sá's 1795 holding may well have included another five slave children born between

69 APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fls. 263, 291, 389. Manuscript.
70 APSASJRM, *Livro 9*, fl. 544v; *Livro 10*, fls. 140, 246. Manuscript.
71 APSASJRM, *Livro 84*, fl. 26. Manuscript.
72 "Listas de 1831."
73 APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fl. 37. Manuscript.
74 APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fls. 90, 135, 162, 181, 216, 268, 311, 440, 508. Manuscript.
75 APSASJRM, *Livro 7*, fls. 178, 228 (double entry – twins), 285, 433, 495 496, 577v, 588, 598v. Manuscript.
76 APSASJRM, *Livro 8*, fls. 128, 255v; *Livro 9*, fls. 31, 378v, 388v, 460, 461v. Manuscript. Rodrigues de Oliveira died in 1781. APSASJRM, *Livro 80*, fl. 171v. Manuscript.

1789 and 1795 and, therefore, not old enough to be inscribed in the *Rol*.[77] Thus far it has not been possible to trace any of the children of André Rodrigues de Oliveira and Joana de Sá and it is quite likely that following the death of their mother some of them may have left the region to establish families and make a living. It is perfectly reasonable to suppose that some of the second- and third-generation slaves migrated along with their new owners. Yet again, this partial reconstitution of a colored freedwoman's household and its families affords us a vivid example of how difficult it is to separate owner and slave families or to separate the very survival of slavery, especially that of small holdings, from the institution of the family.

As suggested earlier, the preceding examples of slave ownership among African freedwomen and women of African descent are part of a larger picture. The nominal list census material show, for example, that widows and women designated as unwed accounted for roughly a fifth of all slaveholders in 1795 and 1831 (19.9 percent and 23 percent respectively). The 1795 *Rol de São Jozé* permits a breakdown of household heads according to how they were labelled as to color or origin and the results are very much relevant for present purposes. Women of color accounted for a majority of slave owning widows – 61 out of 108 – and for virtually all "single" women slaveholders – a total of fifty-nine. So, in focusing on women slaveholders of color, the emphasis does not rest on some exotic or minor aspect of slave ownership in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. That is especially true given the weight of smallholdings – typical among female owners – in the Minas slave society.[78]

From the end of the eighteenth century onward a demographic transition was taking place in Minas Gerais that would result in the longstanding majority of Africans in the slave population giving way to an increasing predominance of native born bondspeople.[79] In São José Africans made up three fifths of the slave force tallied in the 1795 *Rol*, but the 1831 nominal lists reveal a reversal of positions with natives corresponding to slightly more than 60 percent of all bondspeople. These census sources also allow for a closer look at the distribution of slaveholding in 1795 and 1831 and at the changes taking place over time. The holdings of widows and "single" women started out the period with an almost even split between African and native-born slaves (51.3 percent/48.7 percent and 54,1 percent/45.9 percent respectively), but by 1831 natives far outnumbered imported slaves in the households of widows (65.5 percent/43.5 percent), while in those of unwed women the difference was still greater:

77 APSASJRM, *Livro 8*, fl. 255v; *Livro 9*, fls. 31, 378v, 388v, 460. Manuscript. A girl born in 1784 does not appear in the *Rol*, while a second girl, born in April of 1795 could not have been included in the *Rol*. APSASJRM, *Livro 8*, fl. 128; *Livro 9*, fl. 461v. Manuscript.

78 In the event, holdings of up to ten bondspeople accounted for 84.8 percent of parish slave properties in 1795 and 81 percent in 1831. The corresponding proportions of the overall parish slave force were 43.3 percent and 40.5 percent.

79 For an overview of this process see: Laird Bergad, *Slavery and the Demographic and Economic History of Minas Gerais, Brazil, 1720–1888* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

nearly four fifths of bondspeople were natives (79.7 percent).[80] In the aggregate, then, the gender factor did make a considerable difference: slaves belonging to independent women were increasingly more likely to have been native born, the fruit, as it were, of more intense natural increase. While such findings cannot be held to mean that women slave holders deliberately pursued natural increase, they do suggest that it was somehow encouraged by the interpersonal relations prevailing in female headed households, most especially those headed by Africans and women of African descent.

What conclusions can be drawn from the findings made thus far? Given that a general transition to a native-born majority in the slave population was taking place during the period in focus, it can hardly come as a surprise that slave families – loosely defined and mostly in the absence of known fathers – were a feature of all the slave holdings scrutinized above. What does stand out is the regularity of the emergence of new generations: in all six of the examined cases, as young adults, second-generation females gave birth to children, thus generating third-generation slaves. It seems plausible to suggest that the households involved here were imbued with a culture that consistently encouraged family formation – with or without the blessings of the Church. The intimacy and intermingling of slave and owner families must have created an ambience that reassured slave women that their children would remain with them or close by and safe at least until coming of age. It is hard to escape the notion of a wider family that embraced and enveloped in an atmosphere of stability and varying degrees of affection all generations of slaves and owners. The ties of spiritual kinship that turn up so often certainly attest to levels of intimacy that, to date, have remained largely undetected in the relevant literature. Such all-embracing, wider families were devoid of the patriarchal *pater familias*, key to understanding Freyre's great plantation family.[81] There were matriarchs in these São José families, but their authority seems to have stemmed from their skillful orchestration of traditions dictating that families circumstantially joined together within households needed to forge bonds of mutual cooperation in order to ensure their survival over time and generations. Grants of freedom could also figure as part of the complex relations that unfolded in these households.[82] When Quitéria Moreira de Carvalho consented to let her slave and fellow West African, Josefa [Moreira], purchase her freedom, both owner and slave may have been following

80 The corresponding proportions for slaves belonging to married couples were 62.3 percent African in 1795 and 44.6 percent in 1831. Slaves held by single men were 67.2 percent African in 1795 and 45,8 percent in 1831.

81 Freyre, *Casa grande e senzala.*

82 In all likelihood, other manumissions were granted by the owners investigated here but are not easily detected in the sources. See: Afonso de Alencastro Graça Filho and Douglas Libby "As diversas fontes documentais das alforrias: as alforrias batismais, as alforrias notariais, as alforrias em sisas e as testamentais em São João del Rey, séculos XVIII e XIX," in *História Social em Registros Paroquiais (Sul-Sudeste do Brasil, séculos XVIII–XIX)*, ed. Roberto Guedes and João Fragoso (Rio de Janeiro: Mauad X, 2016): 11–38.

traditions from their homeland. After all, aside from working many years for her mistress, in producing two daughters Josefa had enlarged the wider family. Her manumission – duly paid for – may have been considered a natural consequence, perhaps even a right, that mirrored Quitéria's own experience in obtaining her freedom and that of her family. It could be posited that, by the end of the eighteenth century, family formation among slaves and concessions of liberty were melded together in a culture that is perhaps most visible in households headed by women of color. The story of Ana Maria de Jesus, her slaves, and the manumissions she granted certainly suggest the existence of such a culture, including among those whose links to slavery and to Africa lay far in the past.

In the end, the complexity of these partial reconstitutions is much greater than can be conveyed in these few lines. The evidence, however, does point to just how adept women slaveholders of color were at balancing family formation, the perpetuation of holdings, spiritual kinship, and opportunities for freedom in order to ensure themselves an enduring level of material comfort, as well as fair level of respectability within the local community. Moreover, the focus on women slaveholders of African descent provided solid examples of how hard it is to separate owners and their slave families or to separate the survival of slavery, especially of small holdings, from the institution of the family.

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