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Course Code: AM420

Course of Study: Space Placement and Movement in Atlantic Slave Societies: Brazil, Cuba and the US, 1791 - 1888

Name of Designated Person authorising scanning: Christine Shipman
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resist so much and survive so many afflictions, as men of stone and of iron.

1.4. A Young Black Man Tells of His Enslavement in Africa and Shipment to Brazil about the Middle of the Nineteenth Century

The following document is one of the few in this book dictated or written by a slave or former slave. Its author, Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, a former Moslem turned Christian, was a native of a place called Zoogoo (Soulougou?) located south of the great bend of the Niger River, perhaps in the region now known as Upper Volta. A privileged attendant of the local king or "massa-sa-ba," Baquaqua was seized, he claimed, by envious persons, sold as a slave, and forced to travel, mostly on foot, to an unidentified coastal location. From this place, probably a Portuguese possession, Baquaqua was shipped to Brazil, arriving in Pernambuco some time in the 1840s. This account of his ordeal, which was told to a publisher named Samuel Moore, fortunately includes detailed impressions of every phase of the slave trade, from seizure in Africa to illegal sale in Brazil.

Baquaqua's story would not have been published had he not traveled to New York, still in the capacity of a slave, on a Brazilian merchant vessel. There, evidently with the aid of some sympathetic free blacks and other abolitionists, he was given his freedom and sent to Haiti. In Haiti he was aided by American Baptist missionaries, eventually returning to the United States where he studied for several years under Baptist tutelage. For Baquaqua's brief account of his experiences as a slave in Brazil, see Ann M. Pescatello, *The African in Latin America* (New York, 1975).

Source: *Biography of Mahommah G. Baquaqua, A Native of Zoogoo, in the Interior of Africa . . . Written and Revised from His Own Words, by Samuel Moore . . .* (Detroit, Geo. E. Pomeroy & Co., 1854), pp. 34-45.

☛ It has already been stated, that when any person gives evidence of gaining an eminent position in the country, he is immediately envied, and means are taken to put him out of the way; thus when it was seen that my situation was one of trust and confidence with the king, I was of course soon singled out as a fit object of vengeance by an envious class of my countrymen, decoyed away and sold into slavery. I went to the city one day to see my mother, when I was followed by music (the drum)

and called to by name, the drum beating to the measure of a song which had been composed apparently in honor of me, on account of, as I supposed, my elevated position with the king. This pleased me mightily, and I felt highly flattered, and was very liberal, and gave the people money and wine, they singing and gesturing the time. About a mile from my mother's house, where a strong drink called Bah-gee, was made out of the grain Har-nee; thither we repaired; and when I had drunk plentifully of Bah-gee, I was quite intoxicated, and they persuaded me to go with them to Zar-ach-o, about one mile from Zoogoo, to visit a strange king that I had never seen before. When we arrived there, the king made much of us all, and a great feast was prepared, and plenty of drink was given to me, indeed all appeared to drink very freely.

In the morning when I arose, I found that I was a prisoner, and my companions were all gone. Oh, horror! I then discovered that I had been betrayed into the hands of my enemies, and sold for a slave. Never shall I forget my feelings on that occasion; the thoughts of my poor mother harassed me very much, and the loss of my liberty and honorable position with the king grieved me very sorely. I lamented bitterly my folly in being so easily deceived. . . .

The man in whose company I found myself left by my cruel companions, was one, whose employment was to rid the country of all such as myself. The way he secured me, was after the following manner:—He took a limb of a tree that had two prongs, and shaped it so that it could cross the back of my neck; it was then fastened in front with an iron bolt; the stick was about six feet long.

Confined thus, I was marched forward towards the coast, to a place called Ar-oo-zo, which was a large village; there I found some friends, who felt very much about my position, but had no means of helping me. We only stayed there one night, as my master wanted to hurry on, as I had told him I would get away from him and go home. He then took me to a place called Chir-a-chur-ee, there I also had friends, but could not see them, as he kept very close watch over me, and he always stayed at places prepared for the purpose of keeping the slaves in security; there were holes in the walls in which my feet were placed (a kind of stocks). He then took me on to a place called Cham-mah (after passing through many strange places, the names of which I do not recollect) where he sold me. We had then been about four days from home and had traveled very rapidly. I remained only one day, when I was again sold to a woman, who took me to Efau; she had along with her some young men, into whose charge I was given, but she journeyed with us; we were several days going there; I suffered very much traveling through the woods, and never saw a human being all the journey. There was no

regular road, but we had to make our passage as well as we could. . . . After passing through the woods, we came to a small place, where the woman who had purchased me, had some friends; here I was treated very well, indeed, during the day, but at night I was closely confined, as they were afraid I would make my escape; I could not sleep all night, I was so tightly kept.

After remaining there for the space of two days, we started on our journey again, traveling day after day; the country through which we passed continued quite hilly and mountainous; we passed some very high mountains, which I believe were called the mountains of Kong. . . . At length we arrived at Efau, where I was again sold; the woman seemed very sorry to part with me, and gave me a small present on my leaving them. Efau is quite a large place, the houses were of different construction to those in Zoogoo, and had not so good an appearance.

The man to whom I was again sold, was very rich, and had a great number of wives and slaves. I was placed in charge of an old slave; whilst there a great dance was held and I was fearful they were going to kill me, as I had heard they did in some places, and I fancied the dance was only a preliminary part of the ceremony; at any rate I did not feel at all comfortable about the matter. I was at Efau several weeks and was very well treated during that time; but as I did not like the work assigned me, they saw that I was uneasy, and as they were fearful of losing me, I was locked up every night. . . .

After leaving Efau, we had no stopping place until we reached Dohama; we remained in the woods by night and traveled during the day, as there were wild beasts in great abundance, and we were compelled to build up large fires at night to keep away the ferocious animals, which otherwise would have fallen upon us and torn us to pieces; we could hear them howling round about during the night. . . . Dohama is about three days journey from Efau, and is quite a large city; the houses being built differently to any I had previously seen. . . . When we arrived here I began to give up all hopes of ever getting back to my home again, but had entertained hopes until this time of being able to make my escape, and by some means or other of once more seeing my native place, but at last hope gave way; the last ray seemed fading away, and my heart felt sad and weary within me, as I thought of my home, my mother! whom I loved most tenderly, and the thought of never more beholding her added very much to my perplexities. . . .

We then proceeded to Gra-fe, about a day and half's journey; the land we passed was pretty thickly settled and generally well cultivated; but I do not recollect that we passed any streams of water after entering upon this level country. At Gra-fe, I saw the first white man, which you may

be sure took my attention very much; the windows in the houses also looked strange, as this was the first time in my life that I had ever seen houses having windows. They took me to a white man's house, where we remained until the morning, when my breakfast was brought in to me, and judge my astonishment to find that the person who brought in my breakfast was an old acquaintance, who came from the same place; . . . his name was Woo-roo, and had come from Zoogoo, having been enslaved about two years; his friends could never tell what had become of him. . . .

Woo-roo seemed very anxious that I should remain at Gra-fe, but I was destined for other parts; this town is situated on a large river. After breakfast I was taken down to the river and placed on board a boat; the river was very large and branched off in two different directions, previous to emptying itself into the sea. The boat in which the slaves were placed was large and propelled by oars, although it had sails as well; but the wind not being strong enough, oars were used as well. We were two nights and one day on this river, when we came to a very beautiful place; the name of which I do not remember; we did not remain here very long, but as soon as the slaves were all collected together, and the ship ready to sail, we lost no time in putting to sea. Whilst in this place, the slaves were all put into a pen, and placed with our backs to the fire, and ordered not to look about us, and to insure obedience, a man was placed in front with a whip in his hand ready to strike the first who should dare to disobey orders; another man then went round with a hot iron, and branded us the same as they would the heads of barrels or any other inanimate goods or merchandise.

When all were ready to go aboard, we were chained together, and tied with ropes round about our necks, and were thus drawn down to the sea shore. The ship was lying some distance off. I had never seen a ship before, and my idea of it was, that it was some object of worship of the white man. I imagined that we were all to be slaughtered, and were being led there for that purpose. I felt alarmed for my safety, and despondency had almost taken sole possession of me.

A kind of feast was made ashore that day, and those who rowed the boats were plentifully regaled with whiskey, and the slaves were given rice and other good things in abundance. I was not aware that it was to be my last feast in Africa. I did not know my destiny. Happy for me, that I did not. All I knew was, that I was a slave, chained by the neck, and that I must readily and willingly submit, come what would, which I considered was as much as I had any right to know.

At length, when we reached the beach, and stood on the sand; oh! how I wished that the sand would open and swallow me up. My

wretchedness I cannot describe. It was beyond description. . . . I was then placed in that most horrible of places,

THE SLAVE SHIP.

Its horrors, ah! who can describe. None can so truly depict its horrors as the poor unfortunate, miserable wretch that has been confined within its portals! . . . We were thrust into the hold of the vessel in a state of nudity, the males being crammed on one side, and the females on the other; the hold was so low that we could not stand up, but were obliged to crouch upon the floor or sit down; day and night were the same to us, sleep being denied us from the confined position of our bodies, and we became desperate through suffering and fatigue.

Oh! the loathsomeness and filth of that horrible place will never be effaced from my memory; nay, as long as memory holds her seat in this distracted brain, will I remember that. My heart even at this day, sickens at the thought of it. . . .

The only food we had during the voyage was corn soaked and boiled. I cannot tell how long we were thus confined, but it seemed a very long while. We suffered very much for want of water, but was denied all we needed. A pint a day was all that was allowed, and no more; and a great many slaves died upon the passage. There was one poor fellow so very desperate for want of water, that he attempted to snatch a knife from the white man who brought in the water, when he was taken up on deck and I never knew what became of him. I supposed he was thrown overboard.

When any one of us became refractory, his flesh was cut with a knife, and pepper or vinegar was rubbed in to make him peaceable (!) I suffered, and so did the rest of us, very much from sea sickness at first, but that did not cause our brutal owners any trouble. Our sufferings were our own, we had no one to share our troubles, none to care for us, or even to speak a word of comfort to us. Some were thrown overboard before breath was out of their bodies; when it was thought any would not live, they were got rid of in that way. Only twice during the voyage were we allowed to go on deck to wash ourselves—once whilst at sea, and again just before going into port.

We arrived at Pernambuco, South America, early in the morning, and the vessel played about during the day, without coming to anchor. All that day we neither ate or drank anything, and we were given to understand that we were to remain perfectly silent, and not make any out-cry, otherwise our lives were in danger. But when [night came], the anchor dropped, and we were permitted to go on deck to be viewed and handled by our future masters, who had come aboard from the city. We landed

a few miles from the city, at a farmer's house, which was used as a kind of slave market. The farmer had a great many slaves, and I had not been there very long before I saw him use the lash pretty freely on a boy, which made a deep impression on my mind, as of course I imagined that would be my fate ere long, and oh! too soon, alas! were my fears realized.

When I reached the shore, I felt thankful to Providence that I was once more permitted to breathe pure air, the thought of which almost absorbed every other. I cared but little then that I was a slave, having escaped the ship was all I thought about. Some of the slaves on board could talk Portuguese. They had been living on the coast with Portuguese families, and they used to interpret to us. They were not placed in the hold with the rest of us, but come down occasionally to tell us something or other.

These slaves never knew they were to be sent away, until they were placed on board the ship. I remained in this slave market but a day or two, before I was again sold to a slave dealer in the city, who again sold me to a man in the country, who was a baker, and resided not a great distance from Pernambuco.

When a slaver comes in, the news spreads like wild-fire, and down come all those that are interested in the arrival of the vessel with its cargo of living merchandise, who select from the stock those most suited to their different purposes, and purchase the slaves precisely in the same way that oxen or horses would be purchased in a market; but if there are not the kind of slaves in the one cargo, suited to the wants and wishes of the slave buyers, an order is given to the Captain for the particular sorts required, which are furnished to order the next time the ship comes into port. Great numbers make quite a business of this, and do nothing else for a living, depending entirely upon this kind of traffic.

1.5. An Ex-Slavetrader's Account of the Enslavement Process in Africa and the Illegal Traffic to Brazil (1848-1849)

On two occasions in 1848 and 1849, as part of a parliamentary investigation of the international slave trade, members of the British Parliament questioned an American-born former slave trader, Dr. Joseph Cliffe. A naturalized Brazilian subject and a trained physician, Cliffe had spent many years in Brazil and Africa. He had served Brazil in her war for independence in the early 1820s, had worked in the interior province of

Minas Gerais as a gold and diamond prospector, and, while trafficking in slaves, had made voyages to Portuguese African colonies. His frank responses to questions concerning conditions in Africa and on slave ships, while confirming the testimony of Baquaqua and Oliveira Mendes, add details which apply especially to the years after 1830. In that year the British-Brazilian treaty of 1826, which banned the traffic, went into effect, and the slave trade to Brazil was henceforth illegal.

Source: *Second Report from the Select Committee on the Slave Trade Together with the Minutes of Evidence and Appendix* (London, 1848), pp. 42-46, 51-53; *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, Appointed to Consider the Best Means which Great Britain Can Adopt for the Final Extinction of the African Slave Trade. Session 1849* (London, 1849), pp. 153-154, 160.

2180. From what you have heard from [Africans], and seen yourself on the coast, can you tell the Committee anything as to the mode in which they are collected in the interior?—They are captured generally; many of them have been captured, some bought by means of domestic goods, dry goods, cloths, linen, handkerchiefs, snuff-boxes, beads and ornaments of any kind; a man takes a certain portion of them, and makes slaves of them, and sends them down; others will retaliate upon him in the same way. Frequently, from what I can judge, or from what I know, I believe that it has been often a thing agreed upon between them, consequently the loss of life has been very small upon those occasions. Frequently it has arisen from an actual state of war; all the older ones are then killed, and the younger ones, or the saleable ones, are brought down to the coast; those who are not considered worth bringing down, or worth making slaves of, are oftentimes put to death by having their brains beaten out.

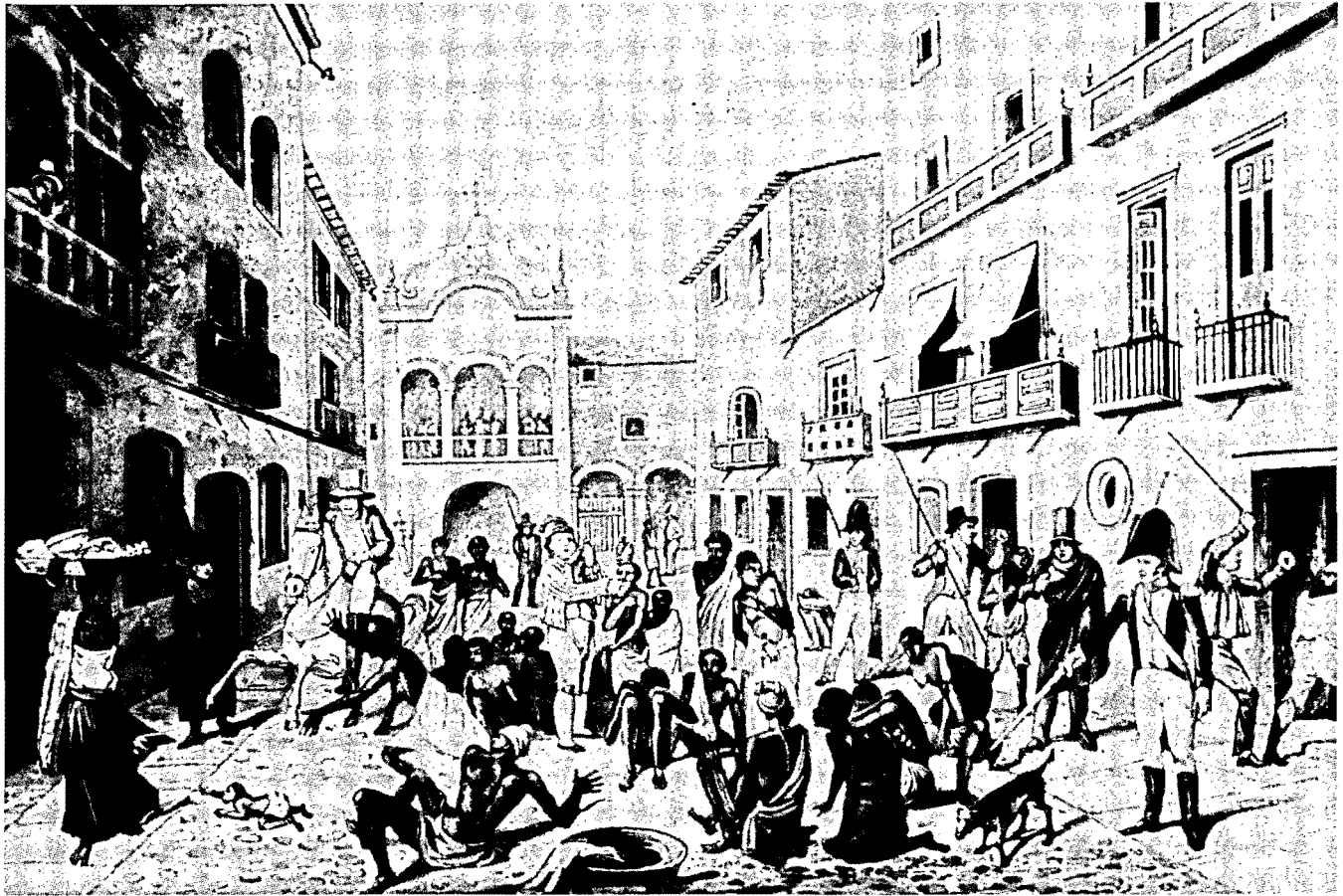
2181. What part of the coast are you speaking of?—I am now speaking of north of Loango, west of the Portuguese settlements.

2182. At what age are they generally brought down for sale?—From seven to eight up to 20 or 25.

2183. You would not buy a man older than 25?—At the present time almost any age sells, but when it was a fair [legal] trade, not older than 25, and rarely, indeed, so old.

2184. Would a man's brains be beaten out if he was older than 25?—They say so.

2185. How are the slaves collected in the interior; are they collected by African agents of the Portuguese slave-traders?—The king or the chief having them for sale, send them down, or did send them down in the olden time, as far as was within his territory; they are a quarrelsome



2. A Slave Market in the City of Recife

people; he probably could not pass over a neighboring chief's territory, but he sold them to him; he traded with him for a certain amount of goods; this one then took them as far as he could carry them, and so ultimately they reached the sea-coast; in fact, they were living money.

2186. They were not paid for originally with money furnished by the Portuguese slave-trader?—In many cases they have been, and in many cases they have not been; many of the blacks themselves consider that if they had not had someone to buy them, they would have been put to death; many and many have stated that to me.

2187. Do the Africans generally treat the slaves kindly or brutally in carrying them down to the coast?—Unless you saw it, you could not suppose the small amount of value which is attached to human life. . . .

2191. Can you tell the committee anything as to the proportion of the sexes in the Africans who are brought into Brazil?—About one to ten.

2192. You are speaking of the present time?—I am speaking of the present time. In looking back, I do not think that there has been a very great difference; perhaps the lowest would be one to seven, and it has not at any time, I think, exceeded one to fourteen, excepting the years 1829 and 1830, and then expecting that the Slave Trade was to have been stopped, everything was brought over that could be brought; the lame, the blind, the deaf, and everything; princes, priests and patriarchs, everything that could swell the number was brought over then.

2193. And were there more women then?—Everything that could be bought, young and old; women with little babies, and women that were pregnant; everything was brought over then. . . .

2314. You spoke of the mortality in the barracoons, when you were estimating the mortality from the first capture of the slaves to their landing in Africa; have you seen much of the condition of the slaves in the African barracoons?—I have seen some little of them; I know that they suffer occasionally from want of food; instances have occurred in which they have suffered much from want of food.

2315. Are not the barracoons always near the sea?—Generally.

2316. Or near some point of embarkation?—Near some point of embarkation; they are simple things; they are merely half-a-dozen poles stuck up, and thatched over with palm; you can make them in a few hours.

2317. But simple as they are, they add very much to the comfort of the slaves on the coast?—Certainly they protect them from the heat, sun and rain, and from the evening dew the effect of which is very bad. . . .

4196. I wish to ask you some questions relative to the sufferings of the slaves on board the slave ships and in the barracoons; is there much

suffering generally in the barracoons on the coast of Africa where the slaves are in a state of detention?—Not in the ordinary course of business. At present, from what I know. I believe that at times there is a great deal of suffering. We will say, for example, that there are 500 slaves waiting for a vessel; a cruiser is in the neighbourhood, and the vessel cannot come in; it is very difficult to get, on the coast of Africa, sufficient food to support them, and they are kept upon the smallest possible ration on which human life can subsist, waiting for an opportunity of putting them on board the vessel or vessels. Therefore there is a great deal of suffering now in the barracoons that did not formerly exist.

4197. It would be generally very difficult in Africa to subsist such a body as 2,000 or 3,000 slaves assembled in a barracoon, and detained there for any length of time?—I do not think that you really could support so many; 500 or 600, from what I know of the parts with which I am acquainted, would be with great difficulty supported for 20 days.

4208. Do the slaves in consequence of insufficient accommodation and other causes, perish in large numbers on board the vessels?—Occasionally they do; in many cases they do.

4209. Generally speaking, is there a large mortality?—There is.

4210. Is the suffering of such slaves as escape death very great?—Exceedingly so; almost beyond the powers of description. I have seen them when brought ashore, when life had been reduced to the lowest possible ebb; when they have been simply alive; nothing more than that could be stated of them; there was a complete wasting of the animal system, and a mere mass of bones, but still alive.

4211. To what causes is that attributable?—To a long passage, to a want of sufficiency of food, and to the confinement and foul air.

4212. Is the heat in the hold of a slaver very great?—Yes, I should think from 120 to 130 degrees, taking the Fahrenheit thermometer, and perhaps more.

4213. What would that thermometer stand at on deck?—Probably not more than 100.

4214. Supposing that the air was not fetid from the crowd of persons and other causes, would that degree of heat expose the slaves to suffering?—Not to a great deal; no. Heat alone would be nothing for their constitution; no injury to them.

4215. What they suffer from then really, is the fetid state of the atmosphere?—The fetid state of the atmosphere, and not having a sufficiency of food and water.

4216. Although the Africans would not suffer from that high degree

of temperature, would it not promote a great deal for drink?—Of course it would under those circumstances.

4217. What quantity of water do you consider that an African would require for his sustenance per day?—A boy of 10 or 12 years of age would drink more than a gallon.

4218. What quantity do they usually get?—It is horrid almost to say; the quantity is very small. I have known from hearsay, within the last two years, that a teacup-full given once in three days, will support life for 20 to 30 days.

4219. Even in that temperature?—Yes; but the loss of life must be great on those occasions.

4220. Is the agony occasioned by desire for water very great?—Indescribable. There are no words that I can make use of that will describe the sufferings in the tropics from the want of water; it is ten times more horrible than the want of food. A man may suffer from the want of food four or five days and think nothing of it, but the sufferings from want of water for two days in the tropics is almost beyond endurance.

4221. Did you ever experience it yourself?—Yes, I have suffered it; I speak from what I have felt. . . .

4223. The slaver, I suppose, is in a very dirty condition?—It must be, because the slaves are jammed in, as I observed before. They are packed in upon their sides, laid in heads amongst legs and arms, so that it is very difficult frequently, until they become very much emaciated so as to leave room, for them to get up alone without the whole section moving together.

4224. Are they permitted to get up?—Small boys would be. Small boys are never confined; but the way in which they are put in now is, that they are generally jammed in in such masses that, even allowing that there was elevation sufficient for them to rise up, they could not rise without the whole section rising. They make two or three slave decks in a vessel which has perhaps six feet between her deck and the beams above. There would be three tiers of slaves stowed away.

4225. In six feet?—Yes; 16 to 18 inches would stow them in; then the timber, or whatever you term it, of which it is built, would occupy the rest of the space; so that you would have three tiers of them in a common deck; therefore there is not room for a very small boy to sit. They are put like books upon a shelf; consequently there is plenty of room for them to lie flat, but not enough for them to elevate.

4226. Do they lie upon their backs?—No; all upon their sides.

4227. Mr. *Gladstone*: Can they turn from side to side?—By the whole section turning, not otherwise until they have become a good deal ema-

ciated, and some have died out; that of course, makes more room for the remainder.

4228. *Chairman*: Are they so placed for the convenience of stowage?—Yes, for the possibility of stowing larger numbers.

4229. By what means is the food supplied to them in that way?—By a man going down amongst them, passing down a calabash with a quantity of rice or beans, or whatever the description of food may be, and passing it round, a little portion to each one.

4230. The slaves are not brought on deck and fed there?—In a vessel where it was well conducted, the old plan used to be to bring them on deck by sections, and let them feed and let them wash themselves, and do what was necessary, and then to take them below again; but now when they are so jammed up it is impossible to do so; in addition to which, the want of water is so great that if they were to see water alongside a great number of them no doubt would jump overboard, without considering that it was salt water, therefore they are fed between decks as much as they possibly can be; a few who are suffering more than the others are occasionally brought on deck, but the object is to keep as many below as possible. . . .

4237. From the circumstances of dispatch under which you have described that the slaves are constantly embarked, are they not occasionally embarked when they are infected with dysentery, and ophthalmia, and fever?—They are brought down now from the interior of the country, and frequently remain for some length of time in the barracoons, upon a very small or imperfect allowance of food; they become much debilitated by it; consequently, when they are packed on board the mortality will be greater in consequence of their sufferings having been so much prolonged. In addition to which the voyage now, in consequence of having to run out of the usual line where cruisers are, in the place of being 20 or 25 days, may occupy sometimes from two months to as much as four months; and no doubt a great deal of this suffering from the want of food and the want of water, where there has been a sufficiency on board for the usual run of 20 days, may have arisen from being compelled to make such a very long passage of it.

4238. The slaves being packed in those large numbers, and exposed to a long voyage after a considerable detention, are very liable to suffer from diseases?—Yes; those are the cases in which the mortality is much the greatest, where they have been detained for some length of time in the barracoons, not having had an opportunity to be shipped; those are the cases in which the mortality is the greater, because their systems have been worn down previously to being put on board the vessel.

4239. Did you ever know an instance of a vessel losing one half of

her cargo?—Yes; a good deal more than that. There was an instance in which, out of 160, which was but half the cargo, only 10 escaped, and those 10 were sold for 300 milreis, about 37£. I know that personally to be a fact. . . .

4243. *Chairman*: The slaves being packed on board ship in the way which you have described, which precludes the possibility of removing them upon deck, of course all the excrement of those wretched creatures during the whole of the voyage remains in the vessel?—In a certain measure. As far as I am aware, it is found almost impossible to keep them clean.

4244. It must remain altogether in the vessel if they do not go on deck?—Yes. Many vessels after they come in are abandoned from the impossibility of getting any person to clean the vessel. I can mention the case of an Austrian-built vessel, a very fine vessel, in which there had been some French seamen on board; she was cast adrift. The Brazilian government had her brought in and cleaned out by galley slaves.

4245. Of course if that is done with regard to a fine vessel, namely abandonment, it would be frequently done with regard to a vessel which was of small value?—Yes. This vessel was worth about 9,000£, but the immense number of slaves that she brought over gave the parties such a famous profit that there was no need of troubling themselves about the vessel. . . .

4250. There is one cause to which you have not called attention, and that is the nature of the decks; I believe that it has been the practice to pack the slaves away frequently upon the casks, has it not, without the intervention of a slave deck?—Yes, that is very frequently done; but as the African is not accustomed to sleep in a feather bed, from sleeping on a hard cask no injury arises.

4251. Do not they suffer from bruises from being jammed together between the casks?—When they are first put on board, they do bruise; but afterwards they become so emaciated, and are so very light, that the bruising is very trifling then. . . .

4302. *Chairman*: With respect to the condition of the slaves when they are landed, are they in a state of great suffering?—They certainly are.

4303. Have you seen many cases of the slaves landed from the slavers on their arrival?—Yes.

4304. In what condition did you find them?—I do not know I could describe it, to be intelligible to you. I do not think that I have power of description enough to describe it.

4305. *Mr. Gladstone*: You have told us these three things, that they are, very many of them, in a situation of acute suffering and at the same

time of great physical reduction and torpidity of the animal functions?—Yes; so that the knee bones appear almost like the head of a person; from the arm you may slip your fingers and thumb up; the muscular part of the arm is gone; it is a mere bone covered with a bit of skin; the abdomen is highly protuberant; it is very much distended; very large. I am speaking of them just as they are landed. A man takes them up in his arms and carries them out of the vessel; you have some slave or some person that must do it if they are not capable of walking; they are pulled out, and those that are very dirty are frequently washed.

4306. *Lord H. Vane*: Do they recover very rapidly after they are once landed?—That is according to the treatment. In those establishments in which they are kept, where they have a clever medical man, by putting them into a warm bath, and by giving them a suitable diet, and suitable regimen, those that will recover do recover quickly.

4307. *Mr. Gladstone*: Are they for the most part lifted up on deck?—A great many of them are; a good many make attempts; they could not stand even if they were not so much emaciated. From not having perhaps stood upright for a month or two, the muscles have lost the power of supporting them.

4308. *Chairman*: The eye has lost its speculation?—Precisely so; it has an idiotic appearance; a leaden appearance; in fact, a sunken appearance. It is almost like the boiled eye of a fish.

4309. In fact, nature is reduced to the very last stage consistent with life?—To the lowest stage in which it is possible to say that they are living.

4310. Do they suffer much from bruises and sores?—Many become bruised; and there are many cases in which a gangrene probably takes place, or a very large ulcer takes place from lying so long in such putrid materials they have to lie in. Many no doubt die from it.

4311. Do they suffer very much from a sort of disease called craw-craws?—Yes, but that is not on board the ships; that is a land disease.

4312. Is it not very rapidly communicated from the contact in which they are placed?—Yes, it passes like the itch would pass. . . .

4316. The slaves usually require some period of time before they can be sufficiently recovered to be brought into the market?—Frequently three months; they require to be fed and taken care of before any person would take the trouble of buying them.

4317. When they are first landed where are they placed?—In a species of barracoon.

4318. In a species of hospital, in fact?—No, a mere barracoon.

4319. *Lord Courtenay*: A barrack?—A barrack.

4320. *Chairman*: They are disposed of in the barracoon, in order that

they may recover their health and strength before coming into the market?—The reason of putting them into such a place is this: no owner of an establishment would permit a new cargo of slaves to be taken to his property, because a species of itch, or a disease of the skin which they have very much, would be propagated throughout the whole establishment; therefore no person would have them in a settled place. Those barracoons are in remote places by themselves, where there is no danger of the slaves running away; the object is to have a species of hospital where they are treated till those that get well do get well, and those that die there are buried.

4321. But as a matter of commercial policy, I presume that it is considered desirable to restore them to some degree of health and physical strength before they are exhibited in the market?—Yes. If you did not, when a purchaser took them, unless he had the convenience of taking them by water, he could not take them away; they could not walk; therefore the sooner you can get them into good condition the better; because a purchaser will take them as soon as he sees that they are able to walk, and not before.

1.6. "It Was the Same as Pigs in a Sty": A Young African's Account of Life on a Slave Ship (1849)

Two days after the ex-slavetrader, Joseph Cliffe, was interrogated, the Select Committee of the House of Lords questioned one Augustino, an African who in 1830, while still a child, had been included in a cargo of slaves transported to Brazil. Cliffe had told the committee that before the traffic had become illegal in March, 1830, conditions on slave ships had been comparatively comfortable. The questions put to Augustino, which were evidently intended to test whether or not this was true, partially refute this part of Cliffe's testimony. Africans rarely had an opportunity to put their impressions of slavery into the written record, and so this brief document, like Baquaqua's testimony (Doc. 1.4), is of unusual interest.

Source: *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, Appointed to Consider the Best Means which Great Britain Can Adopt for the Final Extinction of the African Slave Trade. Session 1849* (London, 1849), pp. 162-163.

☛ AUGUSTINO is called in, and examined as follows, through Mr. Herring, as Interpreter.

2353. How old are you?—I do not know

2354. When you were brought over from Brazil?—I do not know.

Mr. Herring. It was in 1830; I bought him myself in the month of July; we estimated his age at that time at about 12.

2355. (*To Augustino.*) Have you any recollection of your being brought over to Brazil?—I recollect when I arrived, and I recollect also when I came on board ship.

2356. Do you recollect anything which happened while you were on board ship?—I do.

2357. Can you remember whether, while you were so on board, your countrymen who were with you were brought over laid in packs, or in what way they were treated on board?—They were so closely packed together that there was no room to get anything at all in between them.

2358. Were you yourself, as a boy, brought on deck during the time that you were on board?—Yes, because I was so young.

2359. Were the grown slaves taken on deck?—No, they were not.

2360. They could not be, from the number which were packed together?—No; because they were chained down below to the sides of the vessel.

2361. Do you know whether many died on board ship?—When they were first put on board, they were so very thick together that a great many died in a day; five, six, ten, sometimes even a dozen died in a day, in consequence of the excessive heat and of the want of water. Their food was twice a week salt meat, and for the general meals of the day farina, a stuff like saw-dust—baked flour. In consequence of having a very insufficient supply of water, their thirst became so intense that many, from absolute suffocation, from the want of drink, died.

2362. Then, at that time they were not brought over in comfortable berths as emigrants were?—No.

2363. This was in 1830?—

Mr. Herring. It was before the expiration of the Treaty in 1830.

2364. But it was in 1830?—Yes.

Augustino. So far from there being cabins, if you call them cabins, it was the same as pigs in a sty, they were so thick.

2365. Do you know whether there was any difference between the state in which you were brought over and what had been the custom before?—As far as I know, it was the same thing.

Mr. Herring. But then he was up the country 30 leagues.

2366. (*To Augustino.*) Do you remember anything in Africa of your being made a prisoner before you were put on board?—Yes.

2367. Will you state anything that you remember?—A merchant sold my uncle some merchandise, and, before it was paid for, my uncle died;

the merchant came and seized us all, and made us all prisoners, and took us down to the coast; we were there about a week or 10 days, when we were put on board ship. The clothes of all the negroes going on board ship were stripped off them, even to the last rag.

2368. To what country in Africa did you belong?—Sefala.

2369. How far from the coast?—About a fortnight; at about three leagues a day.

Mr. Herring. Those leagues of which he speaks are Brazilian leagues, of four miles, very nearly.

Augustino. We always travelled by night, because they were afraid to travel by day.

2370. Why?—They were afraid that the relations of those who were taken prisoners might come, perhaps to the rescue. When we were on board ship, several had the liberty of coming on deck, in consequence of their youth; I was one, but the powerful ones were fastened below. The young ones had the right of coming on deck, but several of those jumped overboard, for fear they were being fattened to be eaten. The greater part of those that died on board died from thirst.

2371. What put the idea into their heads of being eaten; are they eaten in their own country?—They do not know for what object they are taken, and the idea comes into their head that it is from being made food of. Sometimes, when they are very ill indeed, and perhaps the white man thinks that one of them is dead, he comes and pinches his ear, to see if he feels the pain, and he finds that he is not dead; and then a man will take hold of his rope's end, and give him a good basting with it, and say, "There is nothing at all the matter with you; get up, get up."

Augustino is directed to withdraw.

1.7. A Slave Revolt at Sea and Brutal Reprisals (1845)

The previous documents show that traders in Africans feared revolts among their slaves both on land and at sea, and at times, of course, rebellions occurred. When such revolts were successful there was obviously little chance that anyone involved would have had an opportunity to record what he had seen. As a result, those slave uprisings about which we are informed, whether they happened in Africa, at sea, or in Brazil, were generally without success.

The following sworn testimony of William Page, a British sailor, given before the American consul in Rio de Janeiro, concerns the violent events that occurred aboard an American ship, the *Kentucky*, in 1845.

Under the protection of the American flag, the *Kentucky* had sailed from Rio de Janeiro in 1844 equipped for the slave trade. Reaching Inhambane on the coast of Mozambique, she took on a cargo of slaves and a Brazilian crew. Then, with the original crew members, including Page, traveling as passengers, she returned to Brazil where she landed her surviving cargo. The following section of Page's testimony deals mainly with the revolt and the Brazilian crew's fierce response to it, but it also includes some valuable details on the more normal daily routine of a slave ship in the final phase of the Brazilian traffic.

Source: *Class A. Correspondence with the British Commissioners at Sierra Leone, Havana, Rio de Janeiro, Surinam, Cape of Good Hope, Jamaica, Loanda, and Boa Vista, Relating to the Slave Trade. From January 1 to December 31, 1845, Inclusive* (London, 1846), pp. 517-518.

Deponent . . . said, that a majority of the slaves were brought on board during the night in launches, near the fort at Inhambane. There were about 500 in all that came on board. About a dozen died on the passage, and 46 men and one woman were hung and shot during the passage; and 440 or about, were landed at Cape Frio. When the slaves came on board they were put down on the slave deck, all in irons. Across the vessel, aft, a bulkhead was run, aft of which, and in the cabin, the women, 150 to 200 in number, were put, and the men and boys forward of the bulkhead. When it was good weather, a good many of the negroes were on deck during the night and day. In stormy weather, only those that were kept at work were on deck, but all the others below. The vessel had not a full cargo. It was intended to have 700, but they could not get them. The negroes slept scattered about the slave-deck, as they chose. They were fed twice a day with beans, farina, rice, and dried beef, all boiled together. At the first meal they had beans, farina, and rice together, and at the second meal dried beef and farina. They eat in messes, as on board of a man-of-war, having their food in their dishes. All were provided with wooden spoons, made on board by the seamen, at Inhambane. The cooking apparatus was rigged in the galley, and so arranged and painted that it could not be discovered without coming on board. The cooking was going on all the time, excepting when near a sail, when the fires were damped, and all the negroes put below.

And deponent further said, that the next day after the vessel crossed the bar on leaving Inhambane, as aforesaid, the negroes rose upon the officers and crew; a majority of the men, all of whom were in irons, got their irons off, broke through the bulkhead in the females department,

and likewise into the fore-castle. Upon this, the Captain armed the crew with cutlasses, and got all the muskets and pistols, and loaded them, and the crew were firing down amongst the slaves for half an hour or more. In the meantime deponent was nailing the hatches down, and used no musket or pistol; and there was no occasion, as the Brazilian sailors seemed to like the sport. In about half an hour they were subdued, and became quiet again:

The slaves were then brought on deck, eight or ten at a time, and ironed afresh. They were all re-ironed that afternoon, and put below, excepting about seven, who remained on deck. None were killed on this occasion, and but eight or ten more or less wounded. They fired with balls in the pistols and shot in the muskets. Supposes the reason none were killed is, that they had to fire through the grates of the hatches, and the slaves got out of the way as much as they could.

On the next day they were brought upon deck two or three dozens at a time, all being well ironed, and tried by Captain Fonseca and officers; and within two or three days afterwards forty-six men and one woman were hung and shot, and thrown overboard. They were ironed or chained two together, and when they were hung a rope was put round their necks, and they were drawn up to the yard-arm clear of the sail. This did not kill them, but only choked or strangled them. They were then shot in the breast, and the bodies thrown overboard. If only one or two that were ironed together was to be hung, a rope was put round his neck and he was drawn up clear of the deck, beside of the bulwarks, and his leg laid across the rail and chopped off, to save the irons and release him from his companion, who, at the same time, lifted up his leg till the other's was chopped off as aforesaid, and he released. The bleeding negro was then drawn up, shot in the breast, and thrown overboard as aforesaid. The legs of about one dozen were chopped off in this way. When the feet fell on deck, they were picked up by the Brazilian crew and thrown overboard, and sometimes at the body, while it still hung living; and all kinds of sport was made of the business. When two that were chained together were both to be hung, they were hung up together by their necks, shot, and thrown overboard, irons and all. When the woman was hung up and shot, the ball did not take effect, and she was thrown overboard living, and was seen to struggle some time in the water before she sunk.

And deponent further said that, after this was over, they brought up and flogged about twenty men and six women. When they were flogged they were laid flat upon the deck, and their hands tied, and secured to one ring bolt, and their feet to another. They were then whipped by two

men at a time—by the one with a stick about 2 feet long, with five or six strands of raw hide secured to the end of it (the hide was dry and hard and about 2 feet long); and by the other with a piece of the hide of a sea-horse; this was a strip about 4 feet long, from half an inch to an inch wide, as thick as one's finger or thicker, and hard as whalebone, but more flexible. The flogging was very severe. Deponent and another Englishman on board, named Edward Blake, were obliged to assist in the flogging, as the Brazilians got tired. Deponent flogged four, but he got clear of the hanging and shooting business. All the women that were flogged at this time died, but none of the men. Many of them, however, were sick all the passage, and were obliged to lie on their bellies during the remainder of the voyage, and some of them could hardly get on shore on arrival at Cape Frio. The flesh of some of them where they were flogged (which was not generally on their backs, but on their posteriors) putrified and came off, in some cases 6 or 8 inches in diameter, and in places half an inch thick. Their wounds were dressed and filled up by the Contramestre with farina and cachaça [rum] made into poultice, and sometimes with a salve made on board. When the farina and cachaça were applied to the poor creatures, they would shiver and tremble for half an hour, and groan and sob with the most intense agony. They were a shocking and horrible sight during the whole passage. There was no disturbance on board after this, and no flogging, excepting of the boys for stealing water, farina, and so forth, when it was not allowed them.

Deponent further said that the ages of the negroes were from nine or ten up to thirty years. They were generally healthy, as sickly ones were not bought. Most of them were generally entirely without any article of clothes or covering, though at times they had strips of cloths around their loins, and some had handkerchiefs tied around them. The women were not so frequently naked as the men. Both the men and women frequently would get lousy, and be obliged to take off their strips of cloth to cleanse themselves. They were all brought on deck at different times during the voyage, say fifty at a time, and washed, by having water thrown over them, &c. They were washed four or five times each, and twice they had vinegar given to them to wash their mouths, and scrub their gums with brushes. In good weather the negroes themselves were obliged to sweep and wash down the slave deck every day, and thus kept it clean; but at night, and in hot weather, the hold of the vessel smelt very badly. But a few of them were sick during the passage, excepting those that were so badly flogged. The sick were doctored by the Contramestre, and the wounds of those that were flogged were dressed with aguardiente and farina, and a salve that was made on board.

1.8. A British Physician Describes the State of Africans upon Their Arrival in Brazil (1841-1843)

From the early years of the nineteenth century until after 1850 the British Royal Navy captured hundreds of slave ships at sea as part of Britain's long campaign to stop the international slave trade. The Africans found aboard those ships were taken either to a British colony or, when seized near Brazil or Cuba, delivered over to the doubtful protection of the government in those countries.

Obviously, after their hard journeys, the rescued slaves required assistance of every kind, especially food, quartering, and medical care. To meet these needs locally, in 1840 the British government stationed a frigate, the *Crescent*, in the harbor of Rio de Janeiro, and during the next five or six years eight shiploads of slaves seized off the Brazilian coast, some 3,000 Africans, received help aboard the *Crescent*.

Assigned to this arduous and dangerous duty was a British medical doctor, Thomas Nelson, who kept a written account of what he saw, with an emphasis on the physical conditions of the Africans and their diseases. The following descriptions of Africans who came under Nelson's professional care in 1841 and 1843 are taken from his sensitive account of the Brazilian slave trade published in 1846. The sections within quotation marks are of particular importance, since they were written on the scene while Nelson's impressions were still fresh.

Source: Thomas Nelson, *Remarks on the Slavery and Slave Trade of the Brazils* (London: J. Halchard and Son, 1846), pp. 43-56.

“A few minutes after the vessel dropped her anchor, I went on board of her, and although somewhat prepared by the previous inspection of two full slavers to encounter a scene of disease and wretchedness, still my experience, aided by my imagination, fell short of the loathsome spectacle which met my eyes on stepping over the side. Huddled closely together on deck, and blocking up the gangways on either side, cowered, or rather squatted, three hundred and sixty-two negroes, with disease, want, and misery stamped upon them with such painful intensity as utterly beggars all powers of description. In one corner, apart from the rest, a group of wretched beings lay stretched, many in the last stage of exhaustion, and all covered with the pustules of small-pox. Several of these I noticed had crawled to the spot where the water had been served out, in the hope of procuring a mouthful more of the precious liquid; but unable to return to their proper places, lay prostrate around the

empty tub. Here and there, amid the throng, were isolated cases of the same loathsome disease in its confluent or worst form, and cases of extreme emaciation and exhaustion, some in a state of perfect stupor, others looking piteously around, and pointing with their fingers to their parched mouths whenever they caught an eye whom they thought would relieve them. On every side, squalid and sunken visages were rendered still more hideous by the swollen eyelids and the puriform discharge of a virulent ophthalmia [a dangerous eye inflammation], with which the majority appeared to be afflicted; added to this were figures shrivelled to absolute skin and bone, and doubled up in a posture which originally want of space had compelled them to adopt, and which debility and stiffness of the joints compelled them to retain.

"On looking more leisurely around, after the first paroxysm of horror and disgust had subsided, I remarked on the poop another wretched group, composed entirely of females. Some were mothers with infants who were vainly endeavouring to suck a few drops of moisture from the lank, withered, and skinny breasts of their wretched mothers; others were of every intermediate age. The most of them destitute even of the decency of a rag, and all presenting as woeful a spectacle of misery as it is possible to conceive. . . .

"While employed in examining the negroes individually, and separating and classifying the sick, who constituted by far the majority, I obtained a closer insight into their actual condition. Many I found afflicted with confluent small-pox, still more with purulent ophthalmia, and the majority of what remained, with dysentery, ulcers, emaciation, and exhaustion. In several, two or three of these were met. Not the least distressing sight on that pest-laden deck was the negroes whom the ophthalmia had struck blind, and who cowered in seeming apathy to all that was going on around. This was indeed the ultimatum of wretchedness, the last drops in the cup of bitterness. Deprived of liberty, and torn from their native country, there was nothing more left of human misery but to make them the victims of a physical darkness as deep as they had already been made of a moral one.

"The stench on board was nearly overwhelming. The odour of the negroes themselves, rendered still stronger by their filthy and crowded condition, the sickening smell of the suppurative stage of small-pox, and the far more disgusting effluvium of dysenteric discharge, combined with bilge water, putrid jerked beef, and numerous other matters to form a stench, it required no little exertion of fortitude to withstand. To all this, hunger and thirst lent their aid to finish the scene; and so poignant were they, that the struggles to obtain the means of satisfying them were occasionally so great as to require the interference of the prize crew. The

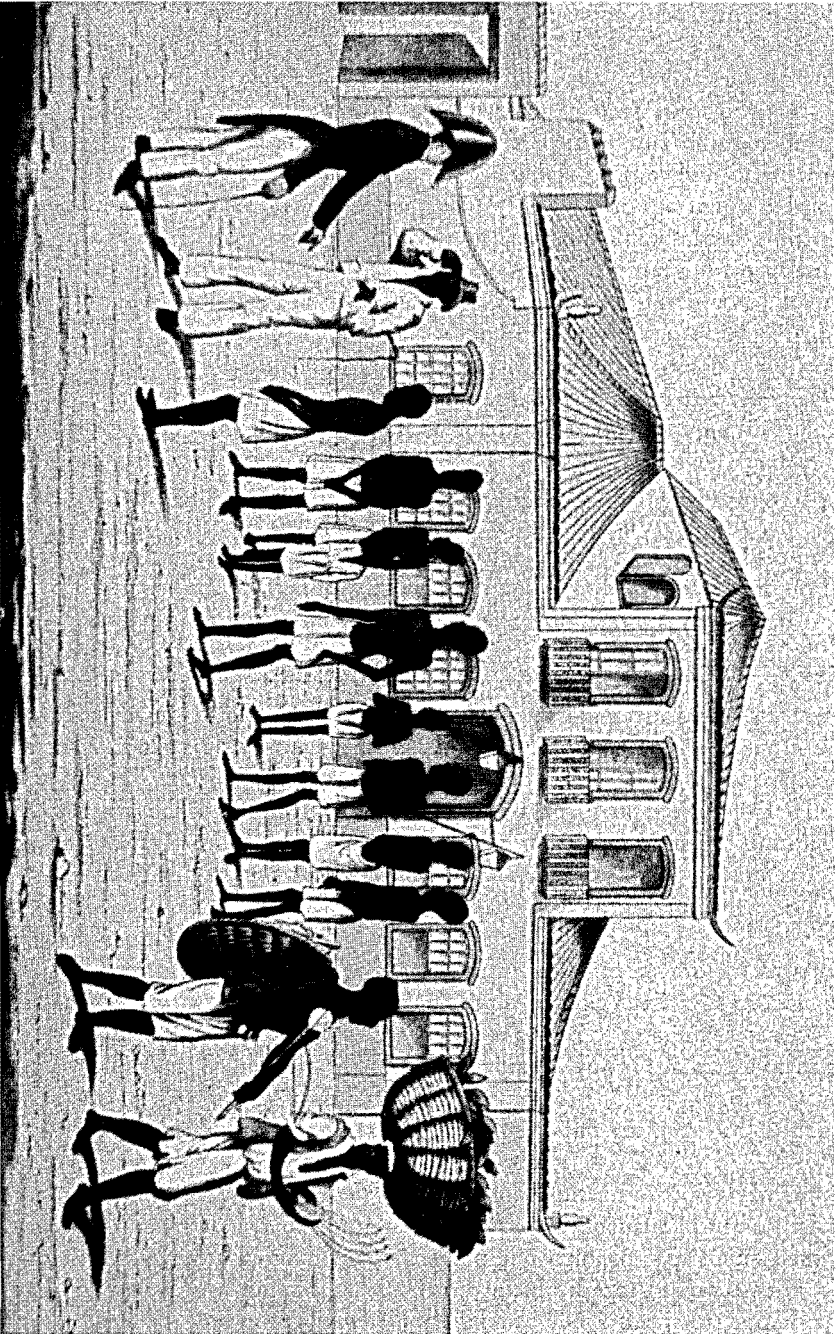
moment it could be done, water in abundance and a meal was provided them; and none but an eye-witness could form an idea of the eagerness with which the former luxury was coveted and enjoyed. For many days, it seems, the water had not only been reduced in quantity, but so filled with impurities, and so putrid, that nothing but the most stringent necessity could have induced the use of it. . . ."

Of another, called the "Vencedora," the following are the notes which are taken.

"Early yesterday morning (11th of September, 1843) the decks of the Crescent were again thronged by a miserable crowd of liberated Africans. The vessel in which they had been conveyed from the 'coast' was captured a few days ago by one of the boats belonging to H.M.S. Frolic, a little to the northward of Rio.

"Previously to the removal of the negroes, Dr. Gunn (the surgeon of the Crescent) and myself went on board the slaver, and on stepping over the side, were astonished at the smallness of the vessel, and the number of wretched negroes who had been thrust on board of her. Below, the hold was crowded to excess; and above, the deck was so closely packed with the poor creatures, that we had to walk along the top of the low bulwarks in order to get aft. Of the appearance of the negroes, no pen can give an adequate idea. In numbers, the different protuberances and anatomical peculiarities of the bones can be distinctly traced by the eye, and appear, on every motion, ready to start through the skin, which is, in fact, all that covers them. Nor has this been confined to appearance; in many, at the bend of the elbows and knee-joints, over the hip-joints and lower part of the spine, the integuments have given way, and caused the most distressing and ill-conditioned sores. A great number of the Africans, especially the younger, cannot stand upright even when assisted, and the moment they are left to themselves, they double up their knees under their chins, and draw their legs so closely to their bodies, that they scarcely retain the form of humanity. So weak and so cramped are the most of them that they had to be carried in the arms of the seamen, one by one, up the Crescent's ladder. All those not affected with contagious diseases are now on board the Crescent, and the most of them look like animated skeletons. From one of the Portuguese crew, who is at present under treatment for small-pox, I learn that the name of the vessel is the Vencedora, and that she left Benguela on the coast of Africa with four hundred and sixty slaves on board. But of this number only three hundred and thirty-eight have been counted over the side, a circumstance which will appear the less surprising when the space in which they were stowed comes to be considered. . . ."

Just as the negroes who remained of the Vencedora had entirely re-



3. Sick Slaves

covered their wonted health and vigour, and were fit to be sent to one of our colonies, H.M.S. Dolphin, on the 15th of November, 1843, brought into harbour a full slaver, which she had captured a day or two before, a little to the northward of Rio. The crew of the slaver had actually run her ashore, and had begun to throw the negroes overboard into the sea, in order that they might be induced to swim for the land, when the boats of the Dolphin came up and obliged them to stop and effect their own escape.

This vessel is the largest I have yet seen employed in this traffic, and is better fitted and found than the common run of slavers; she is American built, and several of her fittings bear the name of American tradesmen. But, as usual, the Africans benefit nothing from the greater size of the vessel. The additional room has not been devoted to give increased accommodation, but to carry a greater number from the coast. The hold, instead of being fitted with one slave-deck, has two; so that, in fact, the negroes have been as badly off, if not worse, than they would have been in a smaller vessel.

On attempting to go down into the hold, and satisfy myself with an examination before the Africans were removed, I was forced, after one or two unsuccessful attempts, to give it up;—the effluvia was perfectly overwhelming, and the heat so great, that the moment I left the square of the hatchway, the sensation approached suffocation. . . . The decks furnish a melancholy spectacle of disease and wretchedness; but the most prominent and widely-spread scourge is purulent ophthalmia. Numbers of poor creatures are squatting down in corners or groping about the deck, deprived of all sight. Their immensely swollen eyelids, contrasting with their haggard and wasted features, and the discharge which keeps constantly trickling down their cheeks, and which they have not even a rag to wipe away, gives them an appearance of ghastly murky misery which it is impossible for me to describe.

Many eyes, I am afraid, are irretrievably lost, and several poor wretches must remain forever totally blind. Dysentery, too, that fellest of all diseases in the negro race, is at work amongst them, and will doubtless commit fearful ravages. Five hundred and seventy-two Africans were found on board. What the number was at starting there is no means of ascertaining. One of the crew, a slave, who acted on board in the capacity of a cook, and who preferred being captured by Englishmen to escaping with his master, told me that many had died and were thrown overboard during the passage. The exact number taken on board, however, he could not tell. In all probability, it was not under seven hundred; but of course this is only mere conjecture. The cargo, he told me, was shipped at

Angola, and is composed of five distinct tribes, who converse in dialects differing entirely from each other. . . .

"21st Nov. The eyes of the negroes afflicted with the ophthalmia are beginning to take on a more favourable aspect generally. We have been highly delighted with the magical effects of the nitrate of silver in these cases. Under its influence, the profuse discharge is rapidly disappearing, and the numerous ulcers on the cornea assuming a healthier and healing appearance. Our hopes are considerable, that we shall not have many totally blind after all. Several eyes are irretrievably lost; but, thanks be to Heaven, this disaster has seldom visited both eyes in the same person.

"It is astonishing to witness the sagacity, if I may so call it, and fortitude with which the poor creatures submit, nay, press to be treated with the different remedies. Not only do they appear perfectly aware that their interest is consulted, and give no trouble, but exhort each other to stand firm while the necessary painful operations of scarifying and of touching the inflamed and ulcerated parts are performed. I could not help being struck, on more than one occasion, while a dingy group of some hundred and more surrounded me on the lower deck of the hulk, which had been hired for their accommodation, all waiting eagerly yet patiently to have their eyes attended to. Children not more than five or six years old will go down on their knees, and opening their swollen eyelids with their own fingers, will remain firm and unflinching whilst the pungent remedies are applied to their eyes."

But while the local affection was thus yielding to the remedies employed, dysentery, in spite of every effort and precaution, continued to spread. Unlike the acute complaint in the white man, in the negro its approach is insidious, and attended with so little pain, that its poor victims, ignorant of its nature, often do not complain until the most fatal lesions have taken place. Day after day fresh cases would present themselves, or be selected where the disease was suspected to exist; but it mattered comparatively little whether they were got early or late: the disease once established clung to the wasted bodies of the wretched sufferers. Apathetic, from exhaustion, to acute suffering, and with scarce any rallying powers of constitution left—and seldom indeed did it quit its hold until death closed the scene.

1.9. A British Clergyman's Impressions of the Valongo Slave Market in Rio de Janeiro (1828)

Most of the foreign travelers who wrote accounts of life in Brazil during the early decades of the nineteenth century devoted at least a few para-

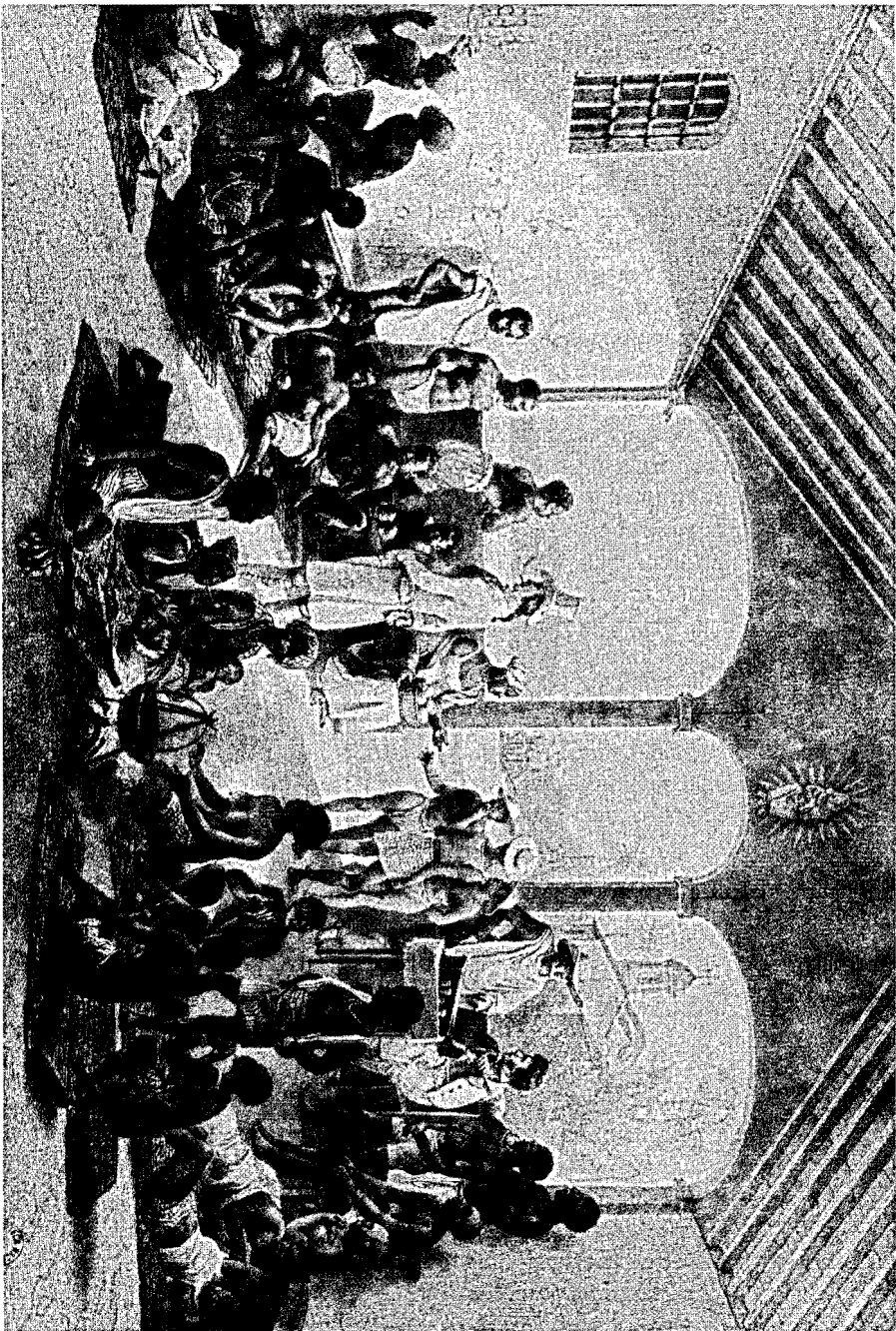
graphs to that intriguing commercial phenomenon, the Valongo slave market in Rio de Janeiro. One of the most valuable of these descriptions was written by Robert Walsh, a British clergyman who traveled widely in Brazil in 1828 and 1829 and wrote sympathetically and intelligently about many aspects of the nation's social life. Like many Europeans with little previous acquaintance with black Africans, Walsh revealed some underlying racist attitudes. However, his Christian humanism was also well developed, and so in this description of conditions in the Valongo market Walsh compassionately revealed the human dignity which the slaves maintained despite the hardships and humiliation that they were made to endure day after day in a new and hostile environment.

Source: Robert Walsh, *Notices of Brazil in 1828 and 1829*, 2 vols. (London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, 1830), II, 323-328.

☛ The place where the great slave mart is held, is a long winding street called the Vallongo, which runs from the sea, at the northern extremity of the city. Almost every house in this place is a large ware-room, where the slaves are deposited, and customers go to purchase. These ware-rooms stand at each side of the street, and the poor creatures are exposed for sale like any other commodity. When a customer comes in, they are turned up before him; such as he wishes are handled by the purchaser in different parts, exactly as I have seen butchers feeling a calf; and the whole examination is the mere animal capability, without the remotest inquiry as to the moral quality, which a man no more thinks of, than if he was buying a dog or mule. I have frequently seen Brazilian ladies at these sales. They go dressed, sit down, handle and examine their purchases, and bring them away with the most perfect indifference. I sometimes saw groups of well-dressed females here, shopping for slaves, exactly as I have seen English ladies amusing themselves at our bazaars.

There was no circumstance which struck me with more melancholy reflections than this market, which I felt a kind of morbid curiosity in seeing, as a man looks at objects which excite his strongest interests, while they shock his best feelings. The ware-rooms are spacious apartments, where sometimes three or four hundred slaves, of all ages and both sexes, are exhibited together. Round the room are benches on which the elder generally sit, and the middle is occupied by the younger, particularly females, who squat on the ground stowed close together, with their hands and chins resting on their knees. Their only covering is a small girdle of cross-barred cotton, tied round the waist.

The first time I passed through this street, I stood at the bars of the window looking through, when a cigano [gypsy] came and pressed me to enter. I was particularly attracted by a group of children, one of



4. New Africans Waiting to Be Sold

whom, a young girl, had something very pensive and engaging in her countenance. The cigano observing me look at her, whipped her up with a long rod, and bade her with a rough voice to come forward. It was quite affecting to see the poor timid shrinking child standing before me, in a state the most helpless and forlorn, that ever a being, endowed, like myself, with a reasonable mind and an immortal soul, could be reduced to. Some of these girls have remarkably sweet and engaging countenances. Notwithstanding their dusky hue, they look so modest, gentle and sensible, that you could not for a moment hesitate to acknowledge, that they are endowed with a like feeling and a common nature with your own daughters. The seller was about to put the child into all the attitudes, and display her person in the same way, as he would a man; but I declined the exhibition, and she shrunk timidly back to her place, and seemed glad to hide herself in the group that surrounded her.

The men were generally less interesting objects than the women; their countenances and hues were very varied, according to the part of the African coast from which they came; some were soot black, having a certain ferocity of aspect that indicated strong and fierce passions, like men who were darkly brooding over some deep-felt wrongs, and meditating revenge. When any one was ordered, he came forward with a sullen indifference, threw his arms over his head, stamped with his feet, shouted to show the soundness of his lungs, ran up and down the room, and was treated exactly like a horse, put through his paces at a repository; and when done, he was whipped to his stall.

The heads of the slaves, both male and female, were generally half shaved; the hair being left only on the fore part. A few of the females had cotton handkerchiefs tied round their heads, which, with some little ornaments of native seeds or shells, gave them a very engaging appearance. A number, particularly the males, were affected with eruptions of a white scurf, which had a loathsome appearance, like a leprosy. It was considered, however, a wholesome effort of nature, to throw off the effects of the salt provisions used during the voyage; and, in fact, it resembles exactly a saline concretion.

Many of them were lying stretched on the bare boards; and among the rest, mothers with young children at their breasts, of which they seemed passionately fond. They were all doomed to remain on the spot, like sheep in a pen, till they were sold; they have no apartment to retire to, no bed to repose on, no covering to protect them; they sit naked all day, and lie naked all night, on the bare boards, or benches, where we saw them exhibited.

Among the objects that attracted my attention in this place were some young boys, who seemed to have formed a society together. I observed

several times in passing by, that the same little group was collected near a barred window; they seemed very fond of each other, and their kindly feelings were never interrupted by peevishness; indeed, the temperament of a negro child is generally so sound, that he is not affected by those little morbid sensations, which are the frequent cause of crossness and ill-temper in our children. I do not remember, that I ever saw a young black fretful, or out of humour; certainly never displaying those ferocious fits of petty passion, in which the superior nature of infant whites indulges. I sometimes brought cakes and fruit in my pocket, and handed them in to the group. It was quite delightful to observe the generous and disinterested manner in which they distributed them. There was no scrambling with one another; no selfish reservation to themselves. The child to whom I happened to give them, took them so gently, looked so thankfully, and distributed them so generously, that I could not help thinking that God had compensated their dusky hue, by a more than usual human portion of amiable qualities.