
DALE T. GRADEN

In June 1852, Brazil’s Minister of Justice, José Ildefonso de Sousa Ramos, reflected on why his government had acted with uncharacteristic determination to end the international slave trade after 1850. He penned his thoughts 21 months after passage of the Eusébio de Queiroz Law in September 1850, which effectively brought to a close the international slave trade to Brazil. In spite of a treaty with Great Britain (signed in 1826) that outlawed the transport of African slaves to Brazil as of 1830, suppression efforts during the two decades between 1830 and 1850 had done little to halt the importation of thousands of slaves all along the coast. Sousa Ramos wrote,

the imperial government helped to bring about the complete extinction of the traffic as a measure of social convenience, of civilization, of national honor and even of public security . . . [such initiatives] show to

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be true a fact of great importance—that the government of Brazil has enough force to carry out its searches and to execute effectively its laws.1

The minister's use of the words public security raise several questions. Did he mean that the actions of the British Navy—which included confiscation of slave ships, incursions into Brazilian ports in 1850–51, and even searches of estates along the coast—had threatened the sovereignty and security of the Brazilian state, thereby forcing imperial ministers to act? Did he echo a belief held by both U.S. and British diplomats that such interventions by the British might inspire abolitionist pressures that in turn would help to undermine the stability of the slave regime? Or did he perhaps imply that imperial officials joined in suppression efforts with unprecedented determination in response to widespread slave resistance, which had little to do with British actions on the high seas?

This article subscribes to the idea that public security in Brazil had been threatened by the rebellious acts of slaves and the fears such turbulence instilled in the Brazilian elite by the late 1840s. It emphasizes that slave resistance, and social tensions closely related to that resistance, influenced Brazilian imperial officials in their decision to support complete termination of the slave trade between Africa and Brazil. Several important events helped to bring about this decision. A major slave rebellion in 1835 in Salvador, Bahia, known as the Revolt of the Malês (Muslims), left the master class deeply concerned for two decades about slaves' ability to organize and rebel. The arrival of thousands of African slaves through the ports of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro added to elite fears that more slave revolts could easily occur. Outbreaks of yellow fever and cholera recurred between 1849 and 1856, which several observers attributed to the presence of slave vessels in Brazilian ports.

This essay is a revisionist interpretation in that it demonstrates how internal pressures contributed to Brazil's final suppression of the slave trade. Several historians have shown how British abolitionist sentiment and gov-

1. Minister of Justice José Ildefonso de Sousa Ramos to President of the Province of Rio de Janeiro Luis Pedro de Couto Ferrez, Rio de Janeiro, June 17, 1852, APERJ, PP2, collection 2, maço 1. Author's emphasis.

2. U.S. diplomat Henry A. Wise wrote, "It is the most anxious desire of the United States to see them [the countries of the Western Hemisphere] ... free from all interference from any quarter in the regulation and management of their domestic concerns. ... Brazil has the deepest interest in establishing the same policy, especially in reference to the important relation between the European and African races as it exists here and in the southern portion of our Union. That under no other [circumstances] can the two races live together in peace and prosperity in either country. That the avowed policy of Great Britain is to destroy that relationship in both countries and throughout the world." Wise to Minister of State Ernesto Ferreira França, Rio de Janeiro, Sept. 24, 1844, AHI/Notas, 280/1/1. Emphasis original. See also David Ellis, Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), 114.
ernment policies contributed to an upsurge in international condemnation of the slave trade from the late eighteenth century on. Others have encouraged closer scrutiny of the social dynamics in the New World's plantation regions. Through analysis of slave resistance in the New World, such interpretations focus on pressures "from below" after the 1780s that often inspired parliamentary discourse concerning the inhumanity of the international slave trade and the institution of slavery. Based on primary documents preserved in several archives, this article sheds light on the question of why popular and official opinion in Brazil shifted quickly in 1850–51 in support of immediate and full termination of the slave trade.

The Culmination of the Slave Trade to Brazil in the Nineteenth Century

Sailing ships carried between 3.6 million and 5 million slaves to Brazil over the course of more than three centuries (1525–1851). During the first half of


5. For a concise description of the shift in political opinion critical of the slave trade to Brazil in 1850–51, see Ellis, Economic Growth, 210–17.

the nineteenth century, the importation reached some of its highest annual and decadal levels (see figure 1). Various factors contributed to this upsurge. With the disappearance of sugar and coffee plantations from St.-Domingue after the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), sugar and coffee planters in Brazil sought to supply international markets with output from their estates. To attain high levels of production, planters desired cheap labor. In the northeastern province of Bahia, a region of expanding sugar output, slave imports reached their pinnacle in the decades of the 1820s and 1840s. To satisfy demand for workers on expanding coffee estates south of Bahia, ships disembarked African slaves in unprecedented numbers. David Eltis writes that between the years “1821 and 1850 more slaves arrived on a four-hundred-mile stretch of coast around Rio de Janeiro than in the rest of the Americas put together.”

Another reason for the upsurge in slave importations at this juncture can be traced to investor responses to the British government’s suppression efforts. Treaties between Great Britain and Portugal (and Brazil after independence) in 1815 and 1817, as well as in 1826, placed various legal restrictions on slave traders. Ratification of the 1826 treaty (in 1827) stipulated that the slave trade to Brazil would become illegal three years later. With inadequate enforcement, however, and with a multitude of planters willing to pay for African slaves to cultivate export crops, the law proved inconse-

Table 1: Population of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, 1775–1855

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Salvador Population</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Freed Persons</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Slaves</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>20,557</td>
<td>(58.4)a</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>14,698</td>
<td>(41.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835b</td>
<td>38,000</td>
<td>(58.0)a</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>27,500</td>
<td>(42.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>38,595</td>
<td>(68.9)</td>
<td>2,027</td>
<td>(3.6)</td>
<td>15,378</td>
<td>(27.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio de Janeiro</td>
<td>1808c</td>
<td>47,090</td>
<td>(78.5)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>45,647</td>
<td>(54.0)a</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>30,182</td>
<td>(46.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>60,095</td>
<td>(62.0)a</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>37,137</td>
<td>(38.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>116,319</td>
<td>(56.5)</td>
<td>10,732</td>
<td>(5.2)</td>
<td>78,855</td>
<td>(38.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures are based on population censuses except as noted.

— Includes freedpersons.

b Estimated by Reis, Slave Rebellion, 6.

c Estimated by Luccock, Notas sobre o Rio de Janeiro, 28.


In 1845, the British Parliament passed the Aberdeen Act, which allowed British cruisers to seize Brazilian slave ships wherever they were encountered. This act demonstrated the continued determination of a small group of British politicians to halt the slave trade to Brazil. But such initiatives only encouraged the major participants in the slave trade—Brazilian, Portuguese, British, and U.S. citizens—to transport to Brazil as many slaves as possible, in case such suppression efforts succeeded. (This was similar to what occurred in the late 1820s before the treaty went into effect.)

The arrival of thousands of African slaves into Brazilian ports and along more remote beaches meant that many cities and towns included large numbers of African-Brazilian inhabitants. Table 1 shows the populations of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro from the late eighteenth until the mid-nineteenth century, on the basis of available censuses and estimates.

By 1835, 27,500 slaves resided in Salvador, constituting 42 percent of the city’s population of 65,500. African slaves numbered 17,325. João José Reis notes that “most slaves were foreigners.” The number of Brazilians of color, either free or manumitted, combined with freed Africans totaled about 19,500, meaning that white inhabitants of Salvador composed a minority...
(28.8 percent) of the city's inhabitants. In Rio de Janeiro, slaves constituted an estimated 38.3 percent of the population by 1849. The presence of nearly 80,000 slaves made Rio de Janeiro by far the city with the largest slave population in the Americas (if not in all of history). Mary Karasch estimates that African-born slaves numbered 52,341, or more than 65 percent of the urban slave population. Significant numbers of slaves, both African and creole (born in the New World), resided in other coastal towns, including São Luís (Maranhão Province), Fortaleza (Ceará), Recife (Pernambuco), Maceió (Alagoas), Vitória (Espírito Santo), the city of São Paulo, and Santos (on the coast of São Paulo Province).

Blacks from various African nations and Brazilian-born slaves profoundly influenced both urban and rural society in Brazil from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Slaves provided urban transport by carrying goods on their shoulders, unloaded large ships and sailed smaller vessels in the harbors, and served owners as domestic laborers in urban households. Slaves educated their own children and often raised the offspring of whites, provided architectural and construction skills, cultivated food on small plots both in cities and the countryside, and contributed to the creation of a rich popular culture. The majority of the African and creole slaves across the Americas ended up enduring the harsh conditions of the plantations. Enslaved workers provided the labor and expertise to ensure that owners could produce and export large quantities of agricultural commodities for a profit.

Therefore, during the years of upsurge in the first half of the nineteenth century, rural planters joined the merchant elite in paying close attention to

9. Reis, Slave Rebellion, 6.
the slave trade. On the one hand, they wanted to get rich; therefore they facilitated all aspects of the slave trade between Africa and Brazil. On the other hand, their concerns over personal and public security mounted.

One major problem was that African slaves had a proclivity to rebel. In Bahia, more than 20 rural and urban slave revolts between 1807 and 1835 left slaveowners distraught. By the 1830s, social instability caused by economic depression, provincial revolts, slave revolts and violence, slave flight, the existence of quilombos (escaped slave communities), and repression by white elites characterized Brazil’s two largest cities (Salvador and Rio de Janeiro) and their hinterlands, as well as other locales in the Brazilian Empire. The outbreaks have been characterized by two observers as “the most radical and violent rebellions in Brazilian history, before or since.”

The maintenance of social cohesion in the empire became an issue of paramount importance. Debates ensued over how to control rebellious slaves, what lay in store for a nation that included so many Africans and creole blacks among its inhabitants, and how best to attract free European colonists to settle in Brazil. Even naive observers recognized that an expanding slave trade could have dangerous results in the future. In particular, Brazilians asked whether or not Brazil might face another Haitian Revolution. Many owners of sugar estates in the interior of Bahia asserted that knowledge of the earlier slave revolt had been passed through the port of Salvador. A letter to Emperor Pedro I signed by 180 people in the interior town of São Francisco declared,


17. Reis, Slave Rebellion, 49–69; Ofício do Marques de Aguilar a o Conde de Arcos, Salvador, June 6, 1814, BNR/SM: II-33,24,29; Alexandra Comes Ferroio Castelbranco to Pedro I, Salvador, Mar. 15, 1816, BNR/SM, Documentos biográficos, C-05; Resolução do conselho interno do governo da Bahia, Salvador, Nov. 28, 1822, BNR/SM, II-34,10,23; João Severiano Maciel da Costa, Memória sobre a necessidade de abolir a introdução dos escravos no Brasil (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1821).

18. For allusions to Haiti, see Luiz Roberto de Barros Mott, “A revolução dos negros e do Brasil,” História: questões e debates 3:4 (June 1982), 52–63; Maciel da Costa, Memória, 21; Reis, Slave Rebellion, 53; Karasch, Slave Life, 324; Bethell and Carvalho, “Empire, 1822–1850,” 103; Genovese, From Rebellion to Revolution, 111.
The spirit of insurrection is seen among all types of slaves, and it is fo-mented principally by the slaves of the city, where the ideas of liberty have been communicated by black sailors coming from São Domingos.\textsuperscript{19}

The Malê Revolt

In the early hours of Sunday, January 24, 1835, the worst fears of Bahia's embattled elite came true. Some six hundred Africans, many dressed in white abadás (long frocks worn by Muslims), ran through the streets of Salvador shouting “Death to the Whites!” For three hours they fought with swords, knives, clubs, and a few pistols against at least 1,500 police, cavalry, national guard soldiers, and civilians armed with more numerous and far better weapons. The uprising had been planned for months; African slaves and freedmen (former slaves who had purchased or been granted their freedom) from both Salvador and outside the city joined in the fighting. Officials learned of the impending outbreak from an informer a few hours before it was launched, and they responded with great efficiency. More than 70 Africans died that night and in the tumultuous days that followed. In succeeding months, five hundred Africans faced punishments including execution, imprisonment, whipping, and deportation to Africa or other parts of the Brazilian Empire. Nine persons who fought on the “legal side” also died the first night. During the ensuing two decades, this failed uprising, the largest urban slave revolt in the history of the Americas, haunted slaveowners and government officials throughout Brazil.

Muslim slaves played a predominant role in the 1835 revolt. Known as Malês in Bahia, African slaves who followed Islam originated from various ethnic backgrounds, including Nagô, Jeje, Hausa, Tapa, and Bornu.\textsuperscript{20} In the early nineteenth century, ships carried many Islamic Nagô slaves from the kingdom of the Yoruba (in present-day Nigeria and the Republic of Benin) to Bahia, and Nagô Malês became an influential minority within the Muslim community of Bahia. Reis emphasizes that “they had a charged identity and provided a strong point of reference for Africans living there. Slaves and freedmen flocked to Islam in search of spiritual comfort and hope. They needed it to establish some order and dignity in their lives.”\textsuperscript{21} These Malês had great respect for written Arabic texts, and shared their knowledge of and belief in the Koran (most often by verbal communication) with other Africans living in Salvador. Such intellectual skills, discipline, and determination to practice their religious beliefs left a profound impression on free Bahians.

\textsuperscript{19} People of São Francisco, Bahia, to Pedro I, Mar. 15, 1816, BNRJ/SM, Documentos biográficos, G.9.5.

\textsuperscript{20} Reis, Slave Rebellion, 93–97.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 110.
few of whom could read or write Portuguese. In the minds of many whites, however, Islam became associated with subversion, and another Malé Revolt had to be prevented by whatever means.

The 1835 revolt made clear to government officials the potential dangers tied to an expanding slave trade. One of the first letters written by the president of Bahia after the upheaval of January 24–25 alluded to the potentially "horrifying effects of similar uprisings in a province where indubitably the blacks outnumber immeasurably the whites." President Francisco de Souza Martins feared that revolts could easily break out in other regions of the huge province (an area the size of France) and emphasized the peril of allowing so many Africans to enter Bahia as part of the illegal slave trade. He wondered how this traffic could be interrupted, given the involvement of local court officials and powerful landowners. The Revolt of the Malés, however, did little to deter planters and merchants involved in the slave trade; importations continued to climb through late 1835 and 1836, with minimal interference from local authorities along the coast.

Fear of another insurrection lingered among Bahian government and police officials. Contemporary documents portray a constant sense of anxiety in Salvador and the outlying regions of the Recôncavo, a fertile strip of land some 60 miles long and 30 miles wide surrounding the Bay of All Saints. Such concerns mounted during the federalist uprising known as the Sabiñada, in which several thousand Bahian rebels, led by radical liberals and militia and army officers, gained control of Salvador for four months, from November 1837 to March 1838. To mount an effective counterattack, the provincial government-in-exile established its base in the town of Cachoeira in the Recôncavo. Composed of several influential planters, it raised an estimated 2,200 troops. The leaders sought to ensure that a civil war that had erupted over political differences did not lead to another slave insurrection. The enlistment of slaves and free blacks in the Sabiñada's armies increased trepidation among conservative planters that their ability to control their slave property in the future might be in jeopardy. With the fierce repression

23. Bethell, Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade, 78–79.
24. Chief of Police Antonio Simões da Silva to President of the Province Manuel Antônio Galvão, Salvador, Mar. 28 and Oct. 16, 1835, APEB/SACP, mapro 2949; Chief of Police Francisco Gonçalves Martins to Vice President of the Province Joaquim Marcellino de Britto, Salvador, Nov. 27, 1835, APEB/SACP, mapro 2949.
that followed the Sabinada revolt, local militia and imperial troops ensured Bahia’s inclusion in the empire and the continuation of the institution of slavery.

Several incidents reflected the continuing insecurity among the inhabitants of Salvador in the wake of the Malê and Sabinada rebellions. On April 22, 1840, an alarm rang out at 8:00 P.M. to warn the city of the outbreak of another slave insurrection. Several families strolling the streets fled back to their homes, while “considerable forces” of male citizens met at various locations to prepare for a battle with the insurgents. Police officials ordered these groups to disband, however. In the following days, they found no evidence of slaves plotting to rebel.\textsuperscript{26}

The mid-1840s proved particularly turbulent in Bahia. In 1844, police arrested a freedman in Salvador who had been “an active participant” in the Malê Revolt. Officials accused him of conspiring with slaves and other freedmen to incite another rebellion.\textsuperscript{27} The following year, an escaped slave named Lucas gained fame for leading a group of escaped slaves and poor whites in attacks on property near the interior town of Feira de Santana.\textsuperscript{28} In another case, hundreds of rural peasants refused to depart from private estates near the town of Santo Amaro.\textsuperscript{29}

The Bahian elite demanded of its police the greatest diligence in searching for blacks involved in suspicious activities or showing signs of impending upheaval.\textsuperscript{30} Planters and overseers did not hesitate to punish slaves brutally in their attempts to thwart any inclination to challenge their authority or to organize a rebellion.\textsuperscript{31} Police officials requested that citizens who provided information about persons involved in the slave trade immediately be paid rewards for their services, as stipulated by imperial law (Article 5 of the law

\textsuperscript{26} Chief of Police Francisco de Paula de Vigno Sobão Lobato to President of the Province Thomas Xavier Garcia de Almeida, Salvador, Apr. 22, 1840, APEB/SACP, maço 2949.

\textsuperscript{27} Moura, \textit{Rebeliões da senzala}, 101–2, 118–20; Police Delegate José Ponce de Leão to Chief of Police Manuel Messias de Leão, Salvador, June 11, 1844, APEB/SACP, maço 6182; Police Delegate Pedro Cerejeira e Lima to Messias de Leão, Salvador, June 26, 1844, APEB/SACP, maço 6182.

\textsuperscript{28} Sélla Jesus de Lima, “Lucas Evangelista: O Lucas da Feira; estudo sobre a rebelião escrava em Feira de Santana, 1807–1849” (Master’s thesis, Universidade Federal da Bahia, 1990). See also Francisca Maria Pessão to President of the Province Francisco José Azevedo Soares de Andréa, Feira de Santana, Bahia, July 4, 1845, APEB/SACP, maço 3119; Edict signed by President Soares de Andréa, Salvador, May 13, 1846, ANR/SPE, I 1 402; João Joaquim da Silva to President of the Province Antonio Ignacio de Azevedo, Feira de Santana, Bahia, Sept. 10, 1846, APEB/SACP, maço 3114.

\textsuperscript{29} Antonio Cosme Bahiaense to Chief of Police, Santo Amaro, Bahia, Sept. 22, 1843, APEB/SACP, maço 3118.

\textsuperscript{30} Chief of Police João Joaquim da Silva to President Soares de Andréa, Salvador, Dec. 12, 1845, ANR/SPE, I 1 118.

\textsuperscript{31} President Soares de Andréa to Minister of Justice Manuel Antonio Calvão, Salvador, June 10, 1845, ANR/SPE, I 1 400.
to illicit recreation to violent outbursts against the oppressors.  

Nevertheless, an economic resurgence late in that decade and into the following one helped fuel the demand for huge numbers of enslaved workers.  

With the arrival of so many African slaves, violence mounted and repression increased in response.

Several incidents demonstrate the sense of disquiet that pervaded the city and province of Rio de Janeiro. For years after the Revolt of the Malês, government officials in Rio de Janeiro inquired about the reasons for the outbreak of the rebellion in Bahia and discussed measures that might thwart such an undesirable event in Rio.  

The practice of capoeira became a paramount problem for the police by the middle of the 1840s. Authorities viewed capoeira as subversive and a significant threat to their capacity to maintain order. Gangs of capoeiristas roamed the streets and terrorized the free population. On various occasions, gang members used their impressive fighting skills against police forces sent out to subdue them.

Carioca slaveowners complained that a group of free blacks was stealing slaves and selling them into the interior of Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais Provinces. The slaveowners charged that blacks of Mina descent from West Africa had “seduced” unknowing and unprotected slaves as they traveled the streets of the city. The accusation reflected the belief that African Minas in Rio had been subverted through contacts with Malê Nagôs of Bahia (who were also of West African Mina descent).  

Minister of Justice José Pimenta Bueno theorized that a communication network existed among slaves in different locales in the empire. He also attributed mounting social tensions and manifestations of slave resistance to an unknown “Gregorian Society.”

37. Ibid., 164.


41. Luiz Fortunato to Minister of Justice José Carlos Pereira Torres, Rio de Janeiro, June 12, 1845, ANRJ/Policia, J 6 204; Minister of Justice José Antonio Pimenta Bueno to President of the Province of Rio de Janeiro Aureliano da Sousa e Oliveira Coutinho, Rio de Janeiro, Mar. 15, 1848, APERJ, collection 5, maço 6.
“abolitionist agents,” or other “foreign influences that conspire to place the current administration into difficult circumstances.”

With the steady rise in slave importations in the first half of the nineteenth century, the number and size of quilombos in Rio de Janeiro Province rose. The existence of many suburban and rural quilombos forced owners to pursue various initiatives to impede slave flight and protect themselves. Police patrols sent out to capture members of the quilombos learned quickly that they could seldom find or capture escaped slaves without luck or a large contingent of troops. In a famous incident that occurred in November 1838, some two hundred slaves fled from two coffee plantations located in the parish of Paty do Alferes in the district of Vassouras. An estimated 150 men searched for the escaped slaves and caught up with them at a quilombo. In the ensuing battle, the slaves shouted “Kill the caboclos! Kill the devils!” (Caboclos were persons of mixed white and Indian descent.) The government troops captured 22 prisoners and killed 7 of the escaped slaves, while 2 soldiers died and 2 were wounded. In the court trial that followed, the judge sentenced the leader of the quilombo, known as Manuel Congo, to death. Such episodes, along with highly publicized assassinations of plantation overseers, contributed to the heightened sense of insecurity among whites during this period. Rumors of slave conspiracies mounted in both countryside and city during the 1840s.

Another legacy of the Revolt of the Malês was white hostility toward the Muslim religion. Both the appeal of Islam and the number of its followers among Africans in Bahia were increasing at the time of the 1835 rebellion. Reis points out that Islam made the slaves “want not to be slaves or inferiors; it gave them dignity; and it created new personalities for its members.” The Muslim leadership of the 1835 revolt (the most influential being Nagô Malês) had hoped to forge an “African front” among Africans of various ethnic backgrounds and religions against their mutual white enemy. To

42. Pimente Bueno to Coutinho, Mar. 15, 1848.
43. Karasch, Slave Life, 313.
44. President of the Province Manuel José de Oliveira to Minister of Justice Bernardo Pereira da Vasconcellos, Rio de Janeiro, May 4, 1838, ANRJ/SPE, I:1 860. See also Alão Eduardo Sciasino, Escravidão e a saga de Manuel Congo (Rio de Janeiro: Achiamé, 1988); and João Luiz D. Pinaud et al., Insurreição negra e a justiça (Rio de Janeiro: Expressão e Cultura, 1987).
45. See the court proceedings for the slave José Lisboa, accused of killing an overseer on a plantation in the interior of Rio de Janeiro Province. The overseer was the fourth assassinated “in the recent past.” Interim Judge João José Coutinho to Pedro II, Itaguáhy, Angra, Rio de Janeiro, Nov. 22, 1845, ANRJ/SPE, I:1 863.
46. Karasch, Slave Life, 327; Chief of Police Queiróz to Minister of Justice Soares do Souza, Rio de Janeiro, Aug. 26, 1842, ANRJ/Poloia, I:1 199.
47. Reis, Slave Rebellion, 112-24, 123, 129-36.
impede any further spread of Islam among slaves and freedpersons in the aftermath of the uprising, police seized objects used in Islamic ceremonies and any documents written in Arabic that they encountered.

Throughout 1835, police in Salvador carried out searches and arrested Africans for suspicious activities. In March, officials invaded the home of an African of Tapa descent and found “rings of the Malês, distinctly like those used by the insurgent blacks.” A month later, police received a complaint of the existence of a “society of Malês.” After arresting several slaves and freedpersons, the officials searched the house of an African of Hausa descent. They found papers and a book written in Arabic, and sent the confiscated materials to the director of the prison. Late in the year, the chief of police led 20 men on horseback and 20 infantry to a suburban location called Areas, where they encountered a large group of Africans. The police captured 24 Africans, “almost all Nagôs, and among them three fugitive slaves.”

The president of Bahia considered fears of another revolt “not without just cause.” He suggested that the imperial government negotiate with the United States over the possibility of deporting suspicious individuals to the African nation of Liberia, where some former slaves from the United States had settled. For the next 15 years, Bahian officials searched constantly and phobically for Arabic documents and books, evidence of the practice of Islamic rituals, and signs of suspicious activities or meetings where rebellion might be fomented.

Similar concern about slaves who believed in Islam, particularly those of Nagô origin, appeared in Rio de Janeiro. Within a month of the 1835 rebellion in Salvador, the chief of police in Rio requested that an African Nagô (most likely a freedman) interpret a letter “in the writing of the Nagôs of Bahia.” Chief of Police Eusébio de Queiroz learned that the document did not include letters in the language of the Nagô (Yoruba), but rather in Ara-

49. “Continuação do extracto do 29 Março 1835,” Salvador, Apr. 6, 1835, APEB/SACP, maço 2949.
50. Chief of Police Simões da Silva to President of the Province Joaquim Marcellino de Britto, Salvador, Oct. 16, 1835, APEB/SACP, maço 2949.
51. President Britto to Minister of Justice Branco, Salvador, Oct. 17, 1835, ANRJ/SPE, I 1707.
52. Chief of Police d’Argollo to President Garcia de Almeida, Salvador, July 26, 1839, APEB/SACP, maço 2949; Judge Francisco de Paulo de Vigario Saya Lobato to President Garcia de Almeida, Salvador, Apr. 22, 1840, APEB/SACP, maço 2949; Police Delegate Ponce de Leão to Chief of Police Messias de Leão, Salvador, June 11, 1844, APEB/SACP, maço 6182; Chief of Police da Silva to President Soares de Andrada, Salvador, Dec. 12, 1845, ANRJ/SPE, I 1118.
53. Chalhoub, Visões da liberdade, 187-88; Reis, Slave Rebellion, 229-30.
publication would place him in danger from a group of “refined thieves” (slaveowners and traders) who had harassed him for a decade. The appearance of such ideas and accusations in print reflected clear disillusionment in some quarters over the arrival of massive numbers of African slaves.

The “Abolition Crisis” and the End of the International Slave Trade, 1848–1850

The internal dynamics of the slave system of Brazil merit close scrutiny in determining why slave importations from Africa ended abruptly at mid-century. Although they desired to adapt to rapid ideological and technological change, planters and merchants remained adamant in their quest to import slaves throughout the 1840s. Advocates of the slave trade sought to impede the spread of radical ideologies and prevent social instability similar to that confronted by European urban elites and fellow slaveowners in the Caribbean Basin and other nations in South America (events about which they kept informed).

Slave trade proponents encouraged expanded and more efficient police forces, repressed abolitionist publications, and defended themselves as responsible citizens who had gained an international reputation as enlightened masters. Such initiatives, however, failed to diffuse agitation throughout the Brazilian Empire. In the words of Eugene Genovese, Brazilian slaveowners confronted an “abolition crisis” in 1848 and the months that followed, particularly in Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. The crisis can be traced to outright slave violence (what Genovese terms “quasi-insurgent struggles”), popular fears of revolutionary activities by blacks, and the appearance of organized

66. Genovese, From Rebellion to Revolution, 111.
“any provisions which make hateful distinctions concerning mulatto citizens of Brazil or freedmen, such as excluding them from belonging to a religious brotherhood, etc., are unconstitutional.”

Several events made the years between 1848 and 1850 particularly turbulent. Accusations against Martins of corruption and personal involvement in the slave trade undermined the credibility of his public statements in support of suppression and emancipation. Like many other political leaders past and present, Martins hesitated to extricate himself from business dealings that had brought him financial wealth and political power. His desire to rid the port of slaves and freedmen most likely had more to do with protecting the interests of slaveowners in Salvador and the Recôncavo (himself included) than with humanitarian resolve. Martins received harsh criticism in Bahian newspapers. In spite of the public condemnation, however, Martins was appointed minister of internal affairs for Brazil in 1852.

Assassinations of overseers on plantations in the Recôncavo also received coverage in newspapers and police correspondence. An abolitionist party emerged in Salvador, composed of slaves and free persons. Members of the “Philanthropic Society of Bahia to Benefit those Brazilians who had the Misfortune to be Born Slaves” sought recognition of its statutes in early 1850, in a petition the chief of police promptly rejected. Chief André da Gama wrote that dangerous persons of the lowest classes who joined such an organization would quickly become “fanaticized” in a liberation movement. Public notices appeared, encouraging Bahians to break away from the central government (similar to the ideas propounded during the Sabinada).

In October 1849, an epidemic of yellow fever spread quickly through Salvador and the interior of Bahia. Many believed the disease had been passed from a North American slave ship that had originated in New Orleans and had possibly stopped in Havana. President Martins estimated that one hundred thousand Bahians had been affected in a few months, noting that a mere one thousand slaves and “free Africans” had become sick. Martins theorized

83. See the mostly illegible letter penned by Martins, in which he defends his reputation, Feb. 3, 1851, ANRJ/SPE, I/1 710.
84. Antonio Rodrigues Navarro to President of the Province Manuel Messias de Leão, Maragogipe, Bahia, May 11, 1848, ANRJ/SPE, I/1 710.
85. Estatutos da sociedade filantrópica estabelecida no capital da Bahia em benefício dos brazileiros que tiverão a infelcidade de nascer escravos (n.d., n.p.); Chief of Police André Corsino Pinto Chichorro da Gama to police delegates and subdelegates, Salvador, May 1, 1850, ANRJ/SPE, I/1 405.
86. President of the Province Magalhães to Minister of Justice Pimenta Bueno, Salvador, Mar. 2 and 14, 1848, ANRJ/SPE, I/1 710.
that perhaps blacks possessed a special ability to resist infection. In private correspondence, Martins admitted that the fever had created serious problems in his province. Ships remained anchored in the port for extended periods, less food arrived in Salvador from the interior, and troops deserted from the military arsenals and the national guard. Although Martins made no reference to the slave trade, his comments reflect both personal and elite concern about a decreasing competence to maintain order in the province. Yellow fever persisted in Bahia for almost four years; in May 1853, Bahians confronted another outbreak.

Comparable tensions surfaced in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The minister of justice for the empire lamented that slaves in the province of Rio de Janeiro had gained knowledge of slave resistance in other parts of Brazil. Police searched the houses of Mina African freedpersons believed to be responsible for secret meetings. The police claimed that Mina Africans resident in Rio de Janeiro corresponded in Arabic with other Africans of the same origin living in the provinces of Bahia, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo. Finding an “infinity of papers written ... in the words of the Mina-Malé language,” the chief of police ordered the arrest and interrogation of suspicious Africans. Because Brazilian law did not allow the detention of individuals for religious practices, the police released the Africans. Chief Antonio Simões da Silva emphasized that these “foreigners” from Africa could easily provoke disturbances in the city, and he encouraged close observation of their activities: “everything found in the searches was just like what was found in Bahia during the slave insurrection of 1835.”

Several factors added to the sense of insecurity felt by the more affluent free inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro. Capoeira gangs continued to plague police forces in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Attempts to disperse large nocturnal meetings of slaves and freedpersons ended in violent confrontations and embarrassed the police, who were poorly prepared for such encounters. A downtown gathering of some 2,500 people “of different classes and

88. President of the Province Martins to Minister of the Empire Monte Alegre, Salvador, Jun. 1, 1850, ANJR/SPE, II j 9 339; Member of the Câmara de Salvador to President of the Province Joaquim Maurício Wanderley, Salvador, Oct. 25, 1853, ANJR/SPE, II J j 339.
89. Director of Public Health Dr. José Vieira da Faria Aragão e Atilha et al. to President Wanderley, Salvador, Feb. 12, 1853, ANJR/SPE, II J j 339; Atilha to Wanderley, Salvador, Apr. 5, 1853, ANJR/SPE, II J j 339.
90. Pinheiro Bueno to Coutinho, Mar. 15, 1848.
conditions" turned into a riot when a merchant failed to live up to promises concerning the availability of goods. In the interior, owners of several plantations expressed panic in response to a rumor of an imminent insurrection. Rural quilombos existed in several suburban and more remote locations, inspiring slaves to flee from their owners. Pursuing one attempt to destroy a quilombo north of the Itapuana River, members of the search party were astonished to find a community of two to three hundred escaped slaves. Members of the quilombo cultivated manioc, beans, sugar, and corn with proficiency. Another group of slaves plotted to steal a boat and sail it along the coast. The chief of police who described this episode in a "top secret" letter observed incredulously that the slaves had acted out of the belief that Great Britain had declared them free.

In December 1849, the dreaded epidemic of yellow fever spread to Rio de Janeiro, leaving 4,160 persons dead (the official government figure and most likely a low estimate) in that province by the end of the following year. In seeking the sources of the deadly epidemic, medical investigators found plenty of evidence to demonstrate that yellow fever had been brought into Brazilian ports on ships. In the hot and humid summer of 1849-50, both immigrant ships (from Europe and from the United States en route to California) and slaving vessels filled the harbor of Rio de Janeiro. Some health officials argued that yellow fever could be traced to the slaves. They subscribed to the ideas of the French physician M.-F.-M. Audouard, who claimed in the 1820s and 1830s that the transmission of yellow fever could be linked to the filthy conditions on slave ships. Other Brazilian medical doctors paid closer attention to the "human cargo" that survived the transatlantic voyage from Africa, speculating that Africans might have had a special capacity for carrying yellow fever germs in their bodies. Such an interpretation arose from the notion of blacks' greater resistance to infection than that of whites in Rio de Janeiro (similar to what President Martins had witnessed in Bahia).

The questions raised in 1850 over the origins of the yellow fever epidemic most likely contributed to the imperial government's decision to halt

94. Karasch, Slave Life, 331.
95. Police Delegate Claudino do Couto e Souza to President of the Province Couto Ferraz, Rio de Janeiro, Nov. 2, 1848, APERJ, collection 166, caixa 13, pasta 4.
96. Chief of Police Vancano José Lisbon to President of the Province Couto Ferraz, Rio de Janeiro, Nov. 22, 1850, APERJ, collection 96, caixa 1, pasta 1.
the slave trade. In January, senators noted that yellow fever had not appeared in the province of Pernambuco because the slave trade to that province had been halted.\footnote{Ibid., 448, n. 14.}
Later that year, Manuel Alves Branco declared in a speech that he considered it quite “probable” that one of the principal reasons for the arrival of yellow fever was the slave trade.\footnote{“Sessão em 9 de Setembro de 1859,” Anais do senado do império do Brasil (Rio de Janeiro: Senado Federal, 1978) (hereafter cited as ASIB), 518–19.}
In August, vehement protests by inhabitants of Recife in response to the arrival of a ship from Salvador erupted out of fear of yellow fever. Free citizens questioned the origins of the slaves on board (whether recently imported from Africa or Brazilian born), in spite of an inspection of passports by the chief of police that found no irregularities.\footnote{Interim Chief of Police André Corsino Pinto Chichorro da Cama to Vice President of Bahia Dr. Alvaro Tiberio de Monteiro e Lima, Salvador, Aug. 8, 1850, ANRF/SPE, II 1 405.}
Given the extraordinary number of Africans transported into Rio de Janeiro and Bahia in the 1840s, the issue of a potential labor shortage posed far less of a problem for imperial officials than an epidemic of yellow fever that had infected one-third of the 265,000 inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro in less than a year. Furthermore, the uneasy planters and urban elite understood that yellow fever could easily become a formidable ally to rebellious slaves, as it had been in Haiti.\footnote{Chalhoub, “Politics of Disease Control,” 445–51.}
Numerous letters written between 1848 and 1850 depict unstable conditions in several provinces with large slave populations. In São Luís de Maranhão, President Joaquim Francisco Franco de Sá offered rewards to slave hunters who captured slaves. The president paid the highest reward, 20 milréis (about U.S.$11.60), for slaves caught in quilombos.\footnote{Maria Januária Vilela Santos, A baia e a insurreição de escravos no Maranhão (São Paulo: Atica, 1989), 71–72.}
A liberal armed rebellion in Pernambuco (1848–49) forced the provincial president to request troops from other provinces to help restore order. Although the revolt centered mainly on political struggles among the landowning elite, the rebels offered to end slavery in return for British recognition. In spite of its short duration, this revolt was a bloody affair, leaving five hundred dead in the streets of Recife after an attack on that city.\footnote{Bothell and Carvalho, “Empire, 1822–1850,” 104–6; Eltis, Economic Growth, 214; Emílio Viatto da Costa, The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985), 68–69.}
In Bahia, President Martins signed a decree offering monetary rewards for fugitive slaves. The amounts awarded depended on how long the slaves had been apart from their owners.\footnote{Tabella No. 3, Palácio do Governo da Bahia, signed by President Martins, Salvador, Mar. 21, 1850.} Some 50 armed slaves shouting “Viva
a Liberdade!” fought with troops in Espírito Santo in early 1849. Although quickly put down, the revolt left the planters in that province shaken. Police officials in Rio de Janeiro responded to published accounts of the “Queimado Insurrection” (named for the district where it broke out) by calling for “circumspection, prudence, and reserve” so as “to prevent any [negative] moral effects the dissemination of such notices might produce in various parts of the province [of Rio de Janeiro].” Slave assassinations of planter families and the formation of quilombos in Minas Gerais also received notice.

In the province of São Paulo, police officials wrote, “it is without question that the majority of the slaves have become imbued with the idea that they should be free.” A “huge quilombo” near the port city of Santos provoked much turmoil. Alluding to an insufficient number of soldiers to maintain order in the province, the chief of police expressed the hope that funds could be made available to hire slave hunters who would “instill great fear among the negros.”

British diplomats and slave-trade opponents sought to exploit this widespread instability. The British chargé d’affaires in Brazil, James Hudson, encouraged his government to incite a slave rebellion in late 1848. Hudson called for a naval blockade and occupation of Bahia, writing, “it is almost certain that the negroes will not let such an occasion of securing their freedom escape.” Hudson predicted, “the existence of slavery itself in other portions of Brazil would be vitally affected.” Fomenting slave violence in Brazil, however, would not have boded well with British investors seeking stable markets to export British and European goods in the recently opened transatlantic steamship trade. For this reason and others, the British For-


108. Police Delegate José Vergueira to Chief of Police Francisco Lourenço de Freitas, Santos, São Paulo, Sept. 7, 1848, APESP/Policia, caixa 2552; Joaquim Francisco Pereira Jorges to President of the Province of São Paulo Vicente Pires da Matta, Santos, Oct. 12, 1850, APESP/Policia, caixa 2454.


110. U.S. diplomat J. Watson Webb observed that Great Britain had made great strides after opening up the steam trade between Liverpool and Rio de Janeiro in 1850, “doubling the importations of Britain and France into Brazil in three years.” This cut into the U.S.-Brazil export trade (Webb estimated by 20 percent per year), which had been rapidly expanding in the 1840s; that trade used clipper ships. Webb to Brazilian rep. Carlos Carneiro de Campos, Rio de Janeiro, Sept. 23, 1864, AHI/Notas, 280/1/8. See also Henry R. Wise to Ernesto Ferreira França, Rio de Janeiro, Sept. 24, 1844, AHI/Notas, 280/1/1. For descriptions of the expansion of the British Empire in the name of antislavery, see Richard Graham, Britain and the Onset of Modernization in Brazil, 1850–1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988); Howard
eign Office rejected such a plan for more subtle initiatives. These included British financial support for newspapers critical of the slave trade published in Salvador (O século) and Rio de Janeiro (O Brasil and Correto da Tarde).\(^{111}\)

British attempts to halt the international slave trade to Brazil accomplished little until late 1849. The possible reasons for this failure included the high costs of a wide-ranging naval presence in the Atlantic Basin, weak leadership in Brazil, conservative opposition in Great Britain, and a refusal to cooperate by powerful investors in England, the United States, and Brazil.\(^{112}\) Within one year, however, the trade ground to a halt. Official and popular sentiment contributed to this rapid shift in favor of suppression. The strengthened conservative imperial government in Rio de Janeiro after October 1849 paid far closer attention to the question of ending the slave trade as a means to open the way for good relations with Great Britain.\(^{113}\)

Influential ministers of that government—Eusébio de Queiroz, Marquês de Monte Alegre, Paulino Soares de Sousa, Bernardo Pereira da Vasconcelos—also had long experienced the strains inherent in Brazil’s slave regime. Fear of slave violence and concern over an incapacity to maintain order pressed on these individuals as much as a desire not to lose domestic and international prestige in the face of aggressive British naval commanders. Many lower-level provincial officials joined in the effort to end the trade in response to British resolve, the actions of their own imperial government, increased sensitivity to the abuse and immorality associated with slave disembarkations, and firsthand knowledge that the arrival of more African slaves made their jobs more difficult.\(^{114}\)

Even landowners who had depended on slave labor expressed relief that efforts to halt importations had succeeded. One letter signed by five planters resident in the interior of the province of São Paulo included the striking observation, “fortunately, the trade in African slaves has ended . . . [now] the lack of workers can only be filled by [free] colonists.”\(^{115}\)

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111. Eells, Economic Growth, 115


113. Ibid., 107.

114. President of Bahia Wanderley to Minister of Justice Conselheiro Thomas Nabuco d’Araujo, Salvador, Oct. 24, 1854, ANRJ/SP, I 1 711; President of Pernambuco Victor d’Oliveira to Minister of Justice Queiroz, Recife, July 28, 1851, ANRJ/SP, I 1 824; President of Pernambuco Francisco Antonio Ribeiro to Minister of Justice Sousa Ramos, Recife, Mar. 17, 1853, ANRJ/SP, I 1 824.

115. Francisco Martins de Montz et al. to President of the Province of São Paulo Jusino de Saramento Silva, Jundiaí, São Paulo, Jan. 31, 1854, APESP/Ofícios diversos, caixa 1897;
Public speeches in the imperial senate demonstrate how concern about slave resistance and social tensions influenced the debate over ending the slave trade. Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcelos chastised the president of Rio de Janeiro in July 1848 for believing rumors of insurrections throughout the empire. Vasconcelos charged that the fears about insurrections resembled public feeling in 1835 after the Revolt of the Malês; he estimated (incorrectly) that the slave population in Rio de Janeiro had dropped by half from an earlier time, in an attempt to portray the city as free of major racial tensions. Other high-ranking officials expressed far greater concern about potential revolts. They explicitly pointed to the threat posed by the arrival of massive numbers of slaves along the coast from Bahia south. Minister of Foreign Affairs Paulino Soares de Sousa cited estimates published in Rio de Janeiro’s abolitionist newspapers that

fifty thousand, sixty thousand, or one hundred thousand Africans had been imported each year to Brazil. Would we not be advised by all moral considerations, by civilization, in our desire to ensure our own security and that of our children, to put an end to the importation of Africans? Seeking to prevent a resurgence of the slave trade a few months after passage of the Queiroz Law, the conservative politician Honório Hermeto Carneiro Leão asked the senate,

Was not the Importation of Africans excessive in the scale that it reached, was it not far too much, would it not have brought future dangers to the nation? ... I think, Mr. President, that the time has come for the government to end this dangerous situation by putting a limit on the trade in slaves; and besides, we have accepted this obligation by signing a treaty.

Other members of the senate condemned the social upheaval several provinces witnessed during the 1840s, arguing that such instability threatened the institutions of the imperial government.

By signing the Queiroz bill into law in September 1850, Pedro II showed that the imperial government was determined as never before to bring Brazil’s international slave trade to a rapid halt. A short 12 months earlier, few observers would have predicted such an outcome. Public officials’ and private groups’ minimal condemnation of the slave trade before 1850 may be

118. “Sessão em 27 de Maio de 1851,” ASIB, 387.
traced, among other factors, to the fear of a violent reaction from the many people tied to the slave trade and the institution of slavery. Yet it became clear to citizens from different social backgrounds that unabated importations of African slaves could easily lead to more urban and rural revolts. When social tensions reached a high in 1848 and the months that followed, particularly in the ports of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, outright popular support for termination coalesced quickly.  

Why the Slave Trade Did Not Resume After 1850

The implementation of successful suppression policies by the Brazilian and British governments helped to ensure that few African slaves arrived in Brazil after September 1850. Official records list nine ships leaving 3,287 slaves on Brazilian shores in 1851, followed by two landings in 1852 and one last disembarkation in 1855. It is most likely that other landings occurred during these years at clandestine locations that did not enter official estimates. By April 1852, the British navy had ended its policy of cruising Brazil’s territorial waters, thereby allowing Brazil independently to maintain vigilance against slaving vessels. With continuing demand for African slaves from plantation owners and small farmers, however, along with the presence of hundreds of persons willing to take part in illegal slave-trading operations, the question arises as to why large slave importations did not resume. The slave trade flourished from Africa to Cuba throughout the 1850s and the first half of the 1860s, so why did its ugly head not reappear between Africa and Brazil?

One interpretation centers on international opinion and ideology. Pedro II and his advisers sought to portray Brazil as a civilized nation capable of acting responsibly. As the international movement to end the slave trade and the institution of slavery spread, an educated minority in Brazil sought to align itself with the forces of progress and morality. Leslie Bethell writes that the 1850 law was “speedily and effectively enforced by the provincial presidents, provincial chiefs of police and county delegates, district and county judges, the national guard, the army, the navy and the special courts.” Widespread repudiation of further disembarkations had emerged, impressing British and Brazilian observers alike. Various forces gave impetus to this rapid transformation, including newspaper editorials, clear signs that the new Brazilian law would actually be enforced, and a desire of many urban workers and small farmers to share in the benefits of free labor and free trade. Yet such an interpretation fails to explain the determined stance against resumption of the slave trade among Brazilian political leaders closely

120. “Sessão em 2 de Julho de 1850,” ASIB, 49.
122. Ibid., 109.
aligned with powerful planter interests, and overlooks internal conditions in Brazil in the first half of the 1850s.

Slave resistance continued throughout the empire between 1851 and 1855. In no way did the tensions that had mounted in the years before passage of the Queiroz law lessen; if anything, they increased. In the Bahian Recôncavo, slaves assassinated overseers on plantations. Police delegates wrote of the need for reinforcements to prevent slave rebellions. In Salvador, police arrested dozens of slaves and freedpersons, invoking laws passed in the wake of the Revolt of the Malês to legitimate such detentions. The repeated reference to the year 1835 in police documents was a reminder of what might ensue with inept enforcement or lack of vigilance.124

Urban police arrested slaves and freedpersons “for suspicion of an attempt of the crime of insurrection.”125 In 1854, the provincial government doubled the number (to four hundred men) of “pedestrian guards” patrolling the streets of Salvador.126 In the parish of Santo Antonio Alem do Carmo, a police inspector attempting to arrest participants in a candomblé ceremony with the help of local inhabitants was threatened by a hostile group of blacks. The inspector asked for troop reinforcements. Later, in his description of events, he noted that this African-Brazilian religious ritual often attracted more than two hundred persons who “practiced immorality” that, he claimed, might result in deaths.127 With large numbers of slaves, freed and free blacks, and even some whites meeting at hidden candomblé houses, authorities viewed such activities with particular trepidation and distrust.128

A huge slave revolt erupted in Alagoas in July 1852 and caused national reverberations. An estimated 30 to 100 slaves attacked five engenhos (sugar plantations), killing the wife and daughter of an owner; set fire to several buildings on the estates; and fled into nearby Jussara Forest. As the insurgents raced through the countryside, fellow slaves joined them. Several of the fugitives suffered serious wounds during and after the attacks on the engenhos. One official estimated that 21 slaves died in the fighting; the posse sent out to capture the fugitives arrested another 19.129 Among those im-

124. See, e.g., the well-preserved police records of Salvador for the month of May 1853 in APEB/SACP, mazo 3117.
125. Police Delegate João José d’Oliveira Junqueira to Vice President of the Province Monteiro e Lima, Salvador, July 7, 1853, APEB/SACP, mazo 3117.
126. Mattoso, Bahia, século XIX, 246.
127. Francisco de Moura Rouxal to police subdelegate, second district, freguesia of Santo Antonio Alem do Carmo, Salvador, Oct. 21, 1855, APEB/SACP, mazo 6231.
129. Vice President of Alagoas Manuel Sobral Pinto to Minister of Justice Sousa Ramos, Maceió, Alagoas, July 22, 1852, ANRJ/SPE, IJ 1 360.
prisoned, six suffered whippings imposed as punishment by a court decision late in the year. Owners of the engenhos involved downplayed the revolt, claiming in November that the province enjoyed "peace and tranquility." Such optimism did not linger long. Less than 14 months later, in January 1854, the president of Alagoas asked officials in the neighboring provinces of Pernambuco and Bahia to make sure that no arms or gunpowder was sent to Alagoas or other nearby provinces. Although he made no specific reference to the earlier uprising, he apparently feared that such materials might end up in the hands of rebellious slaves.\textsuperscript{130}

In the northern district of São Matheus in the province of Espírito Santo, rebellious slaves forced police delegates to request reinforcements to maintain order. One observer wrote that public notices of the demise of the international slave trade had convinced slaves that they had been freed. As an expression of their dissatisfaction, many slaves fled from the manioc farms where they worked to join quilombos in the forests of the interior. Planters hoped quickly to destroy these "agglomerations of slaves" by offering money to police and slave hunters for their services. Officials involved in these searches emphasized that confiscation of weapons in the hands of the quilombolas should be a priority. Slaveowners demanded that all measures be taken to impede the further spread of destructive rumors accusing planters of refusing to implement the supposed imperial emancipation decrees.\textsuperscript{131}

In the province of Rio de Janeiro, various manifestations of slave resistance created considerable public turmoil. In September 1854, some 50 slaves took over a soap and candle factory near Gamboa beach in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The factory owner claimed that the black workers planned to kill all the whites. At least 120 troops arrived to resolve the standoff, which ended with the arrest of 17 blacks.\textsuperscript{132} Police delegates requested that the evening bells be rung at 9:30 and 10:00 P.M. to make sure that slaves and freedpersons withdrew from the streets before the final curfew. An insufficient number of "free Africans" were available to light street lamps at night, which drew complaints from leery urban inhabitants.\textsuperscript{133} The chief of police lamented that free persons of the lowest classes had joined capoeira

\textsuperscript{130} Chief of Police of Rio de Janeiro Alexandre Joaquim de Queirós to Minister of Justice Nãube de Araújo, Rio de Janeiro, Jan. 16, 1854, ANRJ/Policia, IJ 6 217.

\textsuperscript{131} Police Delegate Reginaldo Coimbra dos Santos to President of the Province of Espírito Santo José Bonifácio Nascentes d'Azambuja, São Matheus, Espírito Santo, Oct. 13, 1854, ANRJ/SPE, IJ 1 732; President d'Azambuja to Minister of Justice Queiroz, Vitória, Espírito Santo, Nov. 11, 1851, ANRJ/SPE, IJ 1 732; Almada, Escravidão, 105.

\textsuperscript{132} Chief of Police Teofilo Ribeiro de Bezende to Minister of Justice Nãube de Araújo, Rio de Janeiro, Sept. 5, 1854, ANRJ/Policia, IJ 6 215.

\textsuperscript{133} Police subdelegate Manuel José Pinto Sarqueira to Minister of Justice Nãube de Araújo, Rio de Janeiro, Nov. 17, 1854, ANRJ/Policia, IJ 6 218.

\textsuperscript{134} Chief of Police Queirós to Minister of Justice Nãube de Araújo, Rio de Janeiro, Oct. 29, 1853, ANRJ/Policia, IJ 6 216.
gangs composed of slaves and freedmen. He observed that capoeiristas had become particularly daring and dangerous; their street violence had resulted in beatings and even deaths. He wondered what sort of punishments might be employed to dissuade whites from joining blacks in these gangs.  

Numerous searches for quilombos plying Tijuca and the other dense forests around Rio, and reached farther west into the interior of the province. "Evening reunions" among slaves from various plantations to participate in "mysterious practices" incited the wrath of planters. In such a convulsive milieu, the imperial minister of justice, who lived in the city of Rio de Janeiro, wrote that the imperial government must not weaken in its resolve to prevent any resumption of the slave trade.

One other major event undermined the efforts of large investors who sought to return to the "golden age" of the slave trade. In May 1855, the first signs of cholera appeared in the northern port city of Belém, Pará. Passengers on a ship soon carried the epidemic to Bahia; within six months it spread to the provinces of Sergipe, Alagoas, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, and Pernambuco. By early November 1855, Rio de Janeiro Province was facing a major crisis; within four weeks of cholera's appearance there, some 2,700 persons died. By the time the epidemic subsided in mid-1856, between 150,000 and 200,000 people had perished.

Lower-class free blacks and slaves bore the brunt of the cholera epidemic, a result of the unsanitary conditions that engulfed the vast majority of African Brazilians in both city and countryside. As in the earlier yellow fever epidemic, doctors did not know the specific reasons for the devastating outbreak. Many considered cholera a contagious virus that could be transmitted between persons.

In the midst of the epidemic, a ship seeking to disembark African slaves

135. Chief of Police Sequeira to Minister of Justice Luiz Antonio Barboza, Rio de Janeiro, June 15, 1853, ANRJ/Policia, IJ 6 216.
136. Jerônimo Martins Figueiredo de Mello to Minister of Justice Nabuco de Araujo, Nov. 9, 1854, Rio de Janeiro, ANRJ/Policia, IJ 6 218; Francisco Diogo Pereira de Vasconcellos to Minister of Justice Queiroz, Rio de Janeiro, Dec. 16, 1851, ANRJ/Policia, IJ 6 215.
138. Minister of Justice Sousa Ramos to President of the Province of Rio de Janeiro João Pereira Darrigue Faro, Rio de Janeiro, June 17, 1852, APERJ, PP2, collection 2, maço 1.
139. Police Delegate Antonio Plato da Silva Valle to President of the Province of Rio de Janeiro Luís Antonio Barboza Paraty, Rio de Janeiro, Apr. 22, 1855, APERJ, collection 96, maço 2, pasta 1.
140. Chief of Police Luís Carlos de Paiva Teixeira to President of the Province of Pernambuco José Bento da Cunha e Figueiredo, Recife, Mar. 22, 1856, ANRJ/SPE, IJ 1 825.
appeared off the coast of Brazil. One of hundreds of ships from the United States involved in the Brazilian slave trade, the *Mary E. Smith* had left Boston on August 25, 1855; in preparing for its departure from Boston harbor, the ship and its crew had raised the suspicions of U.S. and British authorities. After a voyage to West Africa, where it took on some four hundred slaves between the ages of 15 and 20, the *Mary E. Smith* arrived near São Mateus (northern Espírito Santo) in January 1856. Informed of a possible attempt to leave African slaves on the coast, the British steamship *Olinda* caught up with the ship and escorted it to Salvador. Port authorities observed that 106 of the Africans had died, while the survivors, barely alive, suffered from a variety of sicknesses, including cholera morbus.

Bahian officials condemned the *Mary E. Smith* and brought the surviving Africans into the city. This act “caused terror among the population of the city,” spurred by the belief that the presence of such debilitated blacks would further spread the cholera epidemic. Bahian doctors and health officials offered medical care and provided food, which supposedly improved the Africans’ health. In spite of such measures, the majority of the Africans who landed soon died. Meanwhile, cholera markedly increased in the city in February. Many inhabitants attributed the upsurge to the Africans from the *Mary E. Smith* and the decision that allowed them to disembark.

The cholera epidemic devastated the province of Bahia. The estimated 46,000 persons who died included thousands of slaves in the districts of Santo Amaro and Cachoeira in the Recôncavo, regions with numerous sugar engenhos. A description of the period offers an estimate that 9,332 inhabitants died in Salvador between August 1855 and May 1856. One logical response to this crisis in terms of the available work force would have been to import more African slaves, no matter what the dangers involved. Yet many Brazilians recognized that the arrival of more “unseasoned” Africans could easily lead to the further spread of the dreaded cholera morbus. Even the most ambitious planters could not disregard the dilemma. A future resumption of the international slave trade might result in consequences far beyond monetary loss, public humiliation, or British incursions into Brazil.

144. Bethell, *Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade*, 374; President of the Province Monteiro e Lima to Minister of Empire Couto Ferreira, Salvador, Mar. 4, 1856, ANRJ/SPE, IJ 9:340.
ian ports. The cholera epidemic of 1855-56 helped to seal the fate of the transatlantic slave trade to Brazil.

Conclusions

Political and economic reform are seldom inspired solely by humanitarian concern or progressive thought. Instead, they often emerge in response to social pressures that make the continuation of existing policies or practices untenable. Slave resistance and the fears it instilled in the master class were major factors in the rapid change of the political tide against the slave traffic. Government leaders, merchants, and planters did not forget the 1835 Revolt of the Malês, even if the number of participants had been small.147 As thousands of African slaves entered the provinces of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro between 1835 and 1850, elite fears of instability mounted. In ending the international slave trade, imperial officials hoped to resolve a domestic problem and at the same time appeal to international opinion.

African slaves and freedpersons residing in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro also did not forget the Revolt of the Malês. The 1835 rebellion demonstrated Africans’ ability to organize and fight for their freedom in an urban setting. In the subsequent 15 years, suburban and rural quilombos proliferated both along the coast and in the interior. Subtle and more obvious manifestations of resistance and organization aided slaves in their struggle against repressive masters. Examples of such endeavors included discreet Islamic religious services, nighttime candomblé ceremonies, urban brotherhoods, communication networks between city and countryside, an interprovincial and transatlantic trading network controlled by freedpersons, and the appearance of abolitionist groups composed of slaves and free persons.148

The rapid shift in favor of suppression in late 1849 and subsequent months did not happen in a vacuum. Instead, it should be seen as an outcome of myriad social tensions that had mounted steadily during the 1840s.149 To maintain stability, slaveowners and provincial governments took extraordinary measures to diffuse threats to the established order. These included the creation of large urban police forces, the employment of brutal slave hunters, and the maintenance of effective communication and information networks throughout a large empire. Devastating epidemics, combined with unceasing slave resistance, made further importations of Africans a very unappealing proposition after 1850 to most free Brazilians residing in the cities and the countryside.

147. Mattoso, Bahia, século XIX, 542.
149. See the insightful comments in this regard by Senhor Marquês de Abrantes, “Sessão em 28 de Maio de 1856,” ASHB, 227-34.