

## **19<sup>th</sup> Century Urban Garbage at Cemetery of the New Blacks Area: Historical Archeology and Human Rights**

### **Lixo Urbano do Século XIX no Cemitério dos Pretos Novos Área: arqueologia histórica e Direitos Humanos**

DOI: 10.55905/ijsmvtv9n4-017

Recebimento dos originais: 03/07/2023

Aceitação para publicação: 02/08/2023

**Natalia Borges da Costa**

Master's Degree in Public Security

Institution: Universidade Vila Velha (UVV)

Address: Avenida Comissário José Dantas de Melo, 21, Boa Vista II, Vila Velha - ES,  
CEP: 29102-920

E-mail: ntbgcosta@gmail.com

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1864-255X>

#### **ABSTRACT**

The Cemetery of the New Blacks is considered the largest slave cemetery in the Americas. The present work has as objective to approach the social aspect of the urban garbage that was introjected in the archaeological site of the Cemetery of the New Blacks in parallel with its formation. It is an approach to Historical Archeology and Human Rights. It's the Urban Garbage at the Cemetery of the New Blacks and its Archaeological Context.

**Keywords:** slavery, archaeology, Human Rights, cemetery, new blacks.

#### **RESUMO**

O Cemitério dos Pretos Novos é considerado o maior cemitério de escravos das Américas. O presente trabalho tem como objetivo abordar o aspecto social do lixo urbano que foi introjetado no sítio arqueológico do Cemitério dos Pretos Novos paralelamente à sua formação. É uma abordagem à Arqueologia Histórica e aos Direitos Humanos. É o Lixo Urbano do Cemitério dos Pretos Novos e seu Contexto Arqueológico.

**Palavras-chave:** escravidão, arqueologia, Direitos Humanos, cemitério, pretos novos.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

With the increase in the slave trade, from 1769 onwards, the main port for disembarking in Brazil was no longer Praça XV and became Valongo. Records at the time report that the situation was depressing. The slaves that arrived were called "New Blacks"

(PEREIRA, 2006): half-naked, sick and skeletal, they crowded into barracks for a period of time that could last up to a year, as they expected to be sold. In this way, many could not resist and would die due to mistreatment and various illnesses. The Marquis of Lavradio then created the Cemetery of the New Blacks (still in 1769). This Cemetery operated for 61 years: the bodies were thrown on the ground, burned, probably in common and open graves until they were full, that is, the bodies were exposed for a few days. The Cemetery of the New Blacks is considered the largest slave cemetery in the Americas. Between 20 and 30 thousand dead were buried. Of course, official records state a smaller number (6,122 between 1824 and 1830).

For legal reasons (trafficking was prohibited), this necropolis was closed in 1830. With time, the city of Rio de Janeiro began the landfill over the swamp and the beach. The memory of the New Blacks martyrdom was increasingly in the past, being forgotten over time. In 1996, more than 100 years later, the couple Maria de La Merced and Petrúcio Guimarães began a renovation of their home, located at Rua Pedro Ernesto, 36, in Gamboa. The masons then found human bones a few centimeters above the ground: it was the great archaeological find of the old Cemetery of the New Blacks. The real reason for the preference of black slaves over Indians was: the death of most Indians. They were expelled from their lands, massacred, caught diseases from whites like measles, flu and smallpox, were enslaved and forced to work until they died. Thus, Africans became a priority in slavery. When they died, Brazilians simply bought more slaves from the slave trade.

The Catholic Church authorized African slavery and was against indigenous slavery (FAZENDA, 1927). The Church convinced Africans that they deserved to be slaves, as a price for their sins. In relation to the Indians, the Church insisted on catechizing them. Africans were traded as slaves since the 15th century by the Portuguese on the African coast. Later, other Christian countries in Europe also began to fight for the right to sell human beings as slaves. Catholic and Protestant Christian countries: Spain, France, England, Holland and Denmark. The European bourgeoisie had the great help of slavery to get richer and richer. But Brazilian traffickers carried out more than half of all the slave trade in Africa (SILVA, 2003). The inhabitants of Brazil kept a huge part of the profits from the slave trade. The richest African slave traders lived in Rio de Janeiro and

Salvador. Some of them were richer than the landowners, due to the wealth accumulated by the traffic. They acted like bankers lending money. Those who were most interested in the traffic were the traffickers and the landowners who needed the labor (CARVALHO, 1987).

## **2 GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION**

The studied site is located in the Port Zone, an area that I will discuss here (with the exception of Cajú), in other words, the Administrative Region I. It is necessary to describe what this part of the City of Rio de Janeiro was like from the city's origins to the reforms that took place during the administration of Mayor Pereira Passos (TAVARES, 2012). The works carried out at the Pier of the Port, which began in the early 20th century, profoundly changed the region. The area was a narrow strip of land hemmed in by Guanabara Bay and a mountain wall that separated it from the rest of the city; and located to the east of the peninsula in a trapezoid shape. The coast was characterized by a continuity of coves and among them the most important were: the Valongo, Gamboa and Alferes sacks. In the end, the sea entered the continent, thus forming the sac of São Diogo, with Formosa Beach, with mangroves that reached Santana Field.

Illustration 1: 1825 Map (EL-DAHDAH, 2021)



Source: EL-DAHDAH, 2021 (red arrow made by me)

The area gradually changed with the construction of bridges and piers; in addition to small isolated landfills. The relief of the area is formed by 8 hills: São Bento, Conceição, Livramento, Providência, Pinto, São Diogo, Saúde (by the sea, between the sacks of Valongo and Gamboa) and Hill of Gamboa (between Saúde and Alferes Sack). Not only over the centuries, but also in the same chronological range, these hills received various names – only São Bento, Conceição, Saúde and Gamboa did not have major problems in this regard. This wide variety of names is related not only to the occupation process, but also to the process of production/appropriation of space. The different names are not only indicators of occupation, but also of currents of domination of space. And consequently, they are (along with the geographic features) important elements for the delimitation of the study area, as they offer a valuable contribution to the understanding of its history.

For example, the name Livramento, which dates back to the beginning of the 18th century, only started dividing the hill with the designation Providência around 1850, with

the area closest to the Hill of do Pinto being reserved to Providência; and to Livramento the part that borders the Hill of Conceição. These two names remained until the beginning of the 20th century, when maps only refer to Providence. Morro do Pinto had its baptismal name Santa Teresa, after which it received the name Nheco, until finally being Pinto. The name Livramento has remained as it is still used by the local population and experts in the area to this day; in addition the hill is big enough and physically differentiated to have both names (Livramento and Providência). The name São Diogo was kept because of the São de Diogo Quarry, which gives a certain peculiarity to the part of the hill that surrounds it.

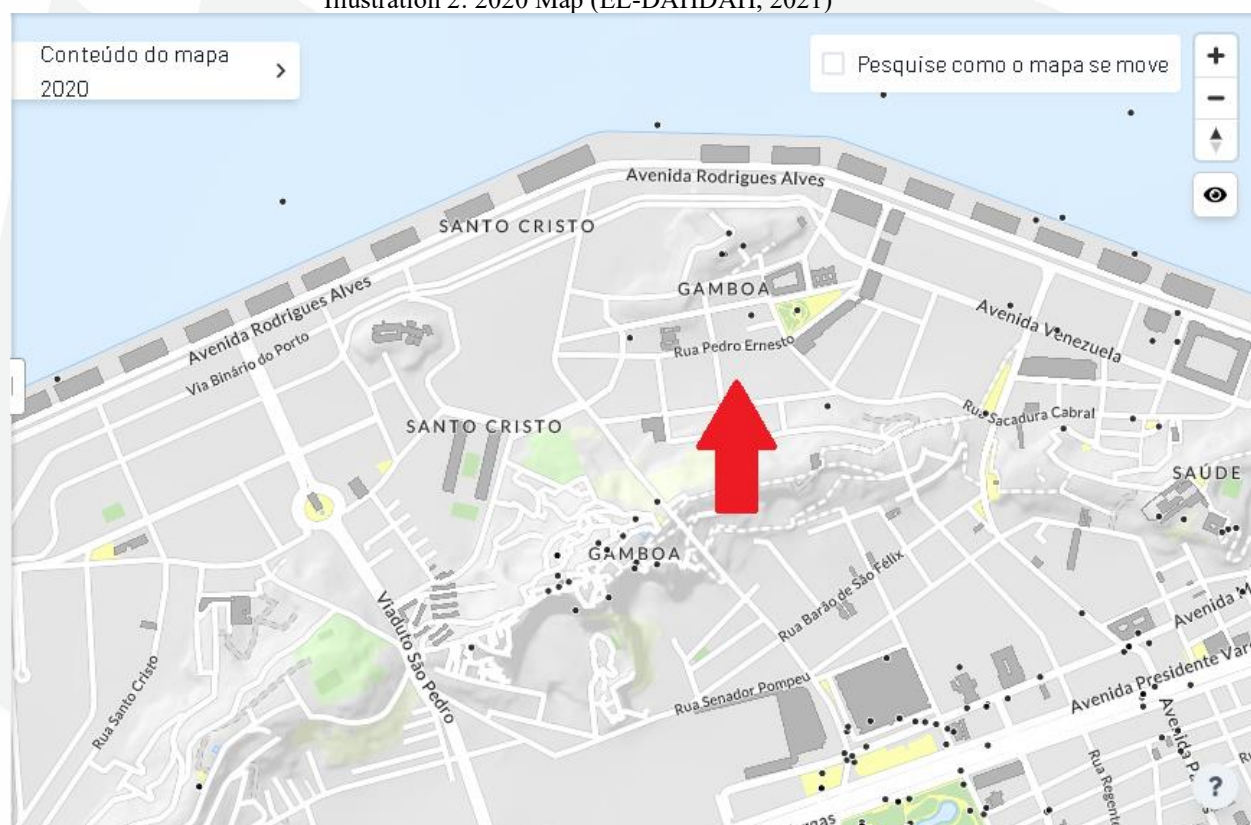
The names of coastal accidents did not vary over time and lasted until their physical disappearance, such as Formosa Beach and Alferes Sack: around them emerged the neighborhoods of Formosa Beach and Alferes Sack, of Sack (mangroves) of São Diogo and Sack of Gamboa. The name Valongo designated the Sack itself (originally in the 18th century) and Valonguinho the stretch of shore immediately before it, towards Mauá Square. After 1850 Valonguinho no longer exists and the name Valongo, which designates the neighborhood, changes to Saúde, a name that was definitively imposed in 1870, also incorporating the space that since the 17th century was called Prainha (part of the coast between the Navy Arsenal and Mauá Square). Hills were obstacles to be overcome, regardless of their names. It was only possible to reach the small coastal plains (located at the bottom of the three sacks, full of mudflats) and Formosa Beach through three natural passages. The one in Prainha (now Mauá Square), between the hills of São Bento and Conceição, led to the region of Prainha, which today is part of the Hill of Saúde.

A little further on, making the path between the hills of Conceição and Livramento, which gave rise to Camerino Street, you arrived at the sack of Valongo. But on the shore, between Prainha and Valongo, there was another obstacle to circulation, which was the Prainha stone, which was destroyed in the 19th century. Through Valongo, through what later became Livramento Street, you reached the sack of Gamboa. Between the Providência and Pinto hills, in the lap of the current América Street, was the third and last natural passage of the wall. Through it, you reached the sack of Alferes and Formosa Beach. To the west, land circulation was impeded as the São Diogo mangroves



surrounded it from the interior to its base. I agree with Reinaldo Tavares (TAVARES, 2012): the process of occupation of the area took into account two geographic landmarks, which were: the barrier of hills and the seafront. The barrier of hills (which made it difficult to communicate by land with the rest of the city) was overcome; and the seafront (which offered good anchorages at the bottom of their sacks) helped the development of activities related to commerce and navigation.

Illustration 2: 2020 Map (EL-DAHDAH, 2021)



Source: EL-DAHDAH, 2021 (red arrow made by me)

### 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS

Several surveys have been and still are carried out with the aim of finding more important data about the New Blacks. After the discovery of the Cemetery, the City of Rio, with its archeology team, began the task of rescuing the fragments of material culture and the mortal remains. Several instruments were found such as necklaces (adornments, ornaments), hoops and spear points; as well as iron artifacts, which prove the skill of the Africans in relation to the production of metallurgy. In the excavations, objects such as

shells, glass beads, porcelain and clay artifacts such as pipes were also found. The Book of Deaths of the Cemetery of the New Blacks recorded that several slaves were buried with tales around their necks — which differentiated the social position of each one and also their ethnicity.

In addition to the fragments of material culture, human bones were also investigated (MACHADO, 2006): 28 bones were saved, from young human beings, most of them between 18 and 25 years old, male. The study of 5,563 fragments showed that the bones were predominantly burned and that such an act occurred after deflection. Such archaeological analysis confirmed the historical accounts of the time of several travelers (such as the German Freireyss) who said that the bodies of slaves were charred. A curious discovery was the filed teeth, which was an Angolan Tribal Hallmark. Dental carvings demarcated social difference as well as rites of passage. Teeth and bones were bioculturally analyzed. The National Museum (UFRJ) and the Institute of the New Blacks (IPN) became responsible for the research from 1999 onwards.

#### **4 THE URBAN GARBAGE**

Some rubbish and rubbish fragments found in the Cemetery are reconstituted and represented in this work:

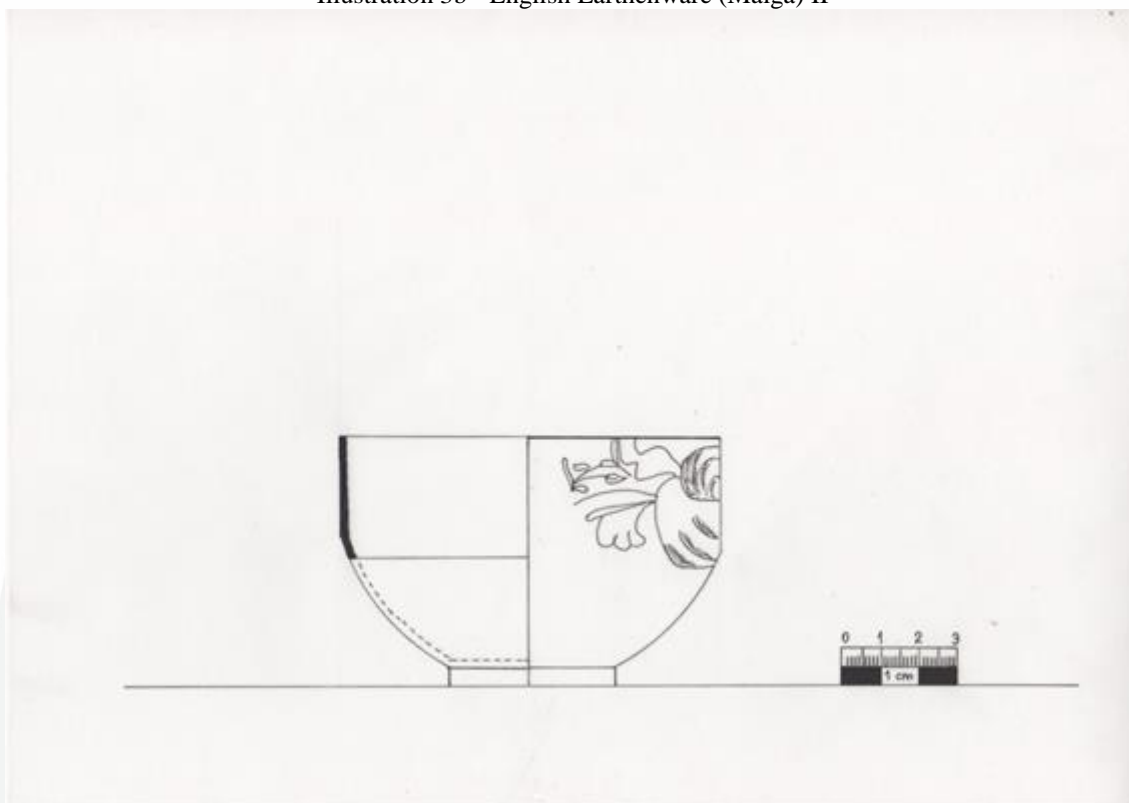
Illustration 3a - English Earthenware (Malga) I



Source: photo made by me



Illustration 3b - English Earthenware (Malga) II



Source: technical drawing made by me

Illustration 4a - English Earthenware (Flat Dish) I

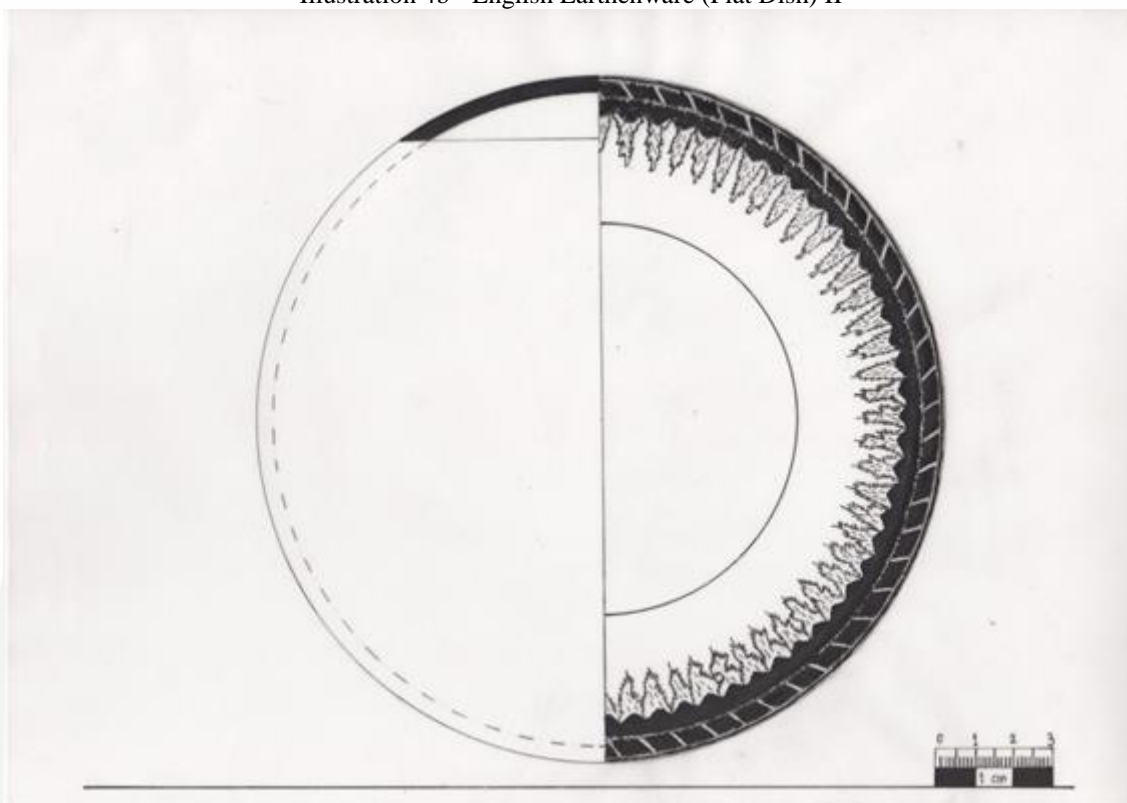


Source: photo made by me





Illustration 4b - English Earthenware (Flat Dish) II



Source: technical drawing made by me

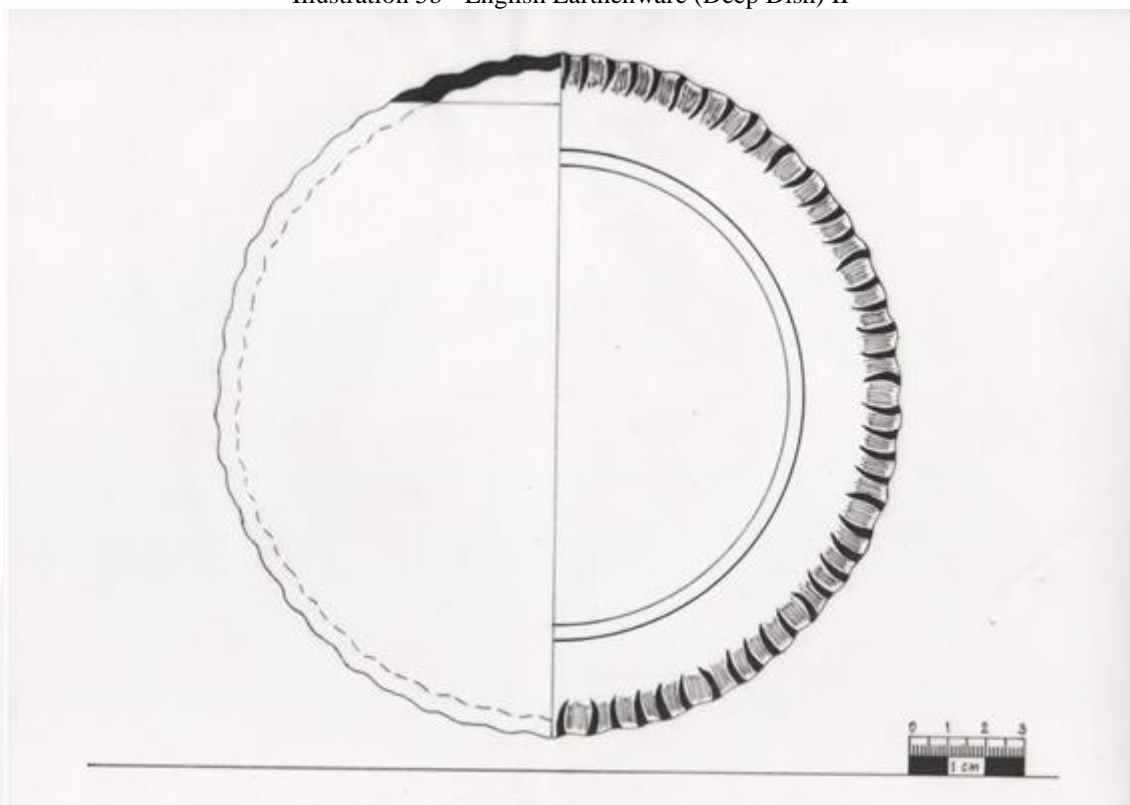
Illustration 5a - English Earthenware (Deep Dish) I



Source: photo made by me



Illustration 5b - English Earthenware (Deep Dish) II



Source: technical drawing made by me

Illustration 6a - Belt Buckle I



Source: photo made by me

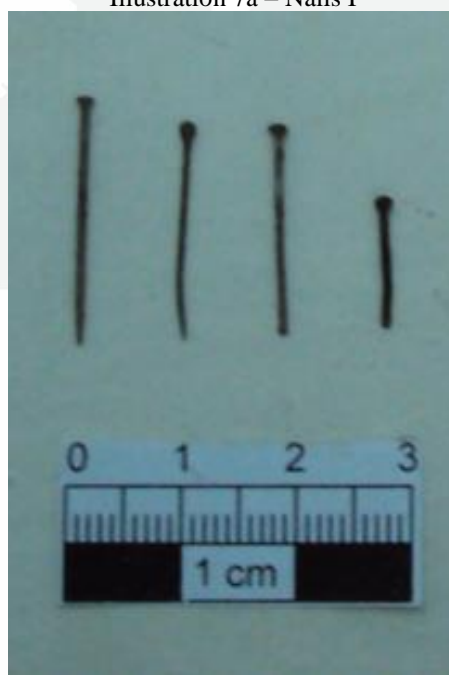


Illustration 6b - Belt Buckle II



Source: technical drawing made by me

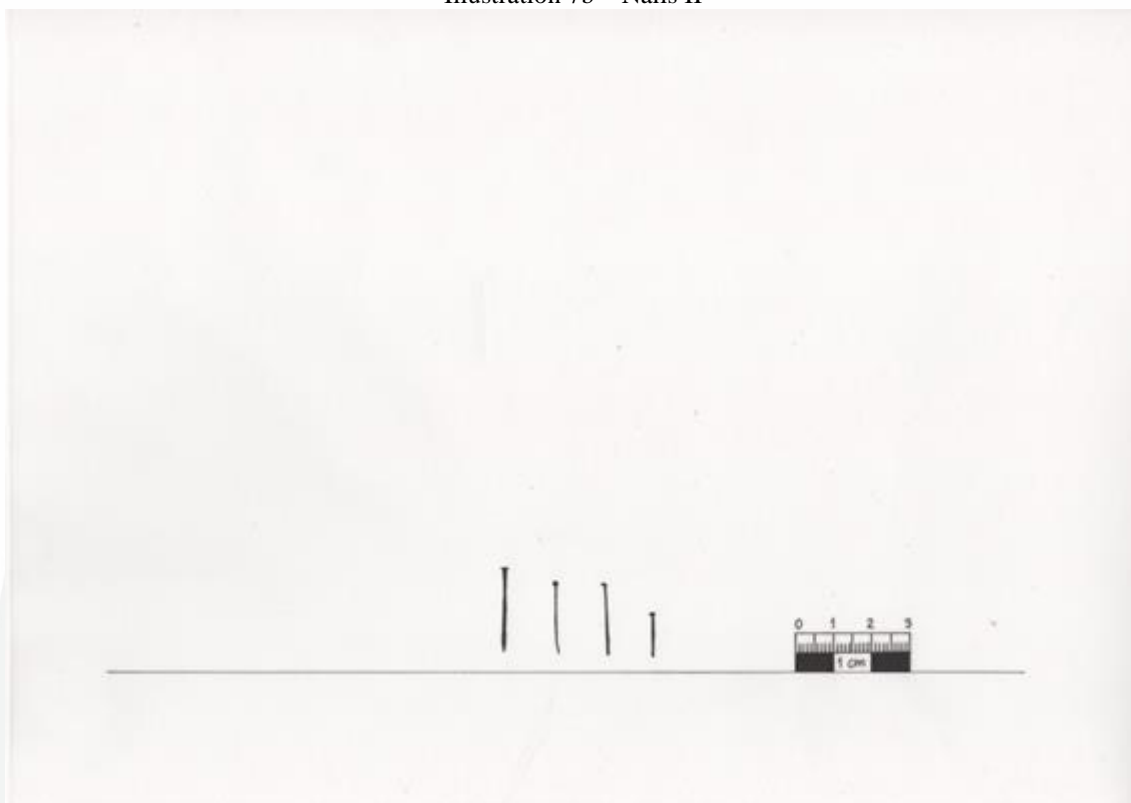
Illustration 7a – Nails I



Source: photo made by me



Illustration 7b – Nails II



Source: technical drawing made by me

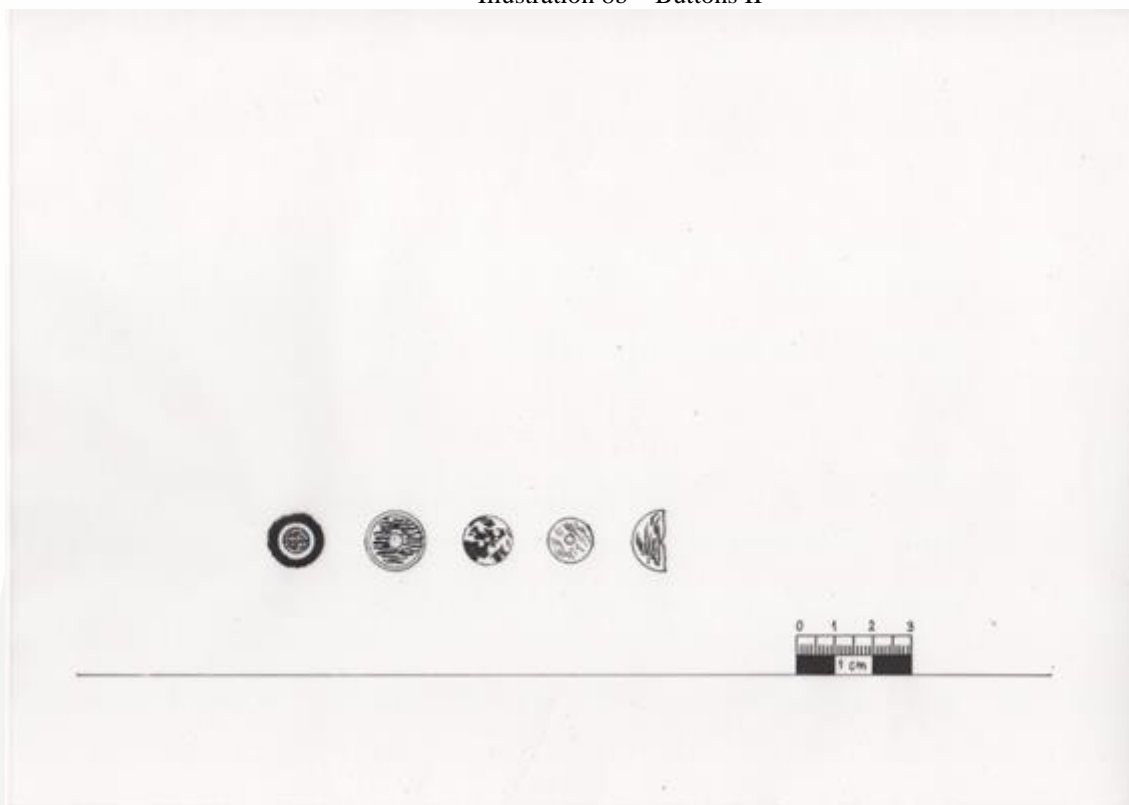
Illustration 8a – Buttons I



Source: photo made by me



Illustration 8b – Buttons II



Source: technical drawing made by me

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Along with the bodies of African Slaves that were thrown to the surface, the urban garbage of Rio Society was also found in the Cemetery of the New Blacks. This fact demonstrates the total disregard and lack of respect for black people. As if it wasn't enough for them to dispose of the bodies as if they were nothing, they threw the garbage in the cemetery as if it were a vacant lot that could be turned into a “dump”. There was no greater contempt. In addition to the bodies, their belongings and the garbage of the population at the time were also thrown away, everyday objects that society at the time discarded and threw into the Cemetery, thus showing the neglect and lack of respect for the burial place of black people.

So I fought slavery with all my strength, I repelled it with all my conscience, as the utilitarian deformation of the creature, and when I saw it end, I thought I could also ask for my freedom, say mine *nuns dimitis*, for having heard the most beautiful news that in my day God could send to the world; and yet, now that it is extinct, I experience a singular nostalgia, which would much astonish a Garrison or a John Brown: the longing for the slave.

It is that both the master's part was unconsciously selfish and the slave's part was unconsciously generous. Slavery will remain the national characteristic of Brazil for a long time. (...) As for me, I absorbed it in the black milk that nursed me; she enveloped me like a silent caress all my childhood; I drew it from the dedication of the old servants who considered me the presumptive heir of the small domain of which they belonged... between me and them there must have been a continual exchange of sympathy, which resulted in the tender and acknowledged admiration that I later came to feel for your role (NABUCO, 2004). (My translation)

Joaquim Nabuco, when saying that he missed the slave, shows us the paradox he lived through: he appeared in a slave society and family, but decided to become an Abolitionist. When he stated that he missed the slave, he was not referring to the whip, but to his beautiful childhood memories: he was nursed by a slave, growing up on a farm with black children, with whom he played. He was one of the pioneers to exhibit the life of whites and blacks on northeastern plantations, where slaves and their owners lived together for several generations, with contact with each other, even if those lives were separate. Nabuco missed the slave: it was not from someone who belonged to his family being in captivity. It was the slave's. It seems strange for an Abolitionist to say this, but at that time there was a misconception of inferior and superior races, a concept that was understood as a scientific value, in the same way as we understand the law of gravity today. He also stated the following:

When the abolition campaign began, there were still nearly two million slaves, their children under eight and all those who were born, despite being naive, were subject to the age of 21 to a regime while equal to captivity. It was this huge block that we attacked in 1879, believing that we would spend our lives without actually carving it. At the end of ten years there was nothing left of him but dust. This result was due to many causes... First, at the time the idea was launched, humanity was too far ahead to still be able to defend slavery in principle, as they had done in the United States. The Latin race does not have such courage. The feeling of being the last nation of slaves humiliated our haughtiness and emulation of a new country. Then to the weakness and sweetness of the national character, to which the slave had communicated his kindness and slavery its relaxation. At this point, compare what it was in Brazil with what it was in North America. In Brazil, slavery is a fusion of races; in the United States, it's the war between them (NABUCO, 2004).

Gilberto Freyre, in an interview, stated the following:

VEJA – Do you see a racist attitude in the cult of the mulatto woman or do you reaffirm your thesis that this cult is proof of the absence of racial problems in Brazil? Is Brazil really a perfect racial democracy?

GF – Perfect, not at all. Now that Brazil is, I believe it can be said without a doubt, the most advanced racial democracy in the world today, that is. The most advanced on this path of racial democracy. There is still, I don't say that there is racism in Brazil, but there is still racial and color prejudice among groups of Brazilians and among certain individual Brazilians (FREYRE, 2020).

Joaquim Nabuco stated that slavery in Brazil was a fusion of races, while in the US it was a war between races. Joaquim Nabuco first made a mistake about the concept of race. He lived at a time when science believed in the misconception that one population was intellectually or physically superior to another population. Only later did scientists agree that skin color is just a veneer over an identical biological structure. There are no races. There is only one race, the human race. There were big differences between Slavery and Abolition in Brazil and the United States. In Brazil, slavery took place throughout the country, while in the United States, slavery was predominantly in the south of the country. In Brazil, the Portuguese did not transfer, originally with their respective families, for the most part, they arrived alone, and thus, with Brazil with very few white women, the Portuguese were left with the opportunity to copulate only with the Indian women, and later, with black women, generating miscegenation in Brazil from the beginning.

In the United States, most English settlers arrived with their entire families, not having the need to copulate with Indian women or black women. In addition, the number of slaves in Brazil was very large, as, with miscegenation, the number of them only increased, and, in the USA, the number of slaves was a minority. In order for Abolition to take place in the United States, a bloody war had to take place, the Civil War. But the main difference between Brazil and the United States in terms of Slavery and Abolition was the Positivation of Residential Segregation. In the United States, Residential Segregation was very, very tough. After the American Abolition, blacks and the few mestizos were segregated into specific neighborhoods, with churches, schools, restaurants, just for blacks. They were not free to attend schools and other places that whites attended.

In this way they generated their Subculture, became a well-defined and completely different group from whites. It took great political activism for blacks to conquer, in the United States, the end of Segregation and all Civil Rights. Gilberto Freyre said that in Brazil there is a Racial Democracy and that it was the most advanced in the world. When Freyre said this, he was referring to other countries in the same way that Joaquim Nabuco referred to the United States, when he said that in Brazil there was a fusion of races. Freyre said right after that there is no such thing as racism, but there is prejudice. I believe that both Joaquim Nabuco and Gilberto Freyre were very radical in making these statements, because in doing so, they despised the struggle of the black resistance. There was an Abolitionist Movement in Brazil that resulted in a lot of violence – it was not as cruel as the US war, but there was a war between whites and blacks in Brazil.

Abolitionists were murdered, hunted by the police, and attacked. Slaves who tried to escape were mutilated, whipped to death, burned with fire, suffered torture of the worst kind. Abolition in Brazil was far from peaceful. The importance of blacks in the formation of Brazilian society was analyzed by Gilberto Freyre, in his work “Casa-Grande & Senzala” (FREYRE, 2001). It so happens that in some parts of his work, Gilberto Freyre conveys an image that slavery in Brazil was more attenuated, as he claimed that in Brazil blacks were treated better than in other colonies. Among Gilberto Freyre's arguments is that the copulation of whites with black women was proof of affection. Gilberto Freyre probably ignored the fact that a man doesn't need noble feelings to have sex. In practice, what happened were rapes. The 12-year-old female slaves already had venereal disease. When they had children, they were also slaves and could be sold if the owner wished to do so.

Gilberto Freyre had the merit of reporting that the owners' wives, when jealous, went so far as to mutilate slaves, cutting their nipples, filing their teeth, tearing their faces. “Casa-Grande & Senzala”, despite being an easy book, in which Freyre uses a colloquial style, giving access to the average reader who seeks the light of reading, it is also a difficult book, because of the orality of its language and Freyre's propensity to think in the form of balanced antagonisms make this Work full of ambiguities, which can deceive and betray any reader who wants to isolate Freyre's concepts and opinions, who presented a new version of Brazilian History, demystifying our society the misconception of



scientific and racism positively interpreting black miscegenation and contribution. In Brazil, despite the Brazilian black rebellion that created the Quilombos and the economic reasons, Abolition happened especially because of the ideas of modernity defended by intellectuals, who believed that the end of slavery would bring progress, industry and capitalism.

The Brazilian Quilombos were a great practical demonstration of an alternative society. In Quilombo everyone was free, working together, with no owner. Their leaders were democratically chosen and they developed crafts, agriculture, animal husbandry. Originally, Quilombos were created for blacks, but later they received the entire marginalized layer of the population, such as prostitutes, poor whites, those wanted by the police, Indians and mulattos. Furthermore, they organized guerrillas to free other slaves. They were a great example that a fairer society can be built by the poor without the help of the rich. They were proof that society can change and that the future of the oppressed is not eternal submission. Nowadays, Brazil has samba schools, which transform black people's struggles into shows: a subtle way of erasing black consciousness, man's critical conscience is deceived by a carnival plot. The history of black resistance needs to be broadcast in a serious way, in the academic world, in schools, enabling children to be aware of what slavery really was, becoming aware adults of what a true democracy is. True democracy only flourishes when there is social democracy.

## REFERENCES

- CARVALHO, José Murilo de. (1987) *Os bestializados: o Rio de Janeiro e a República que não foi*. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras.
- El-Dahdah, Farès; Metcalf, Alida C.; Heyman, David. (2021) *imagineRio*. <https://www.imagnerio.org/map> Accessed in December 11.
- FAZENDA, Dr. José Vieira. (1927) *Antiquilhas e Memórias do Rio de Janeiro*. Vol. 147, tomo 93 da RIHGB Rio de Janeiro, Imprensa nacional.
- FREYRE, Gilberto. (2001) *Casa-grande & Senzala*. 42. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Record.
- FREYRE, Gilberto. (2020) *Entrevista – Gilberto Freyre – Revista Veja, 1970*. In *Leituras Diversas*. Disponível em <https://leiturasdiversas.wordpress.com/2017/05/27/entrevista-gilberto-freyre-revista-veja-1970/> Acesso em: 21 set. 2020.
- MACHADO, Lilia Cheuiche. (2006). *Sítio Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, Análise Biocultural. Interpretando os Ossos e os Dentes Humanos*. In: DIAS, O, CARVALHO, E; ZIMMERMANN, M. *Estudos Contemporâneos de Arqueologia*. Palmas, Fundação Universidade do Tocantins – UNITTIS/Instituto de Arqueologia Brasileiro, s/d.
- NABUCO, Joaquim. (2004). *Minha Formação*. Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks Editora. 14. Ed.
- PEREIRA, Júlio César Medeiros da Silva. (2006). *À Flor da Terra: o Cemitério dos Pretos Novos no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Garamond/prefeitura do Rio de Janeiro.
- SILVA, Alberto da Costa e. (2003). *Um rio chamado Atlântico. A África no Brasil e o Brasil na África*, Rio de Janeiro, Nova Fronteira/Editora da UFRJ, pp. 177-186.
- TAVARES, Reinaldo Bernardes. (2012). *“Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, Rio de Janeiro, Século XIX: Uma tentativa de delimitação espacial.”* Dissertação de Mestrado, UFRJ – Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Museu Nacional, Rio de Janeiro.