

Capitalism in Slavery, Slavery in Capitalism: Original Accumulation, Slave Rent, and the Formation of the World Market

Dale W. Tomich

ABSTRACTS

Der Beitrag untersucht das Verhältnis von Kapitalismus und Sklaverei, indem er die Rolle der Sklaverei bei der Entstehung der kapitalistischen Weltwirtschaft seit dem 16. Jahrhundert neu interpretiert. Durch die Unterscheidung zwischen der Marx'schen Theorie des Kapitals und der Geschichte der kapitalistischen Entwicklung wird der historische Kapitalismus als ein globales System konstruiert, das vielfältige Formen der gesellschaftlichen Arbeit umfasst. Die atlantische Sklaverei fassen wir als eine spezifische Form der Warenproduktion auf, die von Anfang an integraler Bestandteil des historischen Kapitalismus war. Der Artikel untersucht die spezifische Rolle der atlantischen Sklaverei bei der ursprünglichen Akkumulation des Kapitals, d. h. der Entstehung des Systems. Surplusproduktion und -aneignung basierten auf der Sklavenrente, d. h. auf dem Eigentum von Sklaven, nicht auf dem Eigentum von Land. Dieses Verhältnis schuf eine sehr mobile und dynamische Form der Arbeitsorganisation, die für die offenen Warengrenzen des tropischen und subtropischen Atlantiks geeignet war. Die Ausbreitung der Sklavenarbeit im Südatlantik spielte eine fundamentale Rolle bei der Schaffung der weltweiten Arbeitsteilung und des Weltmarktes des 16. Jahrhunderts.

This chapter examines the relation of capitalism and slavery by reinterpreting the role of slavery in the formation of the capitalist world-economy beginning in the sixteenth century. By distinguishing between Marx's theory of capital and the history of capitalist development, it construes historical capitalism as a global system embracing multiple forms of social labour. Atlantic slavery, it argues, is a specific form of commodity production that is integral to historical capitalism from its inception. The article proceeds to explore the specific role of Atlantic slavery in the original accumulation of capital, that is, the formation of the system. Surplus produc-

tion and appropriation were based on slave rent, that is on ownership of the slave as property, not on ownership of the land. This relation created a very mobile and dynamic form of labour organization that was suited to the open commodity frontiers of the tropical and subtropical Atlantic. The expansion of slave labour in the south Atlantic played a fundamental role in creating the world division of labour and world market of the sixteenth century.

The question of capitalism and slavery has returned to the scholarly agenda after a long hiatus. The contemporary discussion has its roots in the pioneering work of C. L. R. James, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Oliver Cromwell Cox. In many ways, the issue has been framed by Eric Williams's pathbreaking *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) and the responses to it in the 1940s and 1950s and then again beginning in the 1970s. With the revival of radical scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s, the interpretation of capitalism and slavery was central to intense debates over modes of production, dependency, underdevelopment, and world-systems in North America, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa. However, with the cultural turn of the 1970s, scholarly attention rapidly shifted away from such concerns. The current revival of interest in the history of capitalism, slavery, and race has to reach back over a generation to recover its antecedents. However, to simply return to earlier traditions and paradigms is inadequate. The earlier formulations of capitalism and slavery continually reproduced a dichotomy between the market and relations of production. Slavery was seen either as unproblematically capitalist because it produced for the market or as a pre-capitalist or non-capitalist relation of production with its own laws of development that were external to the market.¹ Either the specificity of slavery was lost within a generalized conception of capitalism or slavery was one thing and capitalism was another. The economic, political, and cultural conditions in which scholars are returning to questions of capitalism and slavery are markedly different from those of their predecessors. These new circumstances – above all, the global character of capitalism, the degradation of wage labour, and the persistence of forms of compulsory labour – provide the opportunity to rethink the premises from which we approach these problems.

This article treats capitalist slavery as a distinct form of commodity production with its own specific political economic relations and processes. Yet, to pose the question as the relation of capitalism *and* slavery is to distort the problem and to pursue lines of reasoning that do not have clear outcomes. Approaches that follow this course reify the concepts of capital and slavery and treat them as closed things with fixed attributes (capital-wage labour relation, as delineated in Karl Marx's *Capital*, and the master-slave relation). Each term is then located in a given historical geographical zone that is presumed to manifest its own distinctive features. Wage labour, industry, urban, wealth, individual freedom, modernity, and development are terms that characterize capitalist societies in Western Europe and, above all, England. Slavery and compulsion, racial

1 D. Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy*, Lanham 2004, pp. 3–55.

hierarchy, rural, agrarian, poverty, backwardness, and underdevelopment are attributes of the slave societies of the Americas. The origin of capitalism is commonly identified with the Industrial Revolution and the formation of a waged working class in England. As a result of this dichotomy, manifold and changing historical processes are frozen in space and time. This construct of capitalism is transformed into a thing and made into an absolute standard. The problem then becomes whether or how to conjoin capitalism and slavery as two independent terms.

Such approaches obscure the historical processes through which wage labour and slavery are interrelated and mutually formative and the ways in which the relation between them changes in the course of the formation and continual restructuring of the capitalist economy. These conceptions of the problem confuse Marx's critique of political economy with the historical development of capitalism (I confine myself to Marxist approaches here – in part for reasons of exposition and in part because Marxist understandings have influenced the approach even of those who argue against them). Marx's purpose in *Capital* is to delineate *in its pure form* the conceptual structure of capital as a specific historical relation, not to write the history of capital.² It is obvious that wage labour and industrial capital became dominant forms of economic activity in Europe and, above all, in England during Marx's lifetime. But to treat these historical developments as intrinsic attributes of capital is a quite different claim. *Capital* is not a theoretical account of English history. Rather, what Marx seeks "to examine in this work is the capitalist mode of production, and the relations of production and forms of intercourse that correspond to it". He regards England as the locus classicus of these processes. For this reason, he uses England as "the main illustration of the theoretical developments" he makes.³

The object of Marx's enquiry is the concept of capital, not its history. To confound the theoretical examination of the concept of capital with the concrete history of capitalism in England is to invert the relation of theory and history in Marx's work and to belie the complexities and tensions within his argument. As a theoretical category, capital-wage labour expresses the full development of the value form in which all the elements of the production process – instruments of labour, raw materials, and labour power – and the product of labour take the form of commodities and are related to one another through their value. The concept of capital-wage labour orders the theoretical movement from simple to complex determinations of commodity production and exchange that structures *Capital* and gives theoretical coherence to it. According to Marx:

To the extent that we are considering it here, as a relation distinct from that of value and money, capital is capital in general, i.e. the incarnation of the values that distinguish value as capital from value as pure value or as money. [...] We are present at the process of

2 "In order to develop the laws of bourgeois economy, therefore, it is not necessary to write the *real history of the relations of production*. But correct observation and deduction of these laws, as having themselves become in history, always leads to primary equations [...] which point to a past lying behind this system." Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, London 1973, pp. 460–461.

3 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, London 1977, Vol. 1, p. 90.

its becoming. This dialectical process of its becoming is only the ideal expression of the real movement through which capital comes into being. The later relations are to be regarded as developments coming out of this germ. But it is necessary to establish the specific form in which it [capital] is posited, at a certain point. Otherwise confusion arises.⁴

This article reconstructs theoretically capital as a global historical relation that began with the formation of the world market of the sixteenth century and examines the formation of modern slavery as a specific form of capitalist production within the processes of the original accumulation of capital. It draws especially on the work of two Brazilian scholars – Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco and Antônio Barros de Castro⁵ – who went beyond the impasse of the scholarship of the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, perhaps because their work appeared at the time that interest in those debates was waning, it never received the attention that it deserved.

1. Capitalism and Slavery: From Rational Abstraction to Violent Abstraction

The concepts of wage labour and slavery play an important role in the elaboration of Marx's theoretical framework. For Marx, the simple elements of the labour process as a process between nature and persons are common to all human societies. What distinguishes one historical stage of society from another are the forms of their social development. Thus, historical specification of forms of social relations is the focus of Marx's theoretical concern.⁶ The concepts of wage labour and slavery are central to establishing the historical specificity of capitalism, the core of his theory of capital. In the simplest deployment of these two terms, Marx treats them as independent of one another and presents them as polar opposites. These constructions follow Marx's method of "rational abstraction".⁷ This contrast calls attention to the analytical importance of the social form of production relations and surplus appropriation represented by each. Viewed in isolation, free wage labour appears as the defining characteristic of capitalism. In Marx's view, the exchange of equivalent values between wage labourer and capitalist through the sale of labour power is the specifically capitalist form of surplus value production and appropriation. In contrast, slavery designates a form of social relations of production where the surplus produced by the slave is appropriated by means of the direct domination of the person of the enslaved by the slaveholder. In this formulation, the exchange of equiva-

4 Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 310 (emphasis added to last sentence).

5 M. S. de Carvalho Franco, *Homens Livres na Ordem Escravocrata*, São Paulo 1976; *Organização do Trabalho no Período Colonial*, in: P. S. Pinheiro (ed.), *Trabalho Escravo, Economia e Sociedade*, São Paulo 1978, pp. 143–192; A. B. de Castro, *As Mãos e os Pés do Senhor do Engenho*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 41–66; *A Economia Política, o Capitalismo e Escravidão*, in: J. R. do Amaral Lapa (ed.), *Modos de Produção e Realidade Brasileiro*, Petrópolis 1980, pp. 67–107.

6 Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 85.

7 "Production in general is an abstraction, but a rational abstraction in so far as it really brings out and fixes the common element and saves us from repetition. Still this general category, this common element sifted out by comparison, is itself segmented many times over and splits into different determinations." Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 85.

lent values between capital and wage labour masks the production and appropriation of surplus value, whereas slavery appears as an unambiguously non-capitalist form of social production where domination and exploitation are direct and transparent. This direct comparison calls attention to the specific form of unfreedom of free wage labour through comparison with the unfreedom of slavery, its polar opposite. In what ways, through the wage form, the exchange of equivalent values becomes the form of appropriation of surplus value is the central problem that Marx attempts to answer in his conceptualization of capital.

Elsewhere, Marx posits the interrelation and interdependence free wage labour and slavery as a historical question.

*While the cotton industry introduced child-slavery into England, in the United States it gave the impulse for the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery into a system of commercial exploitation. In fact, the veiled slavery of the wage-labourers in Europe, needed the unqualified slavery of the New World as its pedestal.*⁸

This frequently cited passage has been little interrogated. In it, Marx calls attention to the historical importance of slavery for the development of capitalism. However, this relation is suggested rather than developed. Here, Marx is concerned with further contextualizing capital as a historical relation rather than with the history of capital or with slavery per se. Nonetheless, this passage raises important questions that bear further examination.

The most common approach to interpreting these two passages has been to treat both slavery and wage labour as integral, internally unified, and externally bounded political economic systems, each with its own historical laws. Here, the historical forms of social production become what Derek Sayer calls “violent abstractions” and are hardened into distinct modes of production.⁹ The concepts through which these modes of production are constructed as fixed and closed. Their “laws of motion” derive directly from the immediate social relations of production: master and slave in the one case, capitalist and wage labourer in the other. Analytical priority is given to the “internal” relations of production, while the market, exchange, and merchant capital are typically regarded as external to production relations and are held to be of secondary importance.¹⁰

This methodological and theoretical procedure constructs a network of spatially discrete, conceptually independent political economic complexes that are conjoined or “articulated” with one another through contingent external relations of exchange, the market, merchant capital, and colonialism. Each discrete political-economic space is characterized by a distinct mode of production. The laws that pertain to each mode of production are understood as universally applicable across the relevant cases. Slave formations are regarded as pre-capitalist or non-capitalist and follow their own internal laws of historical development. They supply raw materials and provide markets for manufactured goods,

8 Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 925.

9 D. Sayer, *The Violence of Abstraction: The Analytic Foundations of Historical Materialism*, Oxford 1987.

10 Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery*, pp. 32–55.

but the world market, colonialism, and capitalism influence them as external conditions. Likewise, the laws governing the transition from feudalism to capitalism, together with capitalist development, play out within distinct capitalist spaces and are influenced from the outside by slave formations. The world market itself remains external to the inner structure of national economies and is simply the sum of its national economic parts. The result of this approach is a series of “integrated dualities” rather than a “contradictory unity”.¹¹ Slavery and capitalism as well as production and market are treated as separate and independent terms that have to be combined with one another rather than parts of an encompassing historical whole. The laws of motion of each mode of production are given a priori and are treated as though they exist over and above historically formed relations and processes. Real concrete historical processes are treated as the content of such fixed and given forms. This abstract, general, and closed conceptual framework has a limited capacity to explain concrete historical situations. Each particular case – whether slave or capitalist – is a variation of the same historical laws and is construed within a linear conception of historical time. Slave formations move from slavery to emancipation, and capitalist formations move from feudalism to capitalism. They coexist within parallel temporalities. The same problems, forces, and processes are repeated in differing circumstances. At a certain point of its historical development, the expansion of industrial capital – with its increasing rates of productivity and profitability, demand for a greater quantity, and variety of raw materials and bigger markets – renders chattel slavery archaic and obsolete. Whether interpreted economically and/or politically through the rise of liberalism and abolitionism, slavery is seen as an archaic form that is destined to be destroyed. Such an approach can only reproduce variations of its own presuppositions. It results in a dualistic conception that continually juxtaposes one independent entity to another – production and market, capitalism and slavery – and then seeks to combine them. This perspective eliminates as subject matter the world historical origins of capital and the capitalist world economy as a specific system of societal production and reproduction.

2. Beyond Dualism: World Market, Slavery, and Original Accumulation

However, Marx put forward another way to approach the relation of capitalism and slavery. He not only suggests a more complex and comprehensive understanding of capital as a historical relation but also presents the idea that slave relations themselves can change in relation to the development of capital:

But as soon as peoples whose production still moves within the lower forms of slave-labour, the corvée, etc. are drawn into a world market dominated by the capitalist mode of production, whereby the sale of their products for export develops into their principal

11 Franco, *Homens Livres*, p. 11.

interest, the civilized horrors of over-work are grafted onto the barbaric horrors of slavery, serfdom, etc. Hence the Negro labour in the southern states of the American Union preserved a moderately patriarchal character so long as production was chiefly directed to the satisfaction of immediate local requirements. But in proportion as the export of cotton became of vital interest to those states, the over-working of the Negro, and sometimes the consumption of his life in seven years of labour, became a factor in a calculated and calculating system. It was no longer a question of obtaining a certain quantity of useful products, but rather of the production of surplus value itself.¹²

Having established the capital-wage labour as the specifically capitalist form of surplus value production, Marx reconceptualizes surplus value as he moves towards constructing capital as a concrete historical relation. The production of surplus value is no longer the exclusive domain of the capital-wage labour relation and the criterion for differentiating it from slave labour and other forms of social labour. Rather, it becomes the characteristic of all the forms of social labour producing for the capitalist world market. The interrelation and mutual formation of slave labour and industrial capital transform slavery into a system of industrial slavery. Industrial capital, with its need for bigger markets and demand for a greater volume and variety of raw materials, creates the condition for recasting slavery into a “calculated and calculating system”. At this moment in Marx’s argument, wage labour appears as the pedestal for slavery, and slavery, while retaining its form, assumes an industrial character. Historical scholarship since Marx’s time has shown that the degree to which “moderately patriarchal” slavery was oriented to “to the satisfaction of immediate local requirements” is open to question. The sale of their products for export was certainly the principal interest of slave systems before the advent of industrial capital, especially beyond the territorial boundaries of the United States. However, viewed historically, this passage calls attention to the shift from slavery as the precondition for the dominance of capital-wage labour as the organizing pole of the world division of labour (original accumulation) to the reconstitution of slavery as its product (*second slavery*).

In this passage, the key term in the relation between capital and slavery is the world market, precisely the term that is relegated to a secondary position by conventional approaches. But here, the market is not conceived abstractly and regarded as outside of autonomous and primary production relations. Rather, it appears as a substantive historical relation that is at once structured and structuring. The market organizes and permits the development of both slavery and wage labour as parts of an integrated world division of labour. Production as a social process is only completed when the product is exchanged and consumed.

Whether the commodities are the product of production based on slavery, the product of peasants (Chinese, Indian ryots), of a community (Dutch East Indies), of state production

*(such as existed in earlier epochs of Russian history, based on serfdom) or of half-savage hunting peoples, etc. — as commodities and money they confront the money and commodities in which industrial capital presents itself, and enter both into the latter's own circuit and into that of the surplus-value borne by the commodity capital, in so far as the latter is spent as revenue; i.e. both branches of the circulation of commodity capital.*¹³

Marx thus presents a different conception of capital as a concrete historical relation. Capital appears here as the unity of diverse forms of commodity production and exchange structured through the market. This conception shifts the focus of investigation and explanation from treating relations as congealed, reified things to the examination of historical processes. The analytical procedure that it implies can no longer be understood as conjoining independent terms to form the political economic whole. Rather, it entails specifying relations and processes forming and formed by historically changing and dynamically interacting with the world economic whole. Here the problem is no longer that of the relation of capitalism and slavery but that of understanding the capitalist character of slavery and, by extension, the slave character of capitalism.

Beginning the history of the origins of capital with the formation of the world market reframes the spatial and temporal parameters of analysis. This perspective posits a singular process that encompasses the diverse relations of production that comprise the world market and world economic division of labour. It calls attention to the ways in which specific historical relations both require and promote commodity production and exchange and seeks to comprehend the processes through which the interrelations among them form the historical movement towards specifically capitalist production (capital-wage labour). This approach recovers Marx's concept of "original accumulation" (*ursprüngliche Akkumulation*) as opposed to the more commonly used term "primitive accumulation". Original accumulation refers to a singular process that accounts for the historical origins of capital as a whole, not to any particular capital. Neither is it repeated nor is it a permanent feature of the capitalist system. If, as Marx argues in *Grundrisse*, capital is a specific historical form of social production and reproduction, then the relations of commodity production that determine its origins, that is to say its historic presuppositions, form part of the concept of capital. But once capital is constituted, they are not part of the ongoing conditions of accumulation produced by capital out of its own production processes.¹⁴ Thus, original accumulation calls attention to the *historical movement from*

13 Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy*, Harmondsworth 1978, Vol. 2, p. 189.

14 "Once production founded on capital is presupposed [...] [then] the condition that the capitalist in order to posit himself as capital, must bring values into circulation which he created with his own labour — or by some other means, excepting only already available, previous wage labour — belongs among the antediluvian conditions of capital, belongs to it as *historic presuppositions*, which, precisely as such *historic presuppositions*, are past and gone, and hence belong to the *history of its formation*, but in no way to its *contemporary history*, i.e., not to the real system of the mode of production ruled by it" (Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 459). K. Korsch, *Karl Marx*, New York 1971, pp. 49–50, 52–53, 59 emphasizes that it is for this reason that the section of "So-Called Primitive Accumulation" comes at the end of the volume, after the presentation of the totality of relations comprising capital, not at the beginning.

external presuppositions towards wage labour and capitalist production – in Marxist terms, surplus value production and capitalist valorization – but original accumulation is not part of ongoing capitalist production and reproduction.

3. The Genoese Cycle of Accumulation

From this perspective, comprehending the relation of capitalism and slavery requires examining how the world market and world division of labour emerged from within European feudalism and the role of slavery in this political economic transformation. Such an enquiry requires fundamentally rethinking categories of production, exchange, feudalism, market, capitalism, and slavery. In the remainder of this article, I sketch a theoretical-historical model of this process.

Key to the processes of original accumulation and the formation of the world market is the relations between urban, commercial, and financial centres and the emergent territorial states in Western Europe between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. John Merrington's neglected essay, "Town and Country in the Transition to Capitalism" (1975),¹⁵ goes beyond the focus on agrarian class relations and the abstract and general opposition between production and exchange that has characterized Marxist writing on the transition to capitalism. Rather than treating the town as an anomalous island of market relations outside of the feudal countryside, he argues that privilege and monopoly within feudalism's system of fragmented sovereignty constituted the medieval town as an autonomous corporative sphere of sovereignty that encouraged the full development of merchant capital. In Merrington's interpretation, the town is integral to European feudalism, and the relation between production and exchange within the feudal mode was established through the town-country relation. The feudal relations of the countryside were at once the condition for the existence of the town and merchant capital, as well as the limits to their growth. While urban merchant capital was oriented towards increasing trade and the accumulation of wealth, the agrarian economy and non-capitalist relations in the countryside presented a barrier to its expansion.

Merrington's conceptual framework permits a unified theoretical and historical account of European expansion and the origin of the world market without presuming the externality of the various forms of social production to one another and to the market.¹⁶ It provides a theoretical underpinning for what Perry Anderson characterizes as "redeployed feudalism".¹⁷ The interaction of town and country and of production and exchange, together with the centralization of political power, profoundly transformed European feudalism, following the crisis of the fourteenth century. In the countryside, production for the market increased dramatically. Serfdom was abolished following massive peas-

15 J. Merrington, *Town and Country in the Transition to Capitalism*, in: R. Hilton (ed.), *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, London 1976, pp. 170–195.

16 Franco, *Organização Social do Trabalho*, p. 145.

17 P. Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London 1974.

ant revolts. Landlords, in search of monetary incomes, converted peasant obligations to money rents or labour services while emergent small producers produced for the market, and the introduction of the putting-out system led to the development of rural industry. Interlocking networks of local, regional, and international markets, integrated both horizontally and vertically, linked producers and consumers across Europe. Great urban centres dominated by powerful merchant elites were firmly established as centres of trade and finance. Political power was centralized in territorial monarchies. The consolidation of power in these new absolutist states was heavily dependent on the financial resources provided by merchant capital. Anderson insists on the feudal character of these social, political, and economic changes. In his view, they by no means represent the transition to capitalism. Rather, they consolidated feudalism in new ways. The commodification of the economy, changes in social relations, and emergence of new social groups were accompanied by the consolidation of aristocratic power in the absolutist state. The nobility retained its control over land and labour and remained the ruling class in this new redeployed feudalism. For Anderson, and for Merrington as well, the persistence of these redeployed feudal relations and the character of agrarian change in the countryside blocked the development of merchant capital and presented an obstacle to the transition to capitalism.

This interpretation has much to recommend it and certainly is a powerful corrective to overly general claims about the capitalist character of Europe between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Not only did the aristocracy remain the dominant class but also labour and land were not commodified and organized through markets. Much less did they coalesce into a system of self-expanding accumulation. Nonetheless, despite its sophistication, Anderson's interpretation remains the prisoner of the bias towards agrarian class relations that characterize Marxist approaches to the transition. In his insistence that these relations remain feudal, Anderson fails to account for the tensions within this redeployed feudalism and to identify the forces that lead to political economic change. His own analysis demonstrates that redeployed feudalism was increasingly dependent upon the production of commodities and monetary circulation for the reproduction of pre-capitalist class relations. This interdependence drove the tension between aristocratic control of the countryside and urban merchant capital. For aristocratic landholders and the state, the acquisition of monetary wealth was the means to acquire status and power. For urban merchant classes, the acquisition of monetary wealth was the means to expand trade and markets and to accumulate capital. While the class relations of the countryside and the overall political economic structure were at once the condition for and limit to commodity production and circulation and to urban mercantile accumulation, the mobility of merchant capital pushed it beyond the limits of feudal agrarian relations and the territorial state. This configuration of forces discloses four distinct but interrelated and interacting processes that structure the transition to capitalism: the transformation of production relations, the circulation of commodities, the circulation of money and credit, and state formation. Each of these processes has a distinct temporality, rate of change, and spatial extension. Viewed from this perspective, the expansion of urban mer-

chant capital and the circulation of commodities and money, as well as the need of the new states for capital, continually pushed beyond the socioeconomic and geographical obstacles presented by the slower transformation of production relations. The response of merchant capital and the state was to create new commodity-producing hinterlands overseas that were based upon slavery and compulsory labour. Overseas expansion was not external to the feudal European. Rather, it emerged from the tensions that defined redeployed feudalism.

Giovanni Arrighi's concept of "cycles of accumulation" is a useful way of examining the changes discussed above. Arrighi analyses the processes forming and reforming the capitalist world economy through recurrent political economic cycles, each under the leadership of a hegemonic power – Genoa, the Netherlands, Britain, or the United States. He emphasizes the importance of the switch from trade in commodities to trade in money as each cycle reaches maturity. Financial expansion is important because it provides the accumulated liquid capital necessary to restructure political and economic relations.¹⁸ Arrighi identifies the origins of the world market with what he terms the "Genoese cycle of accumulation", which ran from the mid-fifteenth century to the end of the sixteenth century. Genoa was forced on a different path than the other Italian city-states. First, Genoa was blocked from access to the eastern Mediterranean, which remained under the control of Venice. Consequently, the Genoese turned their attention to the western Mediterranean. Second, Venice, Florence, and Milan invested surplus capital from commercial expansion in land and in strengthening the state apparatus. This was not possible for Genoa. There the old nobility withdrew from commerce and refeudalized the land surrounding the city. The new nobility invested its surplus capital in financial expansion and the development of banking and credit institutions. The foundation of the Casa di San Giorgio put the control of public finances in the hands of private creditors and turned state debt into an instrument of accumulation. The Genoese restructured their networks of trade and finance in ways that made them the most powerful class in sixteenth-century Europe. Genoa financed the debt of other states and promoted trade expansion. They financially consolidated the European division of labour and controlled European trade along the Genoa-Antwerp axis. Following a policy of "good money", which allowed them to discount the variations of other currencies, they came to dominate European finance.¹⁹

While Genoa was economically dominant, it lacked the military and political power to protect its interests. Genoa, like the other Italian city-states, was further challenged by the rivalries between the emerging absolute monarchies. The solution to this problem was what Arrighi, following Joseph Schumpeter, refers to as a political exchange with the two aristocratic states of the Iberian Peninsula, Spain and Portugal.²⁰ Genoese capital supported both states, while Spanish and Portuguese power furnished protection to

18 G. Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money Power and the Origins of Our Times*, London 1994, pp. 27–84.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 109–126.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 119–120.

Genoese capital. The alliance of Genoese capital with the power of the Iberian absolutist states created new overseas hinterlands that were devoted to commodity production on the basis of slavery and compulsory labour.

4. Portugal and the Atlantic Slave-Sugar Complex

Portugal was a relatively poor country and was of secondary importance in the political struggles that were shaping the interstate system in the sixteenth century. Because of its location, it was heavily involved in the Atlantic fisheries. Lisbon and, to a lesser extent, Porto were important stopovers on voyages between the Mediterranean and the Low Countries. There was a developed merchant class in both cities, and these links were strengthened by the Genoese presence there. The Portuguese monarchy as well as the aristocracy needed income. However, Portugal's vocation for maritime discovery is exaggerated. Portugal's maritime prowess was the result of knowledge and experience acquired by practical seamen.²¹ The Portuguese aristocracy (led by Infante Henry, the Navigator) wanted more land, more tenants, and more rents and was in favour of a policy of territorial expansion. Their aim was the conquest of Morocco. Morocco was attractive not only because it offered land for farming and stock raising but also because it was the point of arrival of the trans-Saharan caravans that were the source of Europe's gold. Controlling the gold trade was also attractive for the Genoese, who had already made isolated expeditions as far as the Sudan, because Europe's silver was firmly in the hands of the Germans and the Venetians.

Portuguese and Genoese interests converged around the conquest of Morocco. However, Portuguese policy alternated in fits and starts between maritime and terrestrial expansion that was linked to struggles between aristocratic and mercantile factions (In the ten-year interval between Bartolomeu Dias's expedition rounding the Cape of Good Hope and Vasco da Gama's voyage to India, Portugal again turned its efforts to conquering Morocco). The policies in a sense coalesced. Portugal's repeated failure to conquer Morocco pushed the Portuguese further along the Atlantic coast of Morocco, and return voyages took them further out into the ocean. However, Portuguese expansion along the Atlantic coast of Africa was motivated not by Asian spices but by the desire to directly control the source of European gold in West Africa.²² Not only were the Portuguese voyages financed in large measure by the Genoese (among others) but the latter also participated in them as sailors, as priests, and as specialists in sugar production. Overseas expansion was driven by imperial competition from the beginning. Spain attempted to challenge Portuguese domination in the African Atlantic but was no match for superior Portuguese sea power. Already in the fifteenth century, that is, well before Christopher Columbus, the Atlantic was divided in a fateful way. Spain controlled the Canary Islands

21 V. Magalhães Godinho, *Mito e Mercadoria, Utopia e Prática de Navegar. Séculos XIII–XVIII*, Lisbon 1990, pp. 13–55.

22 V. Magalhães Godinho, *Os Descobrimentos e a Economia Mundial*, Lisbon, 1981–1983, Vol. 1, pp. 139–182.

and, therefore, the sailing routes of the North Atlantic. Portugal controlled Cabo Verde and, with it, the sailing routes to Asia, the South Atlantic routes, and the coast of Africa. This division of the Atlantic effectively gave Portugal a monopoly of the Atlantic slave trade. As they occupied and settled the Atlantic islands, they also founded sugar mills and employed African slave labour.

In my view, Arrighi's analysis of the Genoese cycle strays from the mark at this point. He is almost exclusively concerned with European trade with Asia. This was certainly a profitable trade, but it remained a long-distance, luxury trade even as the volume of goods went up and prices fell. With the exception of the Dutch East Indies, a division of labour never formed between Europe and Asia. From the point of view of Portuguese national interest, its domination of the spice trade was short-lived as Venice regained control of the eastern trade routes.²³ Perhaps in a less spectacular way, and certainly under the historiographical radar, the Portuguese revolutionized relations of production and exchange in Atlantic Africa. They established relations with African polities and built the infrastructure of a modern slave trade that was capable supplying the expanding need for slave labour throughout the Genoese cycle of accumulation and beyond.²⁴ By concentrating a mass slave labour force to engage in specialized commodity production, they transformed slavery as both a force and relation of production. This concentration of slave labour further created the plantation as a modern form of economic organization whose value derived from the control of labour rather than property in land.²⁵ The interdependence and interaction of the slave trade, slave labour, and sugar plantation were capable of reproducing themselves on an expanding scale, producing ever more sugar for the world market and making and remaking the maritime division of labour that contributed to the making of the world market and defined the Atlantic as a region of the world economy. This complex forms an integral part of the process of original accumulation and the formation of the capitalist world economy.

5. São Tomé and the Atlantic Slave-Sugar Complex

Iberian expansion carried sugar production from the Mediterranean into the Atlantic. This movement was the culmination of the long migration of sugar production across the Mediterranean that began in the eleventh century. This slow migration marked the transformation of sugar from an exotic spice obtained through long-distance trade to a good produced within the European economy. Sugar was a rare luxury product, but

23 F. C. Lane, *Venice and History*, Baltimore 1966, pp. 399–411.

24 T. Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in West Africa, 1300–1589*, Cambridge 2012; L. F. de Alencastro, *The Trade in the Living: The Trade in the Living: The Formation of Brazil in the South Atlantic, Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries*, Albany 2018, pp. 39–116.

25 D. Tomich, *Re-Thinking the Plantation: Concepts and Histories*, in: Id./F. dos Santos Gomes/O. M. Gomes da Cunha (eds.), *Re-Thinking the Plantation: Histories, Anthropologies, Archeologies* (=Review 34 [2013] 1/2), pp. 15–39.

incorporation into the European economy gave merchants more control over the production and marketing of this bulky product, shortened the lines of communication, and gradually made it more accessible to consumers. The material characteristics of sugar made it an exceptional instrument for the expansion of the European world economy. It provided a commodifiable means of satisfying an almost universal desire for sweetness. Sugar could be cultivated at a variety of sites across the tropics and subtropics, and it proved to be enormously adaptable in the ways that it could be consumed. It has a striking capacity to alter established dietary patterns and integrate consumers into market relations. The demand for sugar has proven to be remarkably elastic. The more it is produced and the cheaper it is, the greater the demand. The history of the expansion of the sugar market is the production of ever-greater quantities of sugar, the discovery of new forms of consuming it, and the emergence of new strata of consumers.²⁶

In the sixteenth century, the Atlantic sugar industry was centred on the Portuguese colonies of Madeira and São Tomé, off the coast of Africa, the Spanish Canary Islands, and the Spanish Caribbean – above all, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico. Expansion into the Atlantic increased the amount of sugar produced, but the economic, social, and technological organization of sugar production in Madeira, the Canaries, and the Spanish Caribbean remained largely unchanged from what it had been in the Mediterranean. However, we may discern the origin of modern capitalist slavery in São Tomé. If the island of Hispaniola in the Spanish Caribbean was the last Mediterranean sugar industry, then the island of São Tomé off the coast of Africa was the first American sugar colony. The São Tomé slave-sugar complex formed as a new kind of productive space directly integrated into the emerging world market. It is distinguished not by the presence of slaves, but by the dominant position acquired by the slave labour force in the activities that formed the socioeconomic structure of the society and the purpose of colonial enterprise.²⁷ São Tomé was a sugar monoculture. Its labour force was entirely enslaved, and all of the slaves were African. The colony embodied the creation of the new material and social relations of commodity production and exchange that were essential to forming the world market. Regimented collective labour constituted a new productive force directly subordinated to the continuous and almost exclusive production of a single commercial crop destined for the world market.

The sugar monoculture of São Tomé transformed not only slavery but also the slave trade. The slave-trading zones of both West Africa and Kongo directly supplied the ongoing demand for slave labour in a zone of specialized commodity production. The new links of interdependence between the zones of the slave trade and the new sugar frontier went beyond the simple exchange of commodities. Instead, they generated the circulation of slaves and sugar on an expanding scale. Planters converted the revenues from sugar into more slaves and more land. The interrelation and mutual dependence of the slave trade, collective slave labour, and sugar in São Tomé created the conditions for the

26 S. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, New York 1985.

27 Castro, *As Mãos e Pés do Senhor*, p. 48.

expanded geographical and social reproduction of the slave-sugar complex that came to be formative of the Atlantic division of labour.

From the beginning, the island was heavily involved in the slave trade and was the centre of export of Kongolese slaves to the West African gold fields. However, the island itself was soon dominated by extensive sugar monoculture and became a major destination for enslaved Africans. It was close to the slave trading centres of both Kongo and West Africa. The Portuguese crown granted the colonists a license to purchase slaves directly in both markets. The São Toméans also traded illicitly and actively on their own account. The enduring association of slave labour and sugar production was soon entrenched there. During the 1550s, there were between 5,000 and 6,000 slaves in São Tomé. By the 1570s, there were either 70 or 120 sugar mills (depending on the source) located in the north and north-east parts of the island.²⁸ Wealthy planters (*senhores do engenho*) established the pattern that would later also prevail in Brazil. They controlled the river courses and established powerful watermills. They could have between 150 and 300 slaves. They ground their own cane as well as that of subordinate cane farmers (*lavradores de cana*) who were themselves slaveowners. São Tomé was a microcosm of what the Americas would become.²⁹

The distinctively capitalist character of the slave-sugar complex in São Tomé is due to the historical conditions under which land, labour, and sugar production were combined with one another. São Tomé was what Jason Moore has termed a commodity frontier, a distinctive mode of expansion of the world market.³⁰ The concept of commodity frontier refers to the way that the production and distribution of specific primary products restructure geographic space at the margins of world economic expansion. The geographical and environmental conditions of such zones are favourable to the production of specific commodities, particularly agricultural products and raw materials. They are zones in which expansion is possible so long as uncommodified land and, to a lesser extent, labour are available. Incorporation and exploitation of land beyond the frontier is driven by demand for the product. The movement of population and transformation of nature follow upon the demand for the commodity, and the open frontier permits the dramatic restructuring of land and labour relations.

São Tomé possessed favourable environmental conditions for the cultivation of sugar cane and large tracts of uncommodified land. It was also in close proximity to the slave trading centres in both West Africa and Kongo. In contrast to the commodity frontiers in Madeira, the Canary Islands, and the Spanish Caribbean, agriculture in São Tomé was given over entirely to sugar production, the most lucrative crop of the time, by slave

28 J. H. Galloway, *The Sugar Cane Industry: An Historical Geography from its Origins to 1914*, Cambridge 1989, pp. 58–61.

29 I. Batista de Souza, *São Tomé et Príncipe de 1485 à 1755: Une société coloniale. Du blanc au noir*. Paris 2008, pp. 156–171.

30 J. W. Moore, *Sugar and the Expansion of the Modern World-Economy: Commodity Frontiers, Ecological Transformation, and Industrialization*, in: *Review* 23 (2000) 3, pp. 409–433.

labour.³¹ In contrast to European seigneurialism, monopoly of the land did not create a labour force; rather, the creation of a labour force based on the direct and explicit domination of the enslaved labourer valorized the land. In the words of Padre Antônio Vieira, the architect of the Portuguese empire: “Without the negro there is no Pernambuco.”³² The origin of the Atlantic slave plantation was not the distribution of land but the implantation of a slave labour force.

The Portuguese crown granted extensive tracts in its colonial territories on the condition that grantees made them productive. The amount of land available commonly exceeded the amount of land that could be effectively exploited. The concentration of the slave labour force generated the concentration of land and subordinated nature and labour to commodity production. The regimentation of collective slave labour producing specialized commodities for the world market created the plantation as a modern, capitalist form of agricultural organization. Slavery was not an “alternative” to wage labour or other forms of labour. Rather, it was the historically necessary means of valorizing the Atlantic commodity frontier.³³ The exploitation of the soil was determined by the number of slaves at the disposition of the proprietor. Land had no value apart from the slaves who worked it. The wealth of the proprietor was measured by the number of slaves in his possession, not the amount of land. Expansion was driven by the shortage of hands (*falta de braços*), which led to the acquisition of slave labour that could valorize land.

Thus, surplus produced by slave labour did not take the form of ground rent derived from the ownership of land but of what Antônio Barros de Castro terms “slave rent”, which is derived from ownership of the slave.³⁴ The condition for the exploitation of slave labour was ownership of the enslaved as chattel property. We might say that slaves were a form of capital and that slave production was a form of accumulation. Because the slave is property, the labour necessary to reproduce the labourer and surplus labour are manifested differently than in the capital-wage labour relation. Marx argues:

*In slave-labour, even that part of the working-day in which the slave is only reproducing the value of his own means of subsistence, in which, therefore, in fact, he works for himself alone, appears as labour for his master. All of the slave's labour appears as unpaid labour. In wage-labour, on the contrary, even surplus labour, or unpaid labour, appears as paid. There the property relation conceals the labour of the slave for himself, here the money relation conceals the unrequited labour of the wage-labourer.*³⁵

For the wage labourer, the exchange of equivalent values masks the production and expropriation of surplus value. For the slave there is no exchange of equivalent values. As

31 Perhaps the island's distance from Portugal and the need for ships to have a profitable return cargo encouraged the development of sugar monoculture there. See S. G. Bunker/P. S. Ciccantell, *Globalization and the Race for Resources*, Baltimore 2005, pp. 1–33.

32 Cited in Castro, *As Mãos e Pés do Senhor*, pp. 48–49.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 50–52.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 50–55.

35 Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, p. 680.

property, the slave is totally at the disposition of the planter. Labour is obtained by direct (personal) domination.³⁶ As seventeenth-century Italian Jesuit André João Antonil wrote in his account of the Brazilian economy, the slave is the “hands and feet of the planter”.³⁷ In other words, as property the person of the slave has a value, but the labour of the slave by itself has no value. While the value of the slave may be determined by the potential value produced by the slave over the course of a working lifetime, it is independent of the value actually produced by the labour of the slave. The cost of slave subsistence is not a return to labour. The slave would have to be fed, clothed, and housed whether she/he works or not. Under slavery labour is not an economic relation.

While all slave labour appears as surplus labour, if we look at the slaves as a group over time, it is clear that a portion of their labour was devoted to producing for their own subsistence. The system of provision grounds and free days to work them was institutionalized on the sugar plantations of São Tomé and was an integral part of the formation of new sugar frontiers in Brazil in the seventeenth century and the Caribbean in the eighteenth century. When working for themselves, the slaves were still working for the master. The practice of allowing slaves marginal lands and time not devoted to export crop production (whether religious holidays or “dead” time in the crop cycle) in order to provide for at least part of their subsistence allowed the slave owner to lower the cost of maintaining the slave labour force. Further, this practice enhanced control over the slaves by tying them to the plantation.³⁸ This labour is effectively “necessary labour”. It ensures the material reproduction of the slave labour force, the condition of the existence of the economy and the society.

This necessary labour time stands in opposition to the labour time realized in the production of the staple product destined for the market, that is, to surplus labour. The surplus entire product is appropriated by the slaveholder without exchange. It takes the form of a particular use value produced for exchange whose value is determined in the market. The slave rent, that is the revenue derived from ownership of the slave as property, is the difference between the labour time dedicated to slave subsistence and the labour time devoted to the production of the export crop. If goods purchased on the market supply some portion of slave subsistence, then that portion of necessary labour is transferred from the closed sphere of domination of the slave plantation to the exchange economy

36 Castro, *A Economia Política*, pp. 67–107; Franco, *Homens Livres*, pp. 173–192; Tomich, *Re-Thinking the Plantation*, pp. 193–212.

37 A. J. Antonil, *Cultura e Opulência do Brasil por suas Drogas e Minas*. Texte de l'édition de 1711, traduction française et commentaire critique par A. Mansuy, Paris 1965, p. 120.

38 However, I wish to stress once again, that such activities were not a return to labour. (Note the New Economic historians treat these activities as if they were the equivalent of a wage.) Rather, they were the cost of maintaining the master's investment in slaves as property. As such, they were a condition for labour. However, at the same time, slave provision grounds and free days were an interstitial space of slave self-organization. They opened the ground for contestation, negotiation, and resistance. Access to these resources enabled slaves to develop individual interest and community bonds. Through them, the slaves became what Sidney Mintz has termed a proto-peasantry and elaborate a peasant way of life while still enslaved. S. W. Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations*, New York 1974, pp. 146–156; Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery*, pp. 139–151; D. Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar: Martinique and the World-Economy, 1830–1848*, Albany 2016, pp. 367–395.

and will depend on the price of those goods in relation to the price of the export commodity. Nonetheless, the labour devoted to slave subsistence varied little over the course of slavery. Slave rent remained relatively stable throughout the history of New World slavery and amounted to perhaps four-fifths of the total slave labour.³⁹ The slave rent produced by the collective labour of enslaved African workers determined the pattern of surplus production and accumulation on the Atlantic commodity frontiers. It was the driving force that extended the market relations and created a new division of labour.

Castro's concept of slave rent leads directly to concrete historical analysis. In his formulation, slave rent is an open category that only achieves full expression in concrete historical conditions. The world market and land are integrated into and constitutive of the categories of slave rent and slave labour. The socioeconomic characteristics of slavery develop through interaction with specific geographies, ecologies, and the material characteristics of production at a specific stage of development of the world market. In São Tomé, the slave labour process and the social relations of slavery, from work routines to the size and composition of the slave gang and the distribution of tasks, were adapted to the material processes and definite technical division of labour required for sugar production and developed the industrial character of slave labour. Sugar production is an agro-industrial process. Sugar has to be harvested when it is ripe and converted into sugar as soon as it is harvested. This process entails sequential steps of cutting, grinding, boiling, and crystallizing. It requires the temporal-spatial integration of a complex division of labour and the continuous calculation of time, distance, and quantity of material. No more cane could be grown than could be cut, and no more cane could be cut than could be converted into sugar. This proportional relation between sectors established the scale of production. The technical and social divisions of labour are interdependent and mutually formative. The slave relation compelled the cooperative labour of the slave gang. The slave labour force was adapted to the historically determined technical division of labour. Specialized slave workers were assigned to each sector of the production process and were subjected to a complex time and labour discipline. The working day extended from sunrise to sunset, with night work to process the crop during harvest season. The slave relation and the proportionality between sectors governed innovation and increases in output. The amount of surplus could be increased by increasing the number of slaves, subject to material and socioeconomic constraints, or by increasing the duration and/or intensity of labour. Technological change was possible, but the obstacle to it was not that slaves were incapable of working with technology. Rather, because the person of the slave was owned as property, technological innovation was not labour saving.⁴⁰ Thus, surplus production moved within definite historically determined parameters.

Slave rents varied in relation to the exploitation of the land so that slave labour created the conditions for its own expansion. Castro divides the development of the commodity frontier into three phases. These phases form sequentially in time and coexist in space.

39 Castro, *As Mãos e Pés do Senhor*, pp. 50–55.

40 M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, Berkeley 1978, Vol. I, p. 126.

In the first pioneer phase, a large proportion of labour time is devoted to clearing land, building infrastructure, and preparing for the first crop. A phase of maturity follows. The land is at its most productive, and the labour force is dominated by able-bodied workers who are fully integrated into the technical division of labour. This phase of peak output is followed by a phase of decline. The demographic composition of the labour force changes, and a greater share of non-working slaves have to be supported, with prolonged sugar monoculture degrading the environment and diminishing yields.⁴¹ Differential productivity and differential rents pushed the expansion of the sugar frontier. Rents were lower in the pioneer and the declining zones. So long as land was available, sugar production extended onto new lands while older zones became depleted.⁴² Thus, differential slave rents created a moving frontier expanded into new zones as the old ones declined. Interestingly, because the slave labour force provided its own subsistence independently from sugar production, plantation in declining zones could turn in on themselves and continue to operate with a very low return from the sale of sugar.

The category of slave rent discloses the relation between slave labour, the commodity frontier, the slave trade, and the sugar market. Slave labour drove the exploitation of the Atlantic commodity frontiers. It valorized land within the parameters set by the material-technical conditions of sugar production. The concentration of slaves made possible sugar monoculture and generated the plantation as a form of socioeconomic organization. The expansion of the sugar plantation generated continuous large-scale demand for able-bodied, low cost slave labour that was met through the Portuguese monopoly of the African slave trade and the infrastructure for systematic cross-cultural slave trading that it established. The ever-greater supply of sugar and its lower price increased demand and widened the market. (Here it is important to note the sugar from São Tomé was of lower quality and therefore cheaper than sugar from Madeira and other centres of sugar production.) The plantation reproduced itself from the profits generated by the sale of its sugar, and planters converted the revenues from sugar into more slaves and more land. The growing volume of production enabled Portugal to feed itself by exchanging sugar for wheat from the Baltic, and the increased circulation of money and commodities benefitted merchant capital throughout Europe, above all the Genoese.

6. Slavery in the Capitalist World-Economy

Beginning the analysis of capitalism with the formation of the world market in the sixteenth century enables us to see capital as a historically changing relation that is continually made and remade. Further, it discloses the ways in which diverse social relations of production, above all slavery, are constitutive of capitalist relations of production and exchange and the ways that such relations are themselves reconstituted in the historical

41 A. B. de Castro, *Sete Ensaios sobre a Economia Brasileira*, Rio de Janeiro 1971, Vol. 2, pp. 48–83.

42 Castro, *As Mãos e Pés*, pp. 55–62; Castro, *Sete Ensaios*, II, pp. 48–69.

processes of capital accumulation. The alliance of urban merchant capital and territorial states created new hinterlands in the Atlantic, producing new commodities on a scale that went beyond the limits to surplus production and commodity circulation created by class relations in the European countryside. European conquest and colonial expansion in the Atlantic created new agricultural frontiers that systematically subordinated land and labour to commodity production and formed new commodity circuits. Atlantic slavery was at once a new relation of production and a new productive force. It was a mobile and flexible form of capital that was well suited to the exploitation of the vast spaces of the maritime Atlantic. The slave plantation was the nexus of a double frontier, the African slaving frontier and the American commodity frontier.⁴³ The African slave trade offered a virtually endless supply of labour as the Americas offered a virtually endless supply of land. Slavery provided the systemic link between the African slave trade as the source of labour and the valorization of Atlantic commodity frontiers. Slave labour was geographically mobile and could be adapted to the increasing scale of production required by the world market and to the material requirements of the crop. The social relations of slavery organized the labour supplied by the slave trade and created a collective force of cooperative labour capable of large-scale commercial production. Slavery as a form of accumulation systematically expanded commodity production and the volume of commodities and money in circulation and created and extended an agricultural hinterland for urban mercantile capital. In contrast to the luxury trade with Asia, the Atlantic commodity frontiers established a maritime division of labour⁴⁴ and created the conditions for the emergence of a world market in the sixteenth century.

The physical mobility and adaptability of slave labour made possible the exploitation of the Atlantic commodity frontiers and generated the conditions for the further expansion of the slave-sugar complex. Slaves were not bound to the land. They could be moved from one place to another either through forced migration or sale. Slave plantation production could be restructured on new frontiers in accordance with the prevailing conditions of the world market and capital accumulation. The logic of differential rents applied within and between sugar frontiers. As the productivity of land declined, production moved on to new frontiers. The further the frontier was located from the final market, the greater the transportation costs and the larger the scale of production that was necessary.⁴⁵ New slave commodity frontiers could be formed on a larger scale. More slaves could be concentrated in new spaces, and slave relations could be reconstituted to increase surplus production. Sugar was an almost ideal product for expanding the market: the more available the sugar and the cheaper the price, the greater the demand. Slavery was intrinsically part of the capitalist world economy from its inception. From the fifteenth through the nineteenth century, the slave-sugar complex extended across

43 Alencastro, *The Trade in the Living*; G. Coco, *A Dinâmica das Duas Fronteiras no Atlântico Sul*, in *Glob(AL): Bio-poder e Luta em uma América Latina Globalizada*, Rio de Janeiro 2005, pp. 77–95.

44 F. Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life*, New York 1981, p. 63.

45 Bunker/Ciccantell, *Globalization and the Race for Resources*, pp. 1–99.

the Atlantic, opening new frontiers and producing on an ever-larger scale. At each step in its expansion, it was integrated in new ways into the structures of the capitalist world economy. São Tomé was the first of a sequence of commodity frontiers that extended the slave-sugar complex across the Atlantic. Beginning in the fifteenth century, the slave-sugar complex was integral to the formation of the world economic division of labour and the creation of the world market of the sixteenth century. At each successive stage of expansion and restructuring of the world economy, Atlantic slave production was also restructured, and its relation to world economic processes of capital accumulation changed. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, a new sugar frontier was formed in Brazil. The scale of production in Bahia and Pernambuco dwarfed that of Saint Tomé and created new commodity circuits and new strata of sugar consumers in Europe.⁴⁶ The Brazilian slave-sugar complex contributed the consolidation of the world market of the sixteenth century. It marked the end of the Genoese cycle of accumulation and, in Marx's formulation, the beginning of the history of capital. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, during what Arrighi refers to as the Dutch cycle of accumulation, the world market organized economic competition and expansion and created the West Indian sugar frontier as part of the capitalist world division of labour. Slave production multiplied and diversified with the formation of new commodity frontiers, most notably tobacco and rice in North America, gold production in Brazil, and coffee and indigo in the Caribbean. These frontiers were part of the original accumulation of capital that culminated with the domination of industrial capital and the capital-wage labour relation as the organizing hub of the processes restructuring the capitalist world economy. During the nineteenth century, the new slave commodity frontiers of the second slavery in the US South (cotton), Cuba (sugar), and Brazil (coffee) formed as part of the Industrial Revolution and the British cycle of productive capital. What anthropologists refer to as "plantation America" is the cumulative result of the historical succession of slave commodity frontiers.⁴⁷ However, by the nineteenth century, the ending of the Atlantic slave trade severed the link between the source of labour in Africa and the slave commodity frontiers in the Americas. The combination of abolitionism and slave resistance brought an end to chattel slavery in the Atlantic slave zones. Nonetheless, the end of chattel slavery in the Americas did not signal the end of forced labour. The perspective presented here further suggests the ways in which the further expansion of world capitalist accumulation after the destruction of Atlantic slavery created new and more diverse commodity frontiers and new and more diverse forms of compulsory labour in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere in the Americas.

46 S. B. Schwartz (ed.), *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450–1680*, Chapel Hill 2004.
 47 Ch. Wagley, *Plantation America: A Cultural Sphere*, in: V. Rubin (ed.), *Caribbean Studies: A Symposium*. Seattle 1960, pp. 3–13; M. Harris, *Patterns of Race in the Americas*, New York 1964 pp. 44–53.