



Chapter 5

AFRICANS IN BRAZIL

1500	Portuguese fleet encounters and claims Brazil.
1530s	Portuguese create captaincies to promote settlement.
1549	Portuguese establish Salvador as colonial capital.
1580s	Brazilian sugar <i>fazendas</i> begin shifting to African field labor.
1580–1640	Spain annexes Portugal and its colonies.
1610s–1694	Palmares, an African state in Brazil, maintains its independence against Portuguese and Dutch attacks.
1680s	Gold discovered in Brazil.
1750s	Mining declines in Brazil.
1770s	Coffee and other new crops introduced to promote exports.
1822	Brazilian independence declared.
1831	Law to end slave trade proves unenforceable.
1850	Queiroz Law effectively ends slave trade.
1850–1880s	Internal slave trade of some two hundred thousand from Brazil's northeast to the coffee zone in the south.

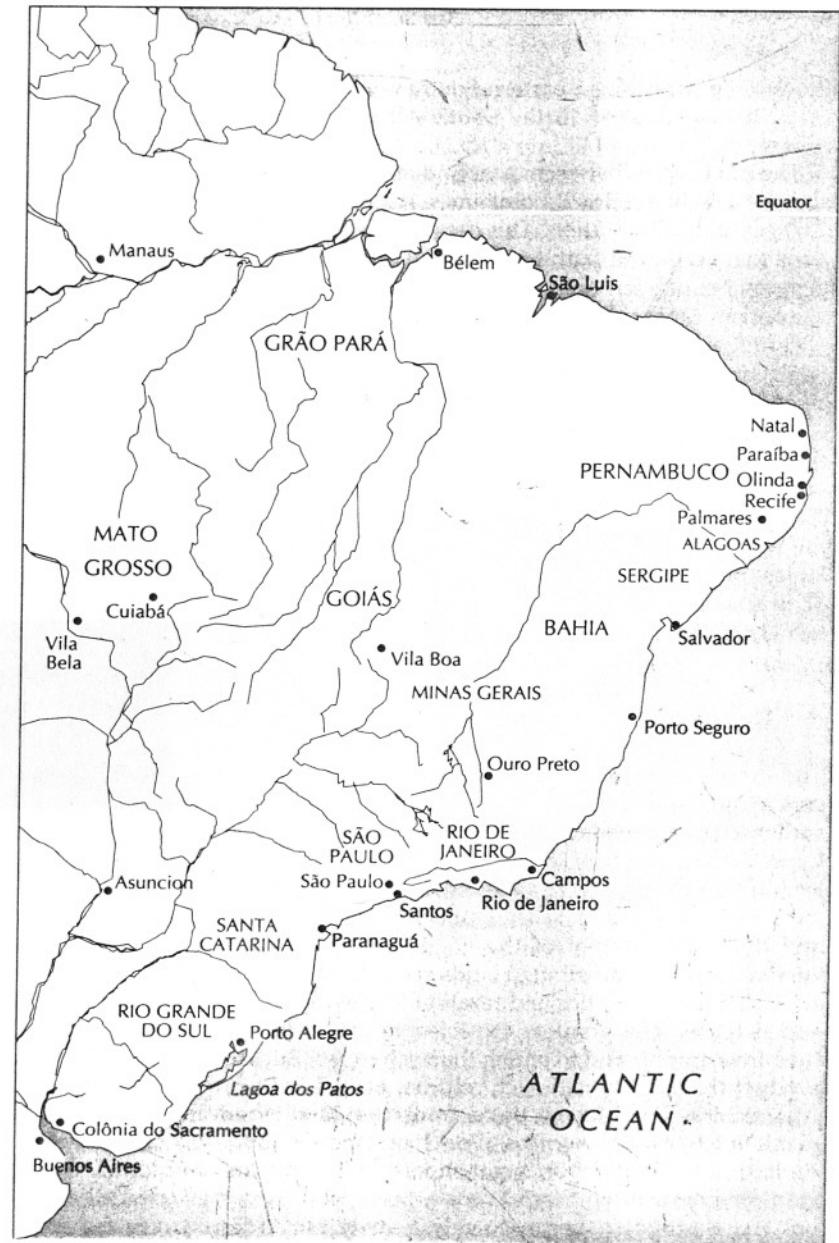
Many millions of years ago, before the continents began to drift apart, Brazil and Africa were joined. A glance at a geological world map shows how the "hump" of Brazil used to fill the Gulf of Guinea. (See Map 5-1.) This ancient connection left common legacies:

The two continents have similarities in geology, vegetation, climate, and fauna. Nevertheless, divergent development on the two continents led to sharp contrasts as well. Africans, in touch with Asia and southern Europe, possessed iron technology, beasts of burden, and political states; the Amerindians of Brazil had none of these.

New links were forged in modern history, especially during the period of the African slave trade, from the 1530s to the 1850s. The forced migration of about five million Africans was complemented by the transfer of technology, culture, microorganisms, plants, animals, and social structures. Because of these new connections, Brazil became Africanized to a greater degree than any other part of the Americas except Haiti. In this sense, human history reversed geological history by reuniting two regions that had split apart through continental drift.

Humans evolved in Africa after the continents separated, and until recent times the Americas lay isolated from and unknown to our species. Then, between thirty and forty thousand years ago, small numbers migrated to the Americas by way of the Bering Strait ice bridge that temporarily connected the two continents. Their descendants in Brazil, called Amerindians, lived seminomadic lives, establishing villages and cultivating cleared lands for several years and then moving on to new sites. Their culture and society were analogous to those of sub-Saharan Africa, from which many slaves were brought. Women managed the homes, cultivated simple crops, raised children, and passed on simple accumulations of goods. Men hunted, fished, built timber-and-thatch structures, conducted warfare, and, when elders, formed councils for public discussions and decision making. Like most sub-Saharan Africans, the Amerindians of Brazil did not recognize individual property rights to land. They worshiped naturalistic gods, with whom they communicated through older men or women called *shamans*.

Portugal claimed Brazil as its territory after its chance discovery by a merchant fleet in 1500. The claim was based on a 1494 treaty with Spain granting jurisdiction over Africa and the South Atlantic islands where its merchants had established settlements. At first the Portuguese believed Brazil to be another island, and even when they learned that it was part of a new continent, they treated it as an extension of their African territories. Fearing that a rival European power might attempt to take over Brazil, the Portuguese undertook to colonize it in the 1530s. They took much from Africa to South America: artisans, soldiers, and agricultural workers; cash crops; capital; and institutions. Soon they began importing slaves as well. In exchange, Brazil supplied trade goods, money, and services of many sorts to West Africa. For over three centuries Africa and Brazil were intimately linked together as Portuguese colonies. Brazil became the more profitable of the colonies, but Africa supplied the people and cultures that



Map 5-1 Brazil with Principal Cities

thoroughly Africanized eastern South America. Thus, for three centuries Brazil belonged more to the South Atlantic than to the North Atlantic sphere.

The similarities between Amerindian cultures and those of the many slaves brought to Brazil sometimes fostered African-native cultural exchanges and collaboration. This occurred in runaway camps and on plantations that employed both peoples as workers. Nevertheless, planters and government officials did everything they could to separate the two and to discourage Amerindians from harboring fugitive slaves. In addition, mixed Amerindian-white Brazilians, called *Mamelucos*, served as native slavers, while mulattoes were hired to recapture runaway Africans. Thus, no major alliances ever formed between Amerindians and slaves.

The Africanization of Brazil reached its height in the decades between the late eighteenth and the midnineteenth centuries, when Brazil's slave imports and commodity exports were immense. Since then contacts have diminished, yet the African legacy in Brazil remains strong, visible today in the physical appearance of the people and in their culture. Brazil has the largest population of African descent outside of Africa. The Africanization of Brazil—a prolonged, complex, multi-directional process—contributed heavily to the creation of a distinctive African American civilization.

◆ THE SUGAR BOOM

The Portuguese Crown chose to establish permanent settlements, called *captaincies*, along the Brazilian coast in the 1530s, using the same methods earlier colonizers had employed on the islands of Madeira, the Azores, the Cape Verdes, and São Tomé. Brazil was divided into fifteen huge territories (captaincies) that were awarded to twelve court favorites, mostly noblemen, known as grantees. These men financed the recruitment of colonists and the transportation of the goods and supplies they would need to survive, and they distributed lands and jobs. Their broad powers included administration of justice and taxation to pay the costs of local government and defense. The grantees expected to make enough profits to recover their investments and to enrich themselves too. Sugar was the only known product that could yield such returns, as had been proven on Portugal's Atlantic islands. Moved there from the Mediterranean shores, sugar plantations—called *engenhos* [Port.] or *ingenios* [Sp.]—brought together capital, equipment, labor, sugar shoots, and technology to produce a cash crop for export to northern Europe. Slave labor had been used all along, but the Portuguese began to rely heavily on African slaves for sugar production. The fateful marriage of sugar and Africans in the late fifteenth century would produce the lowland sugar societies of the Americas.

Sugarcane is a perennial grass that yields a sucrose juice that can be refined into granular sugar. After becoming established, the plants can be harvested annually for about ten years. In a typical *ingenio*, the cane was cut and stripped of its leafy foliage, transported to the mill, squeezed between rollers to extract the juice, and then discarded or dried for later uses. The juice had to be boiled down and refined in huge caldrons to separate impurities from the syrup that would become sugar. This latter operation, requiring great skill, close timing, and persistent attention, usually took place in steamy rooms next to the grinding mills. At the last stage, the thickened syrup was allowed to stand in clay molds until it dried into the classic sugarloaf shape. These loaves were crated and transported to Europe for sale. At the time, sugar production was one of the most complex and capital-intensive enterprises anywhere in the world.

Africans were essential to the transfer of sugar to Brazil and hence to the survival of the early captaincies themselves. The grantees and most colonists imported African slaves to serve as workers, soldiers, and overseers, providing skilled services and acting as auxiliaries to the settlers. Many of them possessed valuable trades, such as ironworking, carpentry, soldiering, and animal husbandry, and they learned Portuguese and understood European ways. Even the few Muslims among them got along with the Portuguese, whose ancestors had coexisted with followers of Islam during the Moorish domination of Iberia.

The early Africans formed a technical backbone of the new Brazilian colony, much as they did in other parts of the Americas. Most important, many Africans were experienced in the sugar business as then conducted on the Atlantic islands, and so they were able to help lay out fields, construct buildings and machinery, and set up refining operations. Because these Africans represented heavy investments of money, training, and acculturation, planters avoided overworking or exposing them to great danger. Africans also helped build and maintain the cities, ports, churches, and ranches, and made other improvements that the Portuguese considered essential for their survival in the Americas.

Most of the early sugar plantations in Brazil employed Amerindian slaves for the intensive labor of clearing, planting, weeding, harvesting, and transporting cane. The Portuguese regarded the Amerindians as expendable, for they were numerous and could be captured easily. Typically, a slaving party, commanded by a European but made up mostly of mestizo and African soldiers, would strike out into the forests, raid native villages, and take their prisoners back to the plantations in chains. A later variety of enslavement was the *resgate* (or rescue), by which the Portuguese would incite intertribal wars so that they could purchase captives from the victor. During the sixteenth century, Amerindian slaves were far more numerous than Africans in Brazil.

In the 1580s a fateful change began in the sugar industry, one that would alter the Brazil-Africa relationship and condemn millions more Africans to a terrible existence. Planters gradually replaced their Amerindian field slaves with Africans, who henceforth did the heaviest labor. This shift had several causes. First, as sugar became a staple in the European diet profits rose rapidly, allowing planters to purchase more Africans. Second, government policy during Portugal's annexation to Spain (1580–1640) provided greater protection for natives and indirectly encouraged the African slave trade. Third, the Amerindian men resisted field work for cultural reasons, whereas Africans had long practiced agriculture. Finally, the Amerindians' susceptibility to European diseases reduced their ability to withstand the rigors of harvest work. So for some fifty years after 1580, plantations in the most productive regions along the Brazilian coast (especially between Pernambuco and Bahia) abandoned using Amerindians in field work and replaced them with Africans.

The growing demand for African laborers in Brazil increased slaving activities in parts of Africa where the Portuguese were active and led to more regular voyages across the South Atlantic. Typically, a ship sailed from Portugal laden with goods and money that could be exchanged for slaves in Africa. The ship then took on a cargo of slaves and sailed for Brazil. The final leg was the return to Europe with sugar, tobacco, and other tropical products. The entire triangular voyage took about a year.

Higher profits and increased use of Africans in the sugar industry raised productivity but led to heavier demands on the laborers, causing the work regime to become regimented and impersonal. The earlier collaborative relationship between masters and slaves now grew antagonistic, and field slaves were treated as chattel. The drive for increased productivity led to overwork, maltreatment, rationed food, nocturnal lock-ups, and corporal punishment. Under these conditions, the average field slave did not live many years. Moreover, Africans could be replaced more easily since the trade had become more efficient. A terrible calculus was used to justify the purchase of more African slaves: In the years they would survive on the plantation regime, they could produce enough to yield high profits for the slaveholder or planter.

Although Amerindians continued to work on sugar plantations after the 1580s, they moved into ancillary activities. Typically, they lived in separate villages on the margins of the plantations, and they performed tasks that were more in keeping with the Tupi-Guaraní culture. The men hunted and fished to provide food for the plantation, and some tended cattle on nearby pastures. Others cut and transported firewood for the refining mill. Finally, Amerindian men operated canoes, rafts, and oxcarts that transported food, wood, raw cane, sugar, and other supplies throughout the plantation and to and from market. Women raised corn, manioc, and other staples, and they also prepared food for the field hands. In the seventeenth cen-

tury, these Amerindians enjoyed a degree of autonomy in the plantation regime and were often paid on a piecework basis.

Slave traders altered their routes in the seventeenth century. Brazilian merchants had now taken over more of the trade and tended to sail directly to Africa, abandoning the Portuguese leg of the route. They exchanged chewing tobacco and rum for slaves along the west coast of Africa, and they often took on Asian goods for resale in Brazil as well. A fast slaver could make several trips a year. Increasingly, the traders bought Bantu-speaking and Kongo people in west-central African ports. Adult men predominated in the trade; women and children made up a minority of the slaves shipped. These people were thought by the Brazilians to be more adaptable to plantation labor and less inclined to create resistance. Many had little prior experience dealing with Europeans, and captivity proved to be highly destructive of their cultures and societies. Therefore, as the slave regime became harsher, the Africans' psychic abilities to resist diminished.

In the first half of the seventeenth century, sugar production reached its apogee in Brazil, and at the same time the Africans experienced their heaviest labor demands in the New World. Sugar exports peaked in the 1640s, when profits were at their highest. At this point Brazil earned almost as much revenue as Mexico and Peru combined, and it surpassed Portuguese India as the chief colony in the empire. The African slave population of Brazil reached several hundred thousand, and some five to seven thousand Africans were brought every year to the main ports of Recife and Salvador. Sugar was king by the midseventeenth century, and it drove the Africanization process.

The plantation compound at the peak of sugar prosperity resembled a miniature township. The *casa grande*, or manor house, accommodated the planter/mill owner as well as his extended family—sometimes dozens of relatives—and many household slaves. Nearby lay the *senzala*, or slave quarters, a low structure with small, poorly ventilated rooms. The mill itself was located near the *casa grande*, where the planter could supervise the most critical tasks, milling and refining sugar. The quadrangle was completed by a chapel, where the slaves often received the sacraments. (The owner's family worshiped separately or in a private chapel in the manor house.) The yard itself served to muster slaves in the mornings and evenings and often witnessed infliction of punishment. This seventeenth-century sugar plantation complex became a paradigm for slave-based plantation agriculture in many tropical areas of the Americas and was replicated in later phases of Brazil's history. Under development for a century, the plantation would survive as an institution for another two hundred years. Even in regions that were not suitable for sugar, slaveholders employed African labor to produce ground crops, livestock, tobacco, forage, fowl, and crafts.

Africans also supplied labor for myriad other businesses besides sugar. The coastal cities, where African slaves made up at least half the population, could not have existed without them. Africans performed most manual and skilled trades, carrying out most construction, haulage, manufacturing, vending, provisioning, sanitation, and peace keeping. They also supplied nearly all domestic and personal services. Finally, the entire shipping industry depended heavily on Africans, both free and slave, for shipwrights and crewmen. In the sense of labor power, then, coastal Brazil was largely Africanized by the midseventeenth century.

The Decline of Sugar

Sugar prices began to fall after midcentury, provoking complex readjustments in coastal Brazilian societies and economies. When planters could no longer afford to hire skilled artisans from the towns to carry out specialized jobs, they began to rely more on talented slaves who had been apprenticed to masters. In this way, a range of artisan positions in the plantation complex again became the slaves' domain. Skilled slaves enjoyed better treatment, more rations, and shorter hours. They could begin families, and some even bought their freedom. Generally, in the last decades of the sugar cycle conditions improved for skilled African and Brazilian-born slaves.

With the decline of profits in sugar, the plantations became more self-sufficient. Planters, who could no longer afford to purchase all the food needed by their slaves, began giving them time to raise their own provisions. Those slaves who did so undoubtedly ate better, and some managed to sell small surpluses in nearby towns and plantations. Some planters, no longer driven by high sugar prices, began honoring the church rule that slaves rest on Sundays. Some replaced expensive luxury imports (liquors, silks, porcelain, jewelry, religious icons, and paintings) with substitutes made locally by their slaves. Finally, planters began to reassign slaves to household service when their labor was no longer critical in the fields. It was in this period that the manor house, with its masters and slaves, became the crucible of racial and cultural mixing in which modern Brazilian society was created.

Because slaves in Brazil (and elsewhere in Latin America) did not have enough children to reproduce their numbers, their ranks had to be constantly replenished from the African trade. The reasons for their low birth rate suggest something of their poor quality of life. First, women as well as men worked long hours at physically exhausting tasks, which left them vulnerable to illness and miscarriage. Second, their diets contained mostly carbohydrates and fat, laced with amounts of salt that caused heart disease in Africans. Third, disruption of their religious, social, political, and eco-

nomie life reduced their psychic defenses against despair and depression, leading to malaise and suicide. Fourth, the sexual imbalance among the African imports lowered the general reproduction rate. This was aggravated by greater manumission rates among women. Fifth, celibacy and abortion reduced women's fertility, and infant mortality took a high toll among those babies carried to term. For these reasons, the Afro-Brazilian population in the seventeenth century, excluding the effects of imports, declined at a rate of about 5 percent a year, a rate far higher than that for healthy groups.

Africans employed in the Brazilian sugar cycle did not, however, exist as automatons, for they possessed many means for self-expression and fulfillment. For example, many could begin families and raise children. What is more, Catholic and legal traditions defended their rights to some extent, allowing them to form kin networks and brotherhoods and even to be heard in court. The Africans reconstituted their religions in Brazil during this era, though never with official approval. Finally, persons assigned to the plantation house blended African and European cuisine and child-raising methods, a new form of cultural expression. Thus, most could at least hope to improve their lives.

The tens of thousands of Africans living in cities enjoyed freedoms and rights that were unusual on plantations. They worked finite hours or had set tasks, after which they were able to rest, socialize, work for themselves, or hire out their services to others. Religious brotherhoods for Afro-Brazilians became meeting grounds for community organization and even political expression. Gradually during the seventeenth century, a new class of Afro-Brazilians, both slave and free, appeared in the cities, whose status was many notches above that of the plantation slaves. Some learned to read and write and assumed leadership roles in the black brotherhoods and trade groups.

Manumission and Runaways

Far greater self-expression came with slaves' manumission, which was common in Brazilian cities but sporadic on plantations. Based on scholarly analyses of letters of freedom (*alforria*), we know a good deal about who gained liberty and how. Most of the manumitted lived in cities, because there they found greater opportunities to earn money and to live in freedom. In addition, most were female and were born in Brazil. Children and adolescents made up a substantial minority of freed persons. Nearly half the manumitted purchased their freedom by themselves or with relatives' help. Compliant behavior and close relations (sexual or caretaking) with the masters were mentioned in many letters. Usually, manumission was unconditional and irrevocable, but occasionally, it was given upon the masters' death, provided for in their wills.

From the earliest days of the sugar economy in Brazil, some Africans gained their freedom by running away from the plantations and towns. Thousands of runaway camps, called *quilombos* and *mocambos* in Brazil, sprang up between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. At first, many Africans who fled into Amerindian territory were captured and killed, but eventually some were accepted and lived permanently among the Amerindians, leading to some cultural mixing. More usual was the founding of independent camps, more or less permanent and defensive, within a day's travel from Portuguese settlements. These Africans raised their own food and sometimes preyed on travelers. They also raided plantations for provisions and encouraged others to flee. Slave owners naturally regarded their existence as threatening to the plantation system. Brazil's quilombos were analogous to the maroon and cimarrón settlements in other parts of the Americas.

Palmares, the largest and most famous quilombo in Brazilian history, was formed at the turn of the seventeenth century in the backlands of Pernambuco and lasted nearly a century, until its destruction in 1694 by irregular soldiers from São Paulo. Zumbi, the king of Palmares at its peak, ruled over thousands of subjects and commanded a guard reported to number five thousand. Portuguese attempts to overrun the settlement failed because of the fine fortifications and disciplined troops, especially during Zumbi's time. (The 1984 movie *Quilombo* by Brazilian filmmaker Carlos Diegues idealized Palmares as an Afro-Brazilian society and suggested the extent to which Brazilians trace their cultural roots back to Africa.)

Most quilombos existed in constant jeopardy because of special deputies known as *capitães do mato*, or bushwhacking captains, men who attacked the camps and returned runaways to their owners or resold them. By the late nineteenth century, however, in the heat of the abolition campaign, quilombos swelled with fleeing slaves and the authorities largely ignored them.

The sugar industry in Brazil, which led colonial employers to depend almost exclusively on African slaves for laborpower, never recovered the sustained profitability it enjoyed in the midseventeenth century. Sugar's long-term importance lay in financing the import of more than a million Africans, who left their imprint on virtually every aspect of life. The patterns of labor, social control, and race relations laid down in Brazil, especially in the sugar plantations, were adopted in other European colonies in the Americas and continue to influence society today.

◆ THE MINING ERA

In the 1680s the discovery of gold in the Brazilian highlands set off the world's first gold rush. Tens of thousands of Portuguese flocked to Brazil

to make their fortunes, and over a million Africans were taken as slaves to labor in the mines and towns. The mining boom also spurred colonization and economic growth from the Amazon to the far south, causing more slave imports. The mining industry differed sharply from the sugar economy, and Africans contributed more to the broad development of the mining regions. The eighteenth century saw the accelerating Africanization of Brazil.

Most of the Europeans who settled in the mining districts of Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso, and Goiás were of northern Portuguese stock and tended to be hard-working, pious, frugal, and family-oriented people. They generally had little experience with Africans. The immigrants invested what capital they had in slaves, tools, provisions, and livestock, and took them into the camps. Since life in these isolated districts was extremely difficult in the early years, few Portuguese women migrated to the region. Many Brazilians also flocked to the mining districts, principally from the northeast coast and from São Paulo. They were used to employing African slaves, and many took with them slaves they had used in other businesses. They also left behind their wives because of the hardships in the mines.

The prices of slaves increased sharply at the turn of the eighteenth century because of the inland migrations produced by the discovery of gold. During the gold rush importations from Africa more than doubled—from about seven to fifteen thousand per year. At first, the Crown attempted to require that slavers buy only at Angolan ports, but the miners preferred Africans from the Costa da Mina region (between the Bight of Biafra and the Windward Coast), because they knew or readily learned mining techniques. The king finally acquiesced, and huge numbers of Mina slaves arrived.

Eventually, shipments of Angolan slaves—favored for general labor—surpassed those from Costa da Mina. The mining boom created a tremendous demand for livestock, tools, food, transport, ships, construction materials, and manufactures. Indeed, the mining boom generated capital and laborpower for later development efforts in the Amazon and along the north and southeastern coasts as well. During the eighteenth century, almost two million slaves were shipped from Africa to Brazil, deepening the process of Africanization.

In Minas Gerais, the numbers of Mina and Angolan slaves remained about equal, and ecological factors limited the total district population to about two hundred thousand. Several censuses provided information on mining slave owners and their slaves. The most frequent occupations among the slave owners were military officer and priest. Most owners had two slaves, whom they used to work mining claims, carry on other business, and do household duties. A few entrepreneurs possessed dozens of slaves each. In the early days male slaveholders outnumbered females

thirty to one, but by the end of the eighteenth century the ratio had fallen to about five to two. At first nearly all slaves were African-born, but by the end of the century the majority (59 percent) were native-born. Female slaves, who made up only 14 percent in the gold rush days, later made up about 42 percent, owing to the rising numbers born in Brazil. The age structure of slaves, highly skewed toward youth at first, became more normal by the end of the century.

Manumissions were at least as frequent in Minas Gerais as in the rest of Brazil, because slaves could hide nuggets and gems with which to buy their freedom. They also had many opportunities to work for themselves and to save money for self-purchase. Women and children more often gained their freedom through grants, because many were concubines or illegitimate children of masters. Some freed persons (especially women) later purchased slaves themselves whom they used in mining, business, or personal service. One of the most famous freedmen was the African prince Chico Rei, whose followers purchased his freedom, elected him king, and then worked in his mine in the town of Ouro Preto.

Because of the scarcity of white women during the gold rush, many miners formed conjugal unions with their female slaves or patronized African prostitutes. Within a few years a generation of children of mixed race arose, some with substantial Amerindian heritage as well. Thus, Minas society was far more racially blended than that of the coastal sugar zone.

Life and work in the mines exposed slaves to more severe risks than they had faced in the sugar fields. Most labored in placer deposits, where they were continuously wet and cold due to the altitude. Pick and shovel mining was as exhausting as plantation work. Nutritious food was not as abundant as on the coast. The greatest scourges for whites and blacks alike were pneumonia, intestinal parasites, and dysentery, for which no effective treatments existed. The slaves' existence in Minas remained as "nasty, brutish, and short" as it had been in the sugar industry. Still, the age distributions and sex ratios revealed in censuses suggest that life expectancy for slaves in Minas Gerais was at least as long as in the plantations. Several causes may be postulated. The small number of slaves owned by most miners might have led to a more familial existence than on plantations, where slaves lived in crowded quarters and ate inferior rations. Closer personal relations between masters and slaves led to high rates of miscegenation, recognition of illegitimate children, and manumission, which could have improved their quality of life. Perhaps the urban residence of most slaves (the mining camps had become towns and cities) improved their chances for survival.

Well-to-do slave owners in Minas provided more education for their sons, white and mulatto, and even underwrote advanced schooling for

some in Europe. Their patronage of the church and the arts created jobs for talented artisans, writers, painters, musicians, architects, jewelers, sculptors, and designers. Africans and their descendants, both slave and free, were very active in the flowering of the first truly Brazilian artistic age, the baroque. One of the most famous Afro-Brazilian artists of all time—the master Aleijadinho—left an exquisite legacy of statuary, religious artifacts, furniture, and churches in Minas Gerais. Such educated and skilled mulattoes formed a racial middle class in Minas Gerais.

Most of what has been said about the African experience in the gold mines was also true of life in the adjoining diamond district after 1730. The work was hard and discipline rigorous. Nevertheless, slaves were often rewarded for finding large stones, and thousands managed to save enough money to buy their freedom. The exclusion of outsiders by Portuguese administrators led to even closer relations between masters and slaves. One of the most extraordinary Afro-Brazilian persons of this era was Xica da Silva, a beautiful and canny African princess, who won her freedom and was lavished with favors by the area's chief diamond contractor, an enormously wealthy man who had fallen in love with her. Her story was made into a film in the 1970s.

With depletion of the ores, the mining cycle went into decline in the 1750s. This change tended to lighten the work demands on the slave population and encouraged economic diversification. Many miners' sons and grandsons took a slave or two and struck out to farm or ranch. Slavery continued to be practiced in the mining region until late in the nineteenth century but in an unusual manner. Operators of small and medium-sized farms and ranches possessed several slaves, who worked as hands and were to some degree members of the owners' extended families. This type of production was profitable and apparently allowed for a natural increase among the slaves, for the first time in Brazil's history. Nowhere else was slavery adapted profitably to agriculture on small holdings.

◆ AFRO-BRAZILIAN CULTURES

By the early nineteenth century, distinctive Afro-Brazilian cultures had arisen, shaped by regional origins in Africa and by the dominant industries in Brazil. The Northeast was dominated by Yoruba influence from the Mina coast. Tens of thousands of Minas remained in the highland region after the decline of mining exports. They had longstanding contacts with Muslims, Europeans, and other Africans, better enabling them to adapt and preserve their culture. Also, they came late and in large numbers, so their culture remained active in the community experience. In particular, some freedmen visited Africa to reestablish contact with ancestral spirits,

important in their religion, called *Candomblé*. In this way they became the interpreters of a new, adaptive African faith in Brazil.

Throughout the time Brazil was a Portuguese colony (1500–1822), most of its population was black and Amerindian. The Amerindians continued to be enslaved for work in regions with low-profit industries, but Africans and their descendants predominated in lucrative branches like sugar, tobacco, mining, urban crafts, and coffee.

Because large numbers of slaves arrived from abroad, one of the sharpest social distinctions among the workers was African versus local birth. A recently arrived African was called a *boçal* (*bozal* in Spanish). This designation implied limited knowledge of European culture, lack of familiarity with local conditions, and greater attachment to his or her nation. *Boçais* might be guarded more closely and kept isolated from native-born slaves who, in turn, were called *creoles* (*crioulo* in Portuguese, *criollo* or *ladino* in Spanish). *Creoles* tended to look down on the *boçais* as ignorant and inferior. This social gap probably impeded efforts to organize resistance and filtered out some African culture that *creoles* regarded as backward, pagan, or primitive.

In addition, large intermediate groups of mulattoes, mestizos, and other mixtures continued to grow. Racial boundaries blurred, while other criteria—family, education, occupation, physical appearance, income, place of birth, dress, and so on—took on more importance for assigning status. According to an old saying that simplified a complicated situation, *dinheiro embranquece*, or money whitens. Persons of color residing outside the plantation environment came to be judged and categorized by several attributes, producing the myth that slavery was less harsh and race relations more peaceful in Brazil.

Race still mattered, of course, for nonwhites filled out the lower tiers of the social pyramid, while the whites and mulattoes dominated the upper levels. A racial hierarchy emerged that operated like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Light mulattoes tended to experience upward mobility and rose in social standing, whereas darker persons found opportunities scarce and movement difficult. Blacks, whether slave or free, rarely escaped from the drudgery and suffering of manual labor and low remuneration. The racial terms for these mixes, *moreno*, *pardo*, and *negro*, fully conveyed society's estimate of and expectations for each group. The ability of lighter colored persons to elude the full opprobrium of racial discrimination in Brazil (and to some extent in Spanish America) has been called the "mulatto escape hatch." Those who eschewed identification with African origins could pass as pseudowhite, and society would recognize such behavior with better treatment. The widespread passing of light-skinned persons distinguished these societies from those founded by northern Europeans, where rigid race lines were observed and enforced. Some critics, however, argue that such behavior merely postponed any discussion of racism as a societal ill.

◆ THE COFFEE BOOM

After a recession in the 1770s, the Brazilian economy (except mining) recovered and grew rapidly for the next one hundred and fifty years, driven by exports of agricultural products from the coastal regions. Although Brazilian producers continued to use Amerindian slaves in marginal areas, they preferred African slaves wherever profits allowed. They were employed in cattle ranching, extraction of forest products, and production of rice, tobacco, cotton, cacao, indigo, sugar, and—the latest boom crop—coffee. In addition, the rising profits from export agriculture caused cities to grow, and most relied on African slaves to sustain their activities. Most Brazilians assumed that civilized life would be impossible without Africans.

Owing to freer navigation, rising agricultural exports, and the growth of cities, slave imports into Brazil grew after the 1770s. British diplomatic pressure on Portugal (and on independent Brazil after 1822) did little to reduce the trade. Faster and larger ships brought slaves from many parts of Africa. A shift in the African sources of slaves occurred in the late eighteenth century. Now many more came from below the equator, from the west-central coast, and from southeastern Africa. Although all Brazilian regions imported slaves, Rio de Janeiro was the principal slave market in the nineteenth century due to the surge in coffee planting in its hinterland. The African trade peaked in the 1840s, when it reached about thirty-eight thousand slaves per year, and then ended shortly after the Brazilian government abolished it with the 1850 Queiroz Law. After the end of the trade, African slaves were supplied to the coffee plantations by means of an interprovincial slave trade, originating in the depressed sugar areas of the Northeast. Between 1850 and 1881, as many as two hundred thousand slaves were transported in this way. While slavery persisted, planters met with little success in recruiting European workers.

Labor on the coffee plantations was as demanding as that in the sugar fields and mines in previous centuries. The hardest work, done by men, was clearing land. Most of the region suitable for coffee (Rio's Paraíba Valley, the high plain of São Paulo, and Triângulo of Minas Gerais) had been heavily forested. Slaves cut down smaller trees and brush, which was allowed to dry before burning. They cut rings in the bark of larger trees to kill them. Seedling coffee trees had to be protected during the six years it took for them to reach producing age. Once the groves were established, they required weeding, pruning, and harvesting, done by men and women. Processing the beans involved hulling, drying, and sacking, tasks usually done by women. Until the coming of the railroad after the 1860s, sacked coffee was loaded by men and transported by mules down from the mountains to the ports of Rio and Santos.

The coffee barons, attempting to recreate the seigneurial life that had

prevailed in the heyday of sugar, built manor houses, senzalas, mills, and chapels in the quadrangular fashion of seventeenth-century plantations. They purchased titles of nobility, arranged financially advantageous marriages for their children, and consumed conspicuously while the money lasted. Some used large numbers of slaves in domestic chores. So here, too, the manor house encouraged the mingling of cultures and genes as in a melting pot. In the end, the dream of a coffee aristocracy faded, due to erosion of the land, the decline and aging of the slaves, and limits to the world demand for coffee. Coffee, it turned out, was Brazil's last cycle of tropical enterprise based on African labor.

Africans brought to Brazil during the nineteenth century helped create new subcultures, which drew on the ethnic heritages of their homelands. In Rio, in particular, a unique culture arose, with its own languages, dress, food, manners, art, music, dance, and calendar of celebrations. The Afro-Brazilian religion called *Umbanda* blended deities and rites from Africa with the relaxed Catholicism practiced by those of European descent. It won converts through private ceremonies (*terreios*), the black brotherhoods, family worship, and word of mouth. By this time the Africanization of Brazil was a self-sustaining, irreversible process.

These African cultures spread throughout Brazilian society in the nineteenth century. A folklore of African origin was passed on to white children by black nannies. Music—instruments, harmonics, melody, and rhythm—also became Africanized, and Brazil's samba is surpassed only by jazz as an Afro-American invention. Dance, speech inflection, food preparation, dress, family relations, work habits, and many other intimate aspects of life in Brazil also showed the effects of Africa, and, obviously, Africa's genetic contribution was very evident in the Brazilian physiology. The melting pot did not homogenize its contents, however; thus, the white, European elements remained on the surface, and African culture was officially discouraged. Even today these African elements are more identified with the working class and the *povo* (people) than with the elite.

◆ MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY IN THE TROPICS

From the 1830s on, groups of freed slaves returned to Africa because they were not entirely secure in their rights as freedmen in Brazil. There they created small Brazilian communities out of nostalgia for their adopted homeland. Most of the returned Africans engaged in commerce with Brazil, even the slave trade. Once this trade ended in the 1850s, they moved into other activities: merchandise exports, ranching and farming, and various trades. The Brazilian communities of Lagos and Dahomey, in particular, numbered in the thousands and were quite prosperous for the remainder of the century. Eventually, however, the connections with Bra-

zil faded, because only scant family, economic, religious, and cultural links remained. The African colonies, like Brazil, became engaged with (and were eventually conquered by) European colonizers and no longer shared mutual interests.

The Africanization process per se ended in the nineteenth century, and what followed was the evolution of a distinctive Afro-Brazilian culture, with its own institutions, language, and behavior. Africanization has not turned Brazil into a replica of Africa, of course. The legacy of three hundred years of slave imports, trade, and development was more complex. In its broad structure Brazil's was a multiracial society led by a white elite, and its dominant culture and institutions were derived from Europe. This meant that European families—some descended from Portuguese nobility—monopolized power, wealth, and prestige and therefore commanded the course of history. They were the least affected by Africanization.

The strata beneath the elite were truly multiracial, composed of the masses of black, Amerindian, and mixed persons. The elite commingled with and yet remained distant from these masses. Members of the elite lived, worked, procreated, worshiped, and took leisure with the masses, yet they were always aware of the racial and cultural differences between them. The elite needed the masses to do society's work, and this required sustained contact. But the elite had to keep the masses in a subordinate position lest it lose its right to command. In the nineteenth century the elite developed an elaborate system of rewards and sanctions designed to preserve the socioeconomic system inherited from colonial times. It required that persons who wished to enjoy the major benefits of society—money, leisure, respect, travel, family—had to behave European, which in essence meant to behave white. This option was only available to persons in positions intermediate between the elite and the masses. Oddly, even racially mixed persons who behaved white passed as white, a process called *branqueamento*.

◆ CONCLUSION

By the midnineteenth century, Brazil had become more Africanized than any other area in the Americas except Haiti. Its religion, mores, language, folklore, music, and social structure clearly revealed the influence of the four million Africans imported in the preceding three hundred years. Africanization most affected the workplace—due to continued slavery—but it also penetrated the bedroom, chapel, kitchen, and drawing room. In subtle ways even the elite was Africanized, despite a tenacious desire to remain European. The nanny who nursed and nurtured the master's children in the plantation house imparted to them her culture. Gilberto Freyre believed that this nexus between two races was what destined Brazil to become a unique and successful civilization in the tropics.