

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18817/ot.v15i26.657>*HISTÓRIA, PATRIMÔNIO E MEMÓRIA SENSÍVEL: o Cais do Valongo no Rio de Janeiro**HISTORY, PATRIMONY AND SENSITIVE MEMORY: the Valongo Wharf in Rio de Janeiro**HISTORIA, PATRIMONIO Y MEMORIA SENSIBLE: el Cais do Valongo en Río de Janeiro*

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**Resumo:** O artigo trata sobre aspectos que definem a importância do sítio histórico e arqueológico Cais do Valongo, situado na cidade do Rio de Janeiro, para a história da escravização de africanos e seus descendentes nas Américas e, em especial, no Brasil. Além de ressaltar a relevância desse bem, reconhecido em 2017 como Patrimônio Mundial pela UNESCO, também aborda o seu significado como sítio histórico de memória sensível e lugar de memória do tráfico atlântico de africanos escravizados. Ao longo do texto, são abordadas ideias-chave, tais como passados sensíveis, violência, dor e sofrimento em perspectiva histórica, indicando possibilidades de comparação com outros espaços no mundo, considerando tragédias humanas e conceitos utilizados nos estudos sobre esses processos. Finalmente, o texto analisa elementos em torno da história da região do Valongo Wharf como espaço de resistência e de afirmação das populações negras.

**Palavras-chave:** Valongo Wharf. História da Escravidão. Passados Sensíveis. Patrimônio Mundial. História dos africanos no Brasil.

**Abstract:** The article deals with aspects that define the importance of the historical and archaeological site of Valongo Wharf, located in the city of Rio de Janeiro, for the history of enslavement of Africans and their descendants in the Americas and especially in Brazil. In addition to highlighting the relevance of this property, recognized in 2017 as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, it also addresses its significance as a historical site of sensitive memory and a place of memory for the Atlantic traffic of enslaved Africans. Throughout the text, key ideas such as sensitive past, violence, pain and suffering are discussed in historical perspective, which indicates possibilities of comparison with other spaces in the world, considering human tragedies and concepts used in the studies on these processes. Finally, the text analyzes other elements around the history of the Valongo Wharf region as space of resistance and affirmation of the black populations.

**Keywords:** Valongo Wharf. History of Slavery. Sensitive Pasts. World Heritage. History of Africans in Brazil.

**Resumen:** El artículo trata sobre aspectos que definen la importancia del sitio histórico y arqueológico Valongo Wharf, situado en la ciudad de Río de Janeiro, para la historia de la esclavización de africanos y sus descendientes en las Américas y, en especial, en Brasil. Además de resaltar la relevancia de ese bien, reconocido en 2017 como Patrimonio Mundial por la UNESCO, también aborda su significado como sitio histórico de memoria sensible y lugar de memoria de la trata atlántica de africanos esclavizados. A lo largo del texto, se abordan ideas clave, tales como pasados sensibles, violencia, dolor y sufrimiento en perspectiva histórica, indicando posibilidades de comparación con otros espacios en el mundo y considerando tragedias humanas y conceptos utilizados en los estudios

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sobre esos procesos. Finalmente, el texto analiza elementos en torno a la historia de la región del Valongo Wharf como espacio de resistencia y de afirmación de las poblaciones negras.

**Palabras clave:** Muelle de Valongo. Historia de la Esclavitud. Pasados Sensibles. Patrimonio Mundial. Historia de los africanos en Brasil.

*O canto do Cais do Valongo  
Que veio de Angola, Benin e do Congo  
Tem semba, capoeira e oração.<sup>1</sup>*

Valongo Wharf became a part of the UNESCO list as a World Heritage Site on July 9th, 2017. It is not the only historic site marked by the Afro-Brazilian presence to receive this recognition in Brazil: the historical centers of the cities of São Luís, in Maranhão and Salvador, in Bahia, among others listed before this date also make up this list. But in the case of this estate located in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the outstanding universal value attributed is mainly justified as it being the place of memory of the Atlantic trafficking of enslaved Africans and of cultural and political resistance of the black population against a long history of violence and exclusion. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the pier was the central landing site for the largest number of enslaved Africans who arrived alive to the Americas. In no other part of the world have so many captives been brought in from Africa as in this city.

It is not just a matter of stepping on the landing location where so many people were brought by force from the other side of the ocean, during the longest process of enforced migration in the history of mankind. It is also about the Valongo Wharf and its surroundings. It also includes the “Cemitério dos Pretos Novos”, the quilombo of “Pedra do Sal”, the corners and streets where important figures of the city and of our contry have circulated, such as João Alabá<sup>2</sup> and Prata Preta<sup>3</sup>, the foundation of the famous Candomblé temple Ile Ase Opo Afonja<sup>4</sup> in Rio de Janeiro, the dockworkers' active unions,<sup>5</sup> among many other characters,

<sup>1</sup> An excerpt from the samba-enredo of Portela, a samba school of Rio de Janeiro, in 2014. Authors are: Toninho Nascimento, Luiz Carlos Máximo, Waguinho, Edson Alves and J. Amaral.

<sup>2</sup> Priest of candomblé that was renowned at his time. His house at the Depósito street (currently known as Barão de São Félix) was frequented by many people. See, among others: GAMA, Elizabeth Castelano. *História e memória do candomblé no Rio de Janeiro: novas perspectivas de análise*. Available in: <<http://www.dhi.uem.br/gtreligiao/pdf8/ST7/004%20-%20Elizabeth%20Castelano%20Gama.pdf>>. Access in: 10 jun. 2016 and ROCHA, Agenor Miranda da. *As nações Ketu, origens ritos e crenças: candomblés antigos no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Mauad, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Leader of the Vaccine Revolt (1904), nowadays lends his name to a samba block at the port region. See, among others: CUNHA, Fabio Samu. Capoeiras e a Revolta da Vacina. *Revistas Espaço Acadêmico*, n. 180, May 2016. Available in: <<http://ojs.uem.br/ojs/index.php/EspacoAcademico/article/view/26869>>. Access in: 9 jun. 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Candomblé house that features among the first, if not the first, in Rio de Janeiro, still in the 19th century, constituted from relations with its congeners in Salvador. See references in note 2.

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movements and historical facts that have made the region part of Little Africa in the city – as it was named by Heitor dos Prazeres, artist and musician who lived there during the first half of the twentieth century. And to the traces and constructions of the past is added the living tradition which gives meaning and keeps alive the flame that burns in the samba and afroxié parties and capoeira rings to this day.

The chronicler João do Rio identified the African aringa in Valongo at the beginning of the twentieth century, evidencing the atmosphere permeated by the living presence - demographically and culturally speaking - of a black population, between former captives and their descendants, even decades after the end of the slave trade.<sup>6</sup> The port area of Rio de Janeiro was a stage for many works and transformations throughout that century but remained a place of residence and circulation of a black and poor population that, on its hillsides and slopes and also in collective houses of habitation in the streets and alleys, continued living and printing its cultural marks. Not without reason, it was the site of dramatic episodes of the Vaccine Revolt in 1904 - an urban revolt that shook the then capital of the Republic - and the reaction to the demolitions in the Pereira Passos period that occurred between 1902 and 1906, as well as the mobilizations of the port workers unions which had a large black presence.

Nevertheless, although all these other dimensions of the history of the region exist, what apparently mobilizes its narratives is undoubtedly the history of the African slaves. One can attribute this choice of starting point and central nucleus to the ever-present pursuit of origins, or to the recognition of the historical dimension of longest duration, or to the fact that slavery is what finally defines and frames this place of memory. As Pierre Nora reminds us, places of memory are understood here as resulting from “signs of group recognition and belonging in a society”<sup>7</sup> therefore, relate to an identity that is constituted and perceived also from that region. And slavery is a central element for the identity brand of this place by those who recognize it as a place of memory.

In the case of the region of Valongo Wharf and the narratives that are built in this space, it is worth thinking about the structuring character of the captivity of Africans and their

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<sup>5</sup> See ARANTES, Erika Bastos. *O porto negro: trabalho, cultura e associativismo de trabalhadores portuários no Rio de Janeiro na virada do XIX para o XX*. 2016. Thesis (PhD in History) - Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 2016. Available in: <<http://www.historia.uff.br/stricto/td/906.pdf>>. Access in: 9 jun. 2016.

<sup>6</sup> The cessation of the entry of enslaved Africans into the Valongo occurred due to the law of November 1831.

<sup>7</sup> NORA, Pierre. Entre memória e história: a problemática dos lugares. *Projeto História. Revista do Programa de Estudos Pós-Graduados em História e do Departamento de História da PUC-SP*, n. 10. São Paulo, 1993, p. 13.

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descendants had in the formation of Brazilian society – without doubt an unquestionable explanatory factor. However, it is not rarely criticized what might be described as an overemphasis on the history of slavery in the use of labor power and control over the enslaved, with all their burden of oppression and loss, to the detriment of aspects equally present as resistance, struggle and even the ability to negotiate and conquer spaces of freedom. It is also worth reflecting on the diverse ways of approaching this same story - after all, one can choose the tone and paths of memory in the paths and narratives.

It is important to make clear in what sense the concept of historical narrative, based on Paul Ricoeur's conception<sup>8</sup> and Carmen Teresa Gabriel's approach:

In this perspective, historical narrative - as a temporal structure that organizes the dispersion of our experiences - is intensely mobilized in the policies of identity and diversity through various devices that trigger memories, produce silences, memoirs, and forgetfulness. In the processes of identification, pasts are chosen, registered, archived, reactivated, transmitted to re-update invented traditions and imagined national communities. In this same movement, another one in time and space is produced, either as an example to be followed or as a goal to be achieved - that is, even as an antagonistic of the narrative identities that one wants to reaffirm. Following its traits, bringing it into the present, transforming it into an object of investigation or teaching are recurrent actions of the professional practices of researchers and teachers of History.<sup>9</sup>

The history of the Valongo pier can be considered an example of this process of identification and erasure of the past and the creation of traditions. The dock was known to exist according to historical documents, but its location was not accurate until it was dug up in 2011 by urban improvement works in the port region of Rio de Janeiro. The way in which its discovery was presented to the public contributed in large part to its significance. The archaeological team that was called to evaluate the site, finding that it was a stone pier of the old Valongo beach of the nineteenth century and, confirming in archaeological and documentary research its historical importance, mobilized the community by making such discovery public in the press, which led to the call of African religious leaders to recognize the place and the vestiges found according to their knowledge - bringing, for this field visit, *mães-de-santo* of great prestige in the community. These women, renowned *mães-de-santo* of the region and in the city, when they were presented to the quay, identified the presence of marks of pain and suffering and diagnosed the need for a spiritual cleansing in the place. And

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<sup>8</sup> According to it, to narrate is to attribute meaning to our experience in time. According to RICOEUR, Paul. *Tempo e narrativa*. Campinas: Papyrus, 1997. 3 v.

<sup>9</sup> GABRIEL, Carmen Teresa. Jogos de tempo e processos de identificação hegemônicos nos textos curriculares de História. *História Hoje. Revista de História e Ensino*. ANPUH, v. 4, n. 8, 2015. Available in: <<https://rhj.anpuh.org/RHHJ/article/view/193>>. Access in: 12 jun. 2016.

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then, in 2012, the first symbolic washing ceremony of the Valongo pier was held, later transformed into an annual event. Today it is part of the official celebration calendar of the city - institutionalized by the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro. It should be noted that the official appropriation of the quay's recognition by the authorities was not carried out without criticism from the black community - residents and activists - and by scholars in the field, revealing itself also as a space on which a memory is disputed.<sup>10</sup>

This is a story of silencing. Over time, the Valongo Wharf has undergone a process of material and symbolic burial. Since it ceased to function as an entry for enslaved Africans in 1831, it was overturned in 1843 for the arrival of the wife of Emperor Pedro II. The new pier was called the `Empress pier` and was built over its predecessor, stone by stone - and this concealment is visible today in the historical-archaeological site of the pier, in which the overlapping layers of this history can be perfectly seen. And it is not only those referring back to the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, the remodelling works of the city that intended to bring the advancement of the Republican era, in the same way, built on the dock of the Empress pier a square, which buried it. That is, the material evidence in the central space - the Valongo pier - of this course of field class are themselves a narrative path to be identified, triggering mechanisms that bring to light the history and memory of slavery.

### **Enslaved Africans and the constitution of the Atlantic world**

The trade of enslaved Africans is the longest process of forced migration in the history of mankind. In the case of the Americas, this captive population has become a fundamental part of the continent's social formation and, above all, of the constitution of transoceanic relations, with the Atlantic as its main attribute for exchanges. Millions of human beings in captivity, set in motion on the great crossing, could not carry with them any material goods, but brought with themselves their ideas, technologies, knowledge, and beliefs. Sometimes, at most, they carried adornments and amulets on their bodies - protection against the evils so close and present<sup>11</sup>. On the African continent, what was expected of this passage

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<sup>10</sup> An analysis of the process of patrimonialization of the Valongo pier and the main events related to it can be found in VASSALIO, Simone; CICALO, André. Por onde os africanos chegaram: o cais do Valongo e a institucionalização da memória do tráfico negreiro na região portuária do Rio de Janeiro. *Horizontes Antropológicos*, Porto Alegre, ano 21, n. 43, p. 239-271, jan./jun. 2015.

<sup>11</sup> On the presence of amulets and their meaning to the history of the enslaved Africans who disembarked and circulated the Valongo pier, see: LIMA, Tania Andrade; SOUZA, Marcos André Torres; SENE, Gláucia Malerba. Weaving the second skin: protection against evil among Valong slaves at nineteenth century Rio de Janeiro. *Journal of African Diaspora, Archeology and Heritage*, v. 3, issue 2, 2014, p.103-136.

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through the ocean was death, a second death - since the separation of family and village had been the first.

The trip was long and often demanded waiting times in warehouses and fortresses. On the road from enslavement to the arrival in the New World, captives were creating meanings from their immaterial heritage and building new cultural realities. In the crossing, new bonds were made - the Malungos, boat companions, emerged from the collective bond of a common painful experience. They created, constructed, and transformed the continent on their own initiative or in response to the power relations established with them. And in this long process, they conformed to the Western world.

Brazil was the destination of more than 40% of the Africans exported from their homelands during the entire period of the Atlantic traffic, and the majority - around 60%, according to the calculations of the demographic history - disembarked in the ports of Rio de Janeiro. As the Africanist Alberto da Costa e Silva stated:

This long Brazilian history lasted almost three and a half centuries, and for at least a hundred and fifty years the arrival of these slaves occurred systematically. Out of these, between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, most disembarked in Valongo<sup>12</sup>.

We can consider the region of Valongo, having the pier as its central nucleus and the archaeological site as material evidence, a living symbol of this history. And in addition to slavery and the harshness of captivity, there are, in this area of the city, around the pier, the marks of survival, resistance and affirmation of these Africans and their descendants, who have created founding elements of urban black culture in the diaspora. How to deal with such dimensions, acknowledging the value of this material and immaterial heritage, and, at the same time, developing narratives that can account for trajectories of suffering and affirmation of our ancestors? And how can we make these historical narratives not become a mechanism for the naturalization of pain experienced by these people in the past that seems so remote? How can we overcome such a negative mental image of black people tied to wood trunks and, at the same time, not idealize rebellion and point to the presence of a memory that goes beyond pain - but incorporates that pain as a fundamental analytical element?

### **Sensitive subjects in history: violence and suffering**

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<sup>12</sup> SILVA, Alberto da Costa. It discourses on the opening (...). And, also according to the *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, put together by ELTIS & RICHARDSON and published by Yale University in 2010, Rio de Janeiro was the largest destination port in all the history of enslaved Africans traffic (p. 265).

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One of the paths that may seem difficult, but which is undoubtedly fundamental is to assume, associated with suffering as a key element in the social history of human beings involved in the slave trade and enslavement itself, the idea of violence as part of this history. This approach must go beyond identifying the presence of violence: it is about discussing its role, to understand it as a condition without which slavery would not be realized. Discussing the use of violence historically presupposes knowing its origins in this specific mode of forced labor, in the society that made use of it and in which it was considered acceptable. It also refers to violence as a historical category, something often not done, because it seems evident. The absence of violence as a topic of analysis, and not as a mere finding, has a meaning. In the words of Hannah Arendt: "It shows to what extent violence and its arbitrariness were taken for granted and were therefore neglected; nobody questions or examines what is obvious to everyone."<sup>13</sup>

Legitimacy of violence against the enslaved people constituted itself as the basis for a series of justifications and debating them contributes to understanding their existence in a world in which labor was something that others were forced to do, and human beings could be considered as marketable goods. Discussing what made it fair to have the rights to capture, enslave, commercialize, punish, torture and own the life of other human beings makes the rationalization of slave violence more comprehensible. And, at the same time, it contributes to the understanding of that which, at a distance, may seem the fruit of a behavioral delay of men and women of a past that is situated in the darkness of time.

Without needing anything that would come to resemble some appealing tone, dealing with such content in the field of historical studies means dealing with the universe of sensitive themes. Commonly associated with recent history or geographically distant processes of Brazilian reality, such as the history of the Holocaust or wars, this theme exposes the delicate and inescapable task of facing the issue of slavery of Africans with all their suffering. And it is not simply a pain diluted in a story from a distant past, at a time when subjecting the other to a situation of dehumanization was natural. The memory of the situation of suffering in the place where this suffering took place makes it a space in which the bridge through time - constructed by the historical narrative - is much more easily constructed. The transition between the past and the present, mobilized by the history brought by the evidence

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<sup>13</sup>ARENDDT, Hannah. *Da violência*. Translation: Maria Claudia Drummond. Available in: <<http://pavio.net/download/textos/ARENDDT,%20Hannah,%20Da%20Viol%C3%AAncia.pdf>>. Access in: 13 jun. 2016.

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of material patrimony, can be realized with much more effectiveness. And, therefore, a more sensitive and, in this sense, more complete understanding of the human meaning of this historical site can be constructed.

In contextualizing the subject, it is important to remember that this pain existed despite the fact that at that time slavery was legalized and people believed they had the right to enslave someone. It is worth remembering, on the part of those who suffered, the presence of fear, incomprehension, and astonishment in the face of a reality that seemed more like a nightmare. This set of sensations also defines, together with the force of creation of so many beautiful things, the atmosphere of the Valongo. All this makes this place, where the black and African presence in the city of Rio de Janeiro and in the country is rightfully celebrated, a place of sensitive memory<sup>14</sup>. A place where for so many years a sea of people (thousands, like nowhere else) has flowed out after a crossing in which not dying could mean expecting to survive painfully.

It will always be a challenge to deal with a theme in the field of history teaching that brings experiences of suffering, especially when this treatment involves creating a classroom dynamic with the concern of opening possibilities for a critical and consistent learning. When dealing with a sensitive subject, one necessarily deals with “memories chained to resentments”<sup>15</sup> and long denied stories that produced justifications for their concealment. As a result of the deconstruction of this silence, the voices that arise (up rise) and which will not always (or almost never will) come in the form of an academically framed speech will have to be heard.

### **Valongo pathways**

However, why should it be important to remember these sad aspects of history in the face of other possibilities that can be so positive and enriching? And more than simply bring to memory, give historical meaning to this past? After all, we could just celebrate the African heritage with recognition of the world that we are the blackest country outside of Africa and, more than that, we wish to make this history a monument and landmark of our identity. Why choose narratives underlining the pain of slavery over the history of Valongo pier?

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<sup>14</sup> As defined by AUSTIN, Nathan K. Managing heritage attractions: marketing challenges at sensitive historical sites. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, v. 4, issue 6, p.447-457, nov./dec. 2002.

<sup>15</sup> BRESCIANE, M.S.; NAXARA, M. (Org.). *Memória e res(sentimento)*: indagações sobre uma questão sensível. Campinas: UNICAMP, 2004.



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It may seem almost obvious that any choice of research topic is a political choice. Or rather, that the selection of a topic for research carries reasons that go beyond the accumulation of knowledge - and direct us to what is expected to be done with this knowledge to be acquired. And that, within the options for this or that subject of the always extensive list of possibilities in the themes of History, the highlight and the approach come from the definition of goals that go beyond the information about the life of societies of another time. Among other reasons, because the choice of a way through the region of the Valongo pier reminds us that the Atlantic traffic of enslaved Africans was a crime against humanity and - it is worth remembering - Brazil has not yet officially recognized it as such. In a crime, there are victims. This concept does not imply in the conception of the enslaved as object-subjects, transformed into commodities and submitted without reaction. This is not about this part of being a victim. It is the story of those who suffered and bequeathed us this memory. Being a victim does not mean losing the ability to act and even transform.

The stories that give meaning to Valongo pier as patrimony also have the role to remember that, like all the beauty and power of creation, pain is part of the heritage left by our African ancestors. The pain that crosses the sensitive memory of the descendants makes the trauma of slavery a cultural process of a base in the formation of identities in the post-abolition. Without any exaggeration, and with all the drama, there is no way of looking at the route around the Valongo Pier and allowing this dimension of history to dissolve in time, and for this, the work of History teachers in their activities in the region becomes critical. That is even more true because, like the African oral tradition, this dimension of history is alive, and we encounter it on our streets and violate it today. The collective trauma has not been overcome, and in its discussion, it may be possible to learn in some way to deal with it. One of these paths would be, within the narrative structure that constitutes the lesson itself, to be able to consider the dimensions of suffering articulated to the forms found historically to face it.

The history that can be narrated when crossing the pathways of the Valongo pier, in addition to its aspects of violence and pain, also crosses spaces in which resistance and celebration of struggle and life emerge as strong symbols. If in the surroundings of the pier there is the Cemetery of New Blacks<sup>16</sup>, in which the newcomer Africans who did not resist the

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<sup>16</sup> Nowadays located at the *Instituto de Pesquisa e Memorial Pretos Novos (IPN)*, which appears after the finding of the cemetery, in 1996. See <http://www.pretosnovos.com.br/>

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hardness of the crossing were buried in the common grave<sup>17</sup>, there is also the Pedra do Sal where, at that time, captives and freed men met to tell and sing about their stories, after days of hard work in the port, on the Capoeira rings and to the sound of the Batuques - and it is the same place that later formed a quilombo woven in black identity and solidarity, by migratory processes in the post-abolition period.<sup>18</sup>

At Pedra do Sal, samba rings are held<sup>19</sup>, and festive dates are celebrated regularly in the black community, and there is an ongoing struggle for the demarcation of an urban quilombo with unique characteristics, which are closely related to the history of the region as a place where the enslavement of Africans operated commercially and the most different forms of struggle for freedom spaces were emerging and interacting. At the Valongo pier, periodic capoeira rings are held and the symbolic washing of the place has become an official date in the calendar of festivities of the city, demarcating the cultural and religious belonging of the memory that is built on the region. In front of the pier is the building of the old Pedro II docks that became the first public building in the city built without the use of enslaved labor in the then capital of the Brazilian Empire – a contractual clause required by the author of the project, the black engineer André Rebouças. Therefore, there are a series of places that, when they are assumed as places of memory, point to different forms of resistance, affirmation, and struggle of the black population.

And you can still think of the region of Valongo as a whole from its status as a place of memory. In this area near the quayside, in addition to the warehouses, especially from the second half of the 19th century onwards, dwellings of a population that worked in the services offered by the port and commercial activity began to appear. In houses of black families, often headed by women, nocturnal drums accompanied religious celebrations in which deities of African origin took on new garments in the Carioca diaspora<sup>20</sup>. Performed in secret and harshly repressed, they were closely related to the bond with Africa and the Atlantic that the then-hidden pier still stood for. In addition, the Candomblé houses became

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<sup>17</sup> See PEREIRA, Julio Cesar Medeiros da Silva. *À flor da terra: o cemitério dos pretos novos no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Garamond: IPHAN, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> See ABREU, Martha; MATTOS, Hebe. Remanescentes de comunidades de quilombos: memória do cativo, patrimônio cultural e direito à reparação. *ANPUH*, 2011. Available in: <[http://www.snh2011.anpuh.org/resources/anais/14/1299778862\\_ARQUIVO\\_anpuh2011.pdf](http://www.snh2011.anpuh.org/resources/anais/14/1299778862_ARQUIVO_anpuh2011.pdf)>. Access in: 14 jun. 2016.

<sup>19</sup> ARQPEDRA (Associação da Comunidade Remanescente do Quilombo Pedra do Sal) created the project *Sal do Samba: tributo a Donga, Pixinguinha, João da Baiana e Siinhô*, that honors great personalities of the history of samba in Rio de Janeiro and promotes cultural events on the site.

<sup>20</sup> Carioca is the way people call Rio de Janeiro natives.

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places of welcoming for Africans and Afro-descendants who came from other parts of the country, especially Bahia, in the 19th century. As Carmem Teixeira da Conceição - known as Aunt Carmen - tells Roberto Moura when he was writing the book about Little Africa in the early 1980s<sup>21</sup>:

It was in Pedra do Sal, there in Saúde, where it was a house of Baianos and Africans, when they came from Africa or Bahia. The ship was visible from their house, and there was a sign that people were coming from there. [...] It was a white flag, sign of Oxalá, warning that people were coming. The house was on the hill, it belonged to an African, she was called Auntie Dada and he Uncle Ossum, they dressed, they gave everything until the person straightened themselves [...]

At the Barão de São Félix street, very close to Camerino street (former Valongo street, later named Imperatriz street), there was a house of Candomblé of the famous João Alabá, a priest famous for his knowledge of his religion. His very busy and crowded house, which would have been settled in 1886, was a meeting place for the aunts of the port and central region of the city. Historical characters of the city participated in the religious activities, such as Hilma Batista de Almeida, Omo Oxum (daughter of Oxum), known by Aunt Ciata, who would occupy the post of Iyá Kekere (Small Mother)<sup>22</sup>.

Still in the field of celebrations, in the Largo do Depósito, in front of the Suspended Gardens of Valongo, lies the headquarters of Afoxé Sons of Gandhi, entity heir to a tradition created in Bahia and which takes sounds and choreographies originating in the terreiros of religions of African matrix for the streets, with a message of peace. The procession of the Sons of Gandhi is present in activities such as the symbolic washing of the Valongo pier, among other moments that mark - and reiterate - the meaning of this place. And in this same itinerary of the festive activities, one can still locate the carnival associations in the region of Valongo, such as the samba school Vizinha Faladeira - the first - and the block of Prata Preta, which honors the famous black leader of the Vaccine Revolt (1904).

### **Historical documents: records about Valongo**

When tracing the routes around Valais Pier, some of the guides in this crossing may be the period documents, historical records, and testimonies, material to be used as a source for

<sup>21</sup> MOURA, Roberto. *Tia Ciata e a Pequena África no Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: FUNARTE; Instituto Nacional de Música/ Divisão de Música Popular, 1983.

<sup>22</sup> O'DWYER, Eliane Cantarino (Org.). *O fazer antropológico e o reconhecimento dos direitos constitucionais: o caso das terras de quilombo no Estado do Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: E-papers, 2012. p.52. Oxum is a deity from the ioruba pantheon, many times identified by possessing, among other characteristics, a sweet demeanor and maternal spirit; and Mãe Pequena is the person in the Candomblé temple who is charged with taking care of it and, above all, of the house children.

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study and light bulbs for understanding the space. Always critically, but also letting the written words resonate with a certain freedom to allow for renewed readings. As, for example, the official determination that defined the place of living and dead among the enslaved that contributed to the city:

*The new negroes, who come from the ports of Guinea and the Coast of Africa, ordering that both those who are in it and those who have come again from those ports, from the same vessels that lead them, after the visit to Saúde, without leaving the land, immediately be taken to the Valongo site, where they will be preserved, from Pedra da Prainha to Gamboa and there they will be left and the sick will be healed and the dead buried, never being able to leave that place to this city, however, justified their motives are, and not even after death, to be buried in the cemeteries of the city[...]<sup>23</sup>*

Another narrative can be brought about from the view of the foreign traveler who described the place and the activities that developed there with detail, astonishment and moral condemnation. After all, not all of this seemed natural to all observers, especially in the advance of the nineteenth century.

The place where the largest slave market is located is a long, winding street called Valongo, which runs from the seafront to the northeast end of the city. Almost all the houses on this street are slave deposits waiting there for their buyers. These deposits occupy both sides of the street, and there the poor creatures are exposed for sale like any other commodity. When a buyer arrives, they are brought before him, being examined and fingered in any part of the body, just as I have seen butchers do with the oxen. The whole examination is restricted only to the evaluation of the physical capacity of the slave, without the slightest concern as to his moral qualities, which are of interest to a buyer as much as if they were acquiring a dog or a donkey.<sup>24</sup>

Some of these travelers bring in their testimonies moving assertions, which also serve to highlight the growing presence of children in the trafficking of enslaved Africans from the days of the Valongo pier, especially when the slaveholders felt the international siege on the “Infamous trade” catching on to them. The factual conditions of the life of the captives are described in the foreigner's text, who thus sees and narrates them.

The first flesh market we entered contained about three hundred children. Of both sexes; the eldest could be twelve or thirteen and the younger, no more than six or seven. The poor children were all crouched in a huge warehouse, girls on one side, boys on the other, for better inspection of buyers; all they wore was a blue and white plaid apron tied around the waist; [...] The smell and heat of the room was very oppressive and disgusting. Having my pocket thermometer with me, I noticed that it reached 33C. It was then winter (June); how they spend the night in the summer, when

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<sup>23</sup> ARQUIVO NACIONAL. *Carta do Marquês do Lavradio de 12 de abril de 1774*, códice 70, v. 7, p. 231. Highlights by the author.

<sup>24</sup> WALSH, Robert. *Notícias do Brasil (1828-1829)*, v. 2. São Paulo: EDUSP, 1985, p. 152

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they are closed off, I do not know, because in this room they live and sleep, on the floor, like cattle in every aspect<sup>25</sup>

And when, in another period source, this traveler was, besides being a foreigner, a woman who, in telling her experience in Valongo, describes the slave markets and a personal experience of contact with them, a new field of vision about the narratives of local history can emerge.

I saw Val Longo (Valongo) today. It is the slave market of Rio. Almost all the houses on this very long street are slave deposits. As I passed through their doors at night, I saw most of the benches placed against the walls, in which rows of young creatures were sitting, their heads shaved, their bodies emaciated, their skin showing signs of recent mange. In some places, the poor creatures lie on carpets, evidently too weak to sit down. In one house the doors were closed halfway up, and a group of young men and women, who did not seem to be more than fifteen years old, and some much less than that, leaned over the half-door and stared at the street with curious faces. They were evidently very young blacks. As I approached them, it seemed that something about me attracted them; they touched each other to make sure everyone was watching, and then they talked in their own African dialect very lively. I turned to them and looked closely at them, even if I was ready to cry. I made an effort to smile at them with joy and kissed my hand to them; with all this, they seemed enchanted; they jumped up and danced as if to repay my courtesy.<sup>26</sup>

These same scenes of the slave warehouses, seen through the eyes of the traveler with so much emotion and compassion, could be the scene of buying and selling activities that, when described in the document, appear as usual and legitimate in their time. Thus, it was recorded in the periodicals:

Joaquim José Ferreira dos Santos, auctions in his warehouse no. 70<sup>27</sup> in the Valongo street today, Friday of the current year (1828), a portion of new slaves arrived near Cabinda in Bergatim Tejo, who are sold for whom intends, in lots of 10, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>28</sup>

Through the streets, alleys and back streets of the Valongo there were also escapees from slavery, and escapes were frequent. It is possible to follow the possibilities of resistance and rebellion in the research and reading of newspaper ads. Registered in the periodicals - practically all accessible today on the site of the National Library on the internet – are many ads like these:

On the 21st of this month a new slave escaped, recently coming from Angola, from the Valongo Warehouse No.106, marked on the left breast with the mark S in the middle of a Triangle; whoever has news of him, go to the same store where his owner can be found, and he will give you a reward.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> BRAND. *Journal of a voyage to Peru...*, London, 1828, p. 13 apud KARASH, Mary. *A vida dos escravos no Rio de Janeiro (1808-1850)*. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2000. p.76

<sup>26</sup> GRAHAM, Maria. *Diário de uma viagem ao Brasil... 1821-1823*. Translation: Américo Jacobina Lacombe. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1956. p.188-254.

<sup>27</sup> Today corresponding to no. 77 of the Camerino Street.

<sup>28</sup> Advertisement from the *Jornal do Commercio*, January 11th, 1828.

<sup>29</sup> *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, December 17th, 1821.

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On June 8 of this year, a light brown slave, aged 16 to 17 years, dressed in denim pants, wearing an old white chintz, and a linen shirt disappeared from the house 119 of Valongo Street; his legs are thin and his fingers are somewhat defective, and his name is Claudino. Anyone who brings the above mentioned to the house on Valongo Street 119 will be rewarded, as well as if you divulge with certainty where he is. Moreover, he is missing a tooth in the upper jaw.<sup>30</sup>

A new slave fled on May 23rd of the current year, near the night, from the warehouse no. 125<sup>31</sup> of Valongo, of Cabinda nationality, who is somewhat crazy, taking only a thong; whoever has news of him, or has collected him; please kindly have him participate in Sabão Street No.36<sup>32</sup>

In the slums of the Valongo region, Africans and their descendants wrote a story that is localized, marked on steep stones, corners, stairways, and hillsides. But in a broader perspective, it crosses the ocean and relates to Diaspora Africans, as well as to many other parts of Brazil, in which, through the internal routes, these people disseminate and circulate - and with them, their ideas, knowledge, technology, and spirituality. Therefore, this story, whose narrative also translates into the lyrics of black songs<sup>33</sup>, samba rings, capoeira, jongo and praises to the Afro-Brazilian deities, found in the patrimonialization on the pier another form of recognition. It is undoubtedly of great value because it has become even more well-known nationally and internationally and has unequivocally brought the category of sensitive memory site to the field of heritage studies in the history of slavery in Brazil. To illuminate this part of our story is not only one (more) way to hear the screams in the dark and to be paralyzed by the pain. On the contrary, it is a matter of investing in resistance and struggle that are built through knowledge. And a rescue of the strength of our relations with Africa.

Finally, in the words of the Mozambican poetess Paulina Chiziane who, placing the enslaved person first, reminds us once again that we are referring to a living memory:

*“I reside in the memory of my descendants*

*In the silence of the skies and in the vibration of the waves.*

*I live in the womb of the sea and in the blue of the horizon.”<sup>34</sup>*

<sup>30</sup> *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, July 7th, 1824.

<sup>31</sup> The advertisement does not give a precise reference to the place, this house either belonging to the Valongo Beach street (current Sacadura Cabral), on which no. 125 now corresponds to no. 97, or, if it belonged to the Valongo street (now Camerino street), it now corresponds to no. 48 according to the current number system.

<sup>32</sup> *Jornal do Commercio*, May 30th, 1828.

<sup>33</sup> On this aspect see, among others: ABREU, Martha. *Da senzala ao palco: canções escravas e racismo nas Américas, 1870-1930*. Campinas: Funcamp, 2017.

<sup>34</sup> CHIZIANE, Paulina. *Canção de amor*. In: *O canto dos escravos*. Maputo: Matiko e Arte, 2017. p.28