

# **El desarrollo del tráfico esclavista en la modernidad. (Siglos XV-XIX)**

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 EDITORIAL  
UNIVERSIDAD DE SEVILLA

Sevilla 2023

Colección Historia  
Núm. 405

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Esta publicación es parte del proyecto de I+D+i *PID2019-107156RB-I00*, financiado por el MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033.

Motivo de la cubierta: Vista de la ciudad de Lisboa. En *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, Amberes y Colonia, 1582. Dominio público.

© Editorial Universidad de Sevilla 2023  
C/ Porvenir, 27 - 41013 Sevilla.  
Tfños.: 954 487 447; 954 487 451  
Correo electrónico: info-eus@us.es  
Web: <https://editorial.us.es>

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Impreso en papel ecológico  
Impreso en España-Printed in Spain

ISBN 978-84-472-2604-7  
Depósito Legal: SE 2432-2023

Diseño de cubierta: notanumber  
Maquetación y realización de cubierta: Cuadratín Estudio  
Impresión: Podiprint

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## PRÓLOGO

Sin lugar a duda podemos considerar que el estudio de la esclavitud durante la Edad Moderna y el siglo XIX ha ocupado en los últimos años y de manera creciente el tiempo y los esfuerzos de los historiadores, que han ido construyendo y ampliando nuestro conocimiento sobre un fenómeno muy complejo que experimentó muchos cambios entre 1450 y 1880. En este ingente trabajo y en la copiosa bibliografía resultante, fruto de la investigación de historiadores de todo el planeta, han gozado de una gran atención los temas relacionados con el trabajo esclavo y, para lo que aquí nos ocupa, el tráfico transatlántico ha sido minuciosamente analizado desde, al menos, 1670 y, especialmente, durante los siglos XVIII y XIX. Estos meritorios estudios han arrojado luz sobre la interdependencia económica de distintos entramados financieros e imperiales por todo el Atlántico y han mostrado cómo el concepto de «comercio triangular» se mostraba insuficiente a la hora de explicar los movimientos del tráfico de esclavos y mercancías que conectaban las distintas orillas del Atlántico entre sí con otros espacios económicos y políticos más allá de sus riberas. Asimismo, podemos encontrar una mayor preferencia por épocas más tardías, como los siglos XVIII y XIX, en el interés demostrado por la sociedad y la cobertura que distintos medios de comunicación de masas en varios formatos (cine, series, redes sociales, periodismo de investigación) ha prestado a la esclavitud y su historia como una vía de comprensión de los acontecimientos y condicionamientos de buena parte de las sociedades actuales (desde la acumulación de capitales y desarrollo industrial europeos hasta el racismo y sus manifestaciones políticas y sociales en América y Europa en la época contemporánea).

Este libro se ocupa de trazar una curva larga en el tiempo, que permita, a través de su lectura, ampliar nuestro conocimiento de las características principales del tráfico atlántico de esclavos, haciéndolo de una manera progresiva, desde finales del cuatrocientos hasta bien entrado el siglo XIX. El interés de los distintos capítulos que lo conforman se centra no solo en la organización logística y los números de esclavos y barcos, sino también en la articulación de

viejas y nuevas rutas comerciales y esclavistas, en el estudio de los puertos de salida de los viajes del tráfico, las dimensiones mercantiles y financieras del fenómeno, etc. Asimismo, con esta obra se procura comprender la participación de todos los agentes implicados en este terrible negocio, a saber: grandes mercaderes contratadores y asentistas encargados del envío de importantes contingentes de esclavos en acuerdo con la Corona, banqueros, mercaderes como inversores y armadores de uno o varios viajes, maestros, marineros, pilotos, arrieros... trazando así un retrato social de la trata lo más completo posible.

El libro se abre con el trabajo de Ivana Elbl, un estudio minucioso de la vida, recursos y andadura comercial de la presencia portuguesa en la isla de Arguim, frente a la costa de la actual Mauritania. Utilizando de manera ejemplar las muy diversas fuentes documentales que conserva el Archivo da Torre do Tombo, reconstruye con acierto el funcionamiento de este centro esclavista y el comercio de él dependiente (goma arábiga, textiles norteafricanos, esclavos, mantenimientos), y el número de barcos y esclavos enviados a Lisboa entre 1492 y 1519, con precios, sexo, edades, tipo de oferta y condicionantes de su adquisición (las condiciones físicas contaban tanto o más que la edad), etc., puestos en relación con los mercados y la demanda africanos. Ofrece un primer abordaje general para realizar un estudio mucho más preciso y caracterizado de los precios y demanda de esclavos que protagonizaron la actuación portuguesa en la zona. Representa por ello no solo un detallado y vívido análisis de todos los factores que condicionaban la actividad económica de Arguim, sino también amplía y perfila nuestro conocimiento de uno de los puertos esclavistas más importantes en los albores de la primera modernidad.

El perfil social de la trata de esclavos cuenta, en primer lugar, con la figura de los mercaderes, a la que se asocian los maestros y pilotos que en muchos casos llegaron a convertirse en grandes mercaderes y financieros que sostenían el negocio. De esta manera, Javier Carmona se aproxima a la actividad de una familia judeoconversa, la de los Sánchez Dalvo, entre los años 1530 y 1560, momento de gran actividad de los conversos sevillanos en el comercio americano y en la trata de esclavos. Analiza en profundidad el rol de los integrantes de esta familia extensa en la trata de esclavos, considerando su papel como especuladores con las licencias de esclavos y como armadores de importantes viajes transoceánicos, moviendo barcos, mercancías, letras de cambio y esclavos entre Sevilla, Cabo Verde y América, donde tenían también otros muchos intereses económicos. Considera, además, su actuación como grupo social y familiar, lo que permite acercarnos de manera más realista a su participación como socios en este inhumano tráfico, que completa la visión construida solo a partir del estudio de individuos aislados. Por su parte, Amândio Barros se ocupa de trazar una panorámica general del perfil social, genealógico y económico de los mercaderes portugueses relacionados con el tráfico de esclavos que operaban hacia Santo Tomé, Cabo Verde y Angola en su relación con Brasil y la



América española, asentados en Oporto y otros puertos lusitanos de carácter medio y pequeño, extendiendo su presencia e intereses al gran eje financiero y comercial de Sevilla-Lisboa, abordando así el lado portugués de la trata en lo que a grandes mercaderes y armadores se refiere, que se complementa con el trabajo de Javier Carmona.

Tres siglos después y en un contexto geopolítico completamente diferente, Martín Rodrigo nos demuestra en su trabajo cómo continuaban actuando mercaderes y marineros en el tráfico ilegal de esclavos, conectando Cuba, Cádiz y Barcelona con las costas africanas, y acumulando enormes fortunas que les permitieron fundar o ser partícipes de la creación de entidades bancarias que reproducían el negocio con sus préstamos e inversiones, siendo algunas de ellas muy importantes en la historia de España, como el Banco de Comercio o el Banco Pastor, y cuya actividad financiera y de depósitos ha continuado en algunos casos hasta bien entrado el siglo xx. Estos banqueros fueron exitosos miembros de la sociedad y economía decimonónicas, y sus descendientes continuaron manteniendo una relevante posición, como sucedió en el caso de buena parte de los mercaderes estudiados por Javier Carmona y Amândio Barros. Estos trabajos profundizan en las continuidades y los cambios que han presidido la fuerte relación entre la trata de esclavos, el trabajo desempeñado por estos y el desarrollo del capitalismo en diferentes momentos históricos, y que no puede desprenderse de este pasado. Estos estudios no dejan de tratar la actividad de los maestros de navío, algunos de los cuales acabarían por convertirse en grandes mercaderes y banqueros. Estos profesionales están en el centro de la aportación de Montserrat Cachero, quien en base a un estudio de caso reconstruye las diferentes redes de las que el piloto vasco Santiago de Ucín era protagonista, ofreciendo un acercamiento innovador a su interpretación utilizando los SNA no solo a nivel gráfico sino también explicativo, poniendo el acento en la actividad polifacética de estos maestros y en la amplia variedad de relaciones mercantiles que emprendieron, en las que la trata de esclavos fue muy importante.

Los capítulos de Ignacio Chuecas y de Maximiliano M. Menz tienen Angola y el contrato de abastecimiento de esclavos basado en dicho reino como fondo, y son complementarios al ocuparse de temas y cronologías diferentes. El profesor Chuecas realiza una fina caracterización social y económica, basada en un amplio cruce de fuentes, de varios de los mercaderes implicados en el contrato de Angola entre 1608 y 1615, comenzando por el contratador, Duarte Dias Henriques, ocupándose de otras dos figuras encargadas de la introducción de esclavos en el puerto de Buenos Aires y en Chile. Todos eran de origen lusitano y cristianos nuevos, con familiares que judaizaron abiertamente en Italia. Estaban emparentados con otros mercaderes importantes del mundo ibérico y estaban relacionados con negocios en Luanda, el azúcar de Brasil y las finanzas de la Corona castellana. La relación de este trabajo con los

anteriores es evidente y aporta un punto de vista absolutamente complementario con el del trabajo de Amândio Barros. Ignacio Chuecas estudia, además, el proceso de introducción de esclavos de Angola hasta Chile, mostrando claramente la articulación de estos territorios también con Potosí y Salvador de Bahía a través del tráfico de esclavos, conectando las rutas terrestres de la trata con las marítimas.

En otro nivel de análisis, el profesor Menz ofrece una amplia visión del perfil social y económico de los contratadores de Angola que abarca algo más de medio siglo, entre 1648 y 1711, estudiando el funcionamiento de los contratos de Angola en aquellos años y los profundos reajustes que experimentó una vez se había consumado la separación de las monarquías portuguesa e hispánica, además de mostrar los intereses en ocasiones contrapuestos y en ocasiones más armonizados, existentes entre los capitalistas de Brasil, Lisboa y Luanda en relación a la demanda de esclavos por parte de la monarquía hispánica, así como el juego de tensiones y complementariedad a escala financiera que supuso la relación de estos centros económicos y portuarios con Madrid y Sevilla. Demuestra la necesidad de trabajos como este que perfilen y caractericen con más precisión la evolución, motivaciones y naturaleza de los intereses de los grandes organizadores económicos y políticos de la trata de esclavos desde Angola, en una época de transición aún mal conocida en muchos aspectos.

Los esclavos, tratados como mercancía y como fuerza de trabajo, aparecen en todos estos estudios y especialmente en los dedicados al análisis de la composición de los remeros de la galera real y el capítulo escrito en torno a su presencia en la hacienda de Calandaima en Nueva Granada. Teresa Peláez nos muestra a bordo de la galera real la existencia en paralelo a la mano de obra esclava la de otras formas de trabajo compulsorio, y la tenue frontera que las separaba, representando este hecho un reto a la hora de establecer el análisis de fuentes históricas que nos muestra las diversas variantes del trabajo forzado en la Edad Moderna. Por su parte, Alberto Campillo señala cómo el recurso a la mano de obra esclava vino a paliar el efecto que tuvo la prohibición de contar con un grupo de indios como si estuvieran encomendados para trabajar en la hacienda de Calandaima. Su presencia a través de los años permite conocer su número, la formación de familias, sexo y edades, con lo que ambos trabajos ponen en relación dos tipos de esclavitud muy diferentes con otros sistemas de explotación laboral, al tiempo que se comparan dos espacios de trabajo muy distintos pero que pertenecían al mismo horizonte cultural y económico de la Monarquía Hispánica.

El estudio de los puertos y las rutas esclavistas no se puede separar del resto de tráficos y mercancías de los que eran absolutamente complementarios. Si el capítulo de Ivana Elbl muestra de manera magistral estos elementos para el tráfico de Arguim con la costa africana, Lisboa y las Antillas, y los de Ignacio Chuecas y Maximiliano M. Menz con Angola, su interior o *sertão*

y América, el trabajo de Amândio Barros se ocupa de puertos portugueses de carácter tradicionalmente considerado como «secundario», pero que conformaban un entramado comercial de gran importancia en la época, el siglo XVI, una cronología que precisa aún de muchos estudios y análisis. El autor se basa en la documentación notarial para complementar, ampliar y matizar los resultados obtenidos con documentación de otros archivos, trabajando de manera ejemplar el cruce de diversas fuentes.

En una cronología más tardía, Huemac Escalona y Adrianna Catena nos muestran los intentos de la monarquía española en el siglo XVIII por estimular la producción de sus espacios coloniales y conectarla con nuevas rutas comerciales. Es el caso del envío de telas teñidas con añil filipino a las recientemente adquiridas islas de Fernando Poo y Annobón, para así poder obtener esclavos que vender directamente en América sin pasar por otros intermediarios, y que acabó fracasando por muy diversos motivos. Se seguían así viejas pautas de comercio y producción tintórea y textil que venían ensayándose desde tiempos anteriores y que conocieron en la competencia europea de los siglos XVII y XVIII un nuevo impulso.

Este libro constituye un jalón más en los resultados del proyecto *El tráfico de esclavos y la economía atlántica del siglo XVI* (MERCATRAT / PID2019-107156RB-I00), financiado por el Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación. Ha sido precedido por otras obras colectivas, artículos de revista, monografías y tesis doctorales producidas en el seno del proyecto y que se han ocupado de estos y otros asuntos relacionados con la trata y la esclavitud (grupos mercantiles y su relación con el tráfico de esclavos, intercambio global de mercancías, finanzas internacionales, los esclavos ante los tribunales de justicia, la demografía esclava y su relación con la evolución de los mercados primarios de oferta y rutas de trata, etc.). Los estudios aquí reunidos pueden leerse de manera independiente o en relación con esta producción y el resto de la bibliografía existente, y contribuyen a entender el tráfico esclavista de la modernidad de manera integral y en la larga duración.

Manuel F. Fernández Chaves y Rafael M. Pérez García  
*Coordinadores*



# Capítulo 1

## THE SLAVE TRADE LOGISTICS IN ARGUIM, 1492-1519

IVANA ELBL  
*Trent University*

While Portugal supplied most of the African slaves shipped to Spanish America in the opening two decades of the sixteenth century, it largely did so indirectly, through re-export to Castile<sup>1</sup>. After a period of recuperation in Lisbon or its vicinity, the slaves destined for export were be sold to major slave traders, such as Bartolomeo Marchione, for resale in western Mediterranean<sup>2</sup>. Some of them were later exported to the Americas from Spanish ports, particularly Seville. Any early attempts to skip the resale stages in the 1510s would have been in contravention of the standing policy of King Manuel of Portugal requiring slaves to be first cleared through Lisbon. At least one shipment of slaves from Arguim is documented to have arrived in San Juan (Puerto Rico) in November 1520. Of the sixty-eight slaves on board of the *Santa Maria de la Luz*, fifty-four reached their trans-Atlantic destination. The mortality rate at sea was 20.6%<sup>3</sup>. The losses in transit constitute the most obvious reason why direct shipments from Africa a very high-risk option. When the Genoese company of Centurione, Vivaldi and Fornari, based in Seville, committed in 1519 to supply 4,000 African slaves to the Spanish West Indies between 1519 and 1524, the understanding was that the slaves were first to be processed in Lisbon and then shipped to Andalusia<sup>4</sup>.

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1. Castilians also purchased a limited number of slaves directly, through the licensed trade with the Cape Verde Islands.

2. For an extensive background analysis of the interconnections among key Italian slave merchants, including Bartolomeu Marchione, see Armenteros Martínez (2012). In particular Section 7 (pp. 265-293).

3. *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade – Database*. Voyage ID 42.87. Accessed 11 April 2022.

4. Fernández Chaves & Pérez García (2016: 388-389); Fernández Chaves & Pérez García (2012: 202-210).

Many of these slaves were to come from the Portuguese outpost of Arguim, off the northern-west coast of the present-day Mauritania. The Genoese company's Castilian associate, Juan Fernández de Castro, signed a contract with the Portuguese Crown to buy as many as 4,300 slaves from Arguim over a five-year period (c. 860 per year), from 1519 to 1524<sup>5</sup>. However, the hopes that Arguim would provide a key staging point for supplying a large number of slaves to the Americas proved unrealistic<sup>6</sup>, despite the fact that in 1518 and 1519 the Arguim slave trade volume reached its highest level in seventy-five years. The reasons are linked to the logistical realities of the outpost: the environmental limitations, its relative marginality in the broader slave trade network that linked the slave-supplying regions of Senegambia and upper Niger to the sub-Saharan and trans-Saharan commercial networks, and the demographics of the slave supply.

This argument may appear paradoxical, given the important role that Arguim played in the first century of the Portuguese Atlantic slave trade. Originally a domain of *Infante* Dom Henrique (Prince Henry the 'Navigator'), after his death in 1460 the Arguim outpost was held and operated directly by the Portuguese Crown. It was located on the sole inhabitable island of the Arguin Archipelago, off the northern-west coast of the present-day Mauritania, and was an important supplier of slaves to Portugal from its founding in the late-1440s and throughout much of the first half of the sixteenth-century<sup>7</sup>. Slaves purchased at Arguim were bound to be among those re-sold in significant number to wholesale slave merchants for export to the Castile and Aragon since the 1460s<sup>8</sup>. The Arguim factory was an important locus of the Portuguese slave trade, exporting on average c. 500 slaves per year between 1450 and 1521 (out of the overall average of almost 2,200 slaves per year from all Atlantic African regions). In the period between 1450 and 1525, it accounted for 23% of the total Portuguese slave exports from sub-Saharan Africa. Arguim was also the most important slave trade location that the Portuguese Crown controlled directly. In 1514, a group of Portuguese merchants obtained an exclusive contract to purchase the slaves coming from Arguim, at a fixed price of 5,000 *réis* per slave<sup>9</sup>. The arrangement either expired or failed by 1516. In 1519, Juan Fernández de Castro agreed to pay 7,500 *réis* per slave, a price that was bound to be very damaging to the company's profit margin<sup>10</sup>.

5. Fernández Chaves & Pérez García (2016: 388-389); Eagle & Wheat (2020: 50-51, 54, 58).

6. Fernández Chaves & Pérez García (2016: 388-389); Eagle & Wheat (2020: 54, note 51).

7. Días (1962: 409-425); Azinhaga (1965); Monod (1983); Daveau (1989: 125-142); Ballong-Wen-Mewuda (1989: 137-149); Limongelli (1991-1992); Godinho (2008).

8. See for example Cortés Alonso (1964); Armenteros Martínez (2012).

9. ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, 58, 155 (3 July 1515).

10. Fernández Chaves & Pérez García (2016: 388-389).

The standing assumption seems to have been that Arguim could sustain exports of at least 900 slaves per year. While this may have been the case in the late 1510s, the ups and downs of Arguim's slave trade over the three preceding decades should have provided a warning. For the period covered by the period discussed here, our 1997 estimate suggested annual slaves from Arguim at 260 slaves in 1490-1499, 250 in 1500-1509, 500 in 1510-1515, and 1,220 in 1516-1521, averaging at 480 annually<sup>11</sup>. António de Almeida Mendes, on the basis of evidence of the bills of lading, proposed a slightly lesser volume for the later 1510s: 965 slaves in 1516, of which 877 survived the voyage; 652 in 1517, with 644 surviving; 1,468 in 1518, 1,396 surviving; 1,745 in 1519, 1,696 surviving; and 478 in 1520, with 471 surviving. These figures suggest an annual average of 1,062 slaves, of whom 1,017 survived the voyage<sup>12</sup>. The differences in the yearly figures are a reflection of the challenge involved in determining the actual annual volume of the Arguim slave trade. The key problem is the lack of continuous and homogeneous data series. The available information is derived from three types of sources: letters of quittance, which the Crown issued to the captains of the outpost at the end of their term in office, entries in the few surviving ledgers, and the known bills of lading (*conhecimentos*) issued to pilots of ships carrying the slaves to Portugal. Additional figures can be obtained from the surviving receipts issued by royal officials to pilots upon delivery in Portugal and documents itemizing obligations to stakeholders. The numbers have to be carefully tabulated and reconciled, in order to avoid double-counting<sup>13</sup>. Contemporary estimates and indirect evidence derived from trade valuations and budget drafts provide complementary data<sup>14</sup>. However, the combined figures offer a very good snapshot of the volume of the Arguim slave trade volume in the three decades between 1490 and 1520, with the proviso that a further revision will be needed when the existing figures are reconciled and more data added. However, the past fluctuations had been severe enough that it is surprising that neither the Portuguese Crown nor Juan Fernández de Castro considered the vulnerability of the supply, contenting themselves with the assumption that the short-term peak in the late 1510s would become a norm.

Arguim, unlike the Santiago (Cape Verde Islands) slave-trade locus, whose relative proximity to supply regions of Senegambia and the Guinea

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11. Elbl (1997: 61, Table 5, Col. 1.2 «Arguim»).

12. Mendes (2004: 29-30 [Anexo], 19-21 [discussion], 20 [fig. 1]) offers a graph of the numbers of the slaves who survived the journey from Arguim to Lisbon. For other publications on various aspects of the Arguim slave trade by Almeida Mendes see Mendes (2005: 351-387); Mendes (2007); Mendes (2008a: 739-768); Mendes (2008b: 63-94); Mendes (2009: 19-34); Mendes (2012: 151-170).

13. See Elbl (1997: 43-44, 48 [Table 2, Col. 2 «Arguim»], 61 [Table 4, Col. 1.2 «Arguim»]).

14. For a discussion of the sources and methods used in estimating the volume of the early Portuguese Atlantic slave trade see Elbl (1997: 31-41).

Rivers explains the high volume of slave imports, was not located close to immediate sources of slaves or to major slave markets. It had to rely on Arab and Sanhaja intermediaries to bring slaves there, over significant distances<sup>15</sup>. According to Duarte Pacheco Pereira (1506), most of the slaves were Wolof and Manding<sup>16</sup>. Even a direct line from Arguim to the Senegal River involves more than 500 kilometers of a difficult terrain. Slaves originating from the upper Niger River faced a journey of 800 kilometers, at the very least. The slaves brought to Arguim traveled by re-sale stages, rather than in a single grueling trip to the coast, given that they arrived in very small groups, sold by a number of traders.

The factory was limited by its physical geography, environment, and human-created difficulties. A large accumulation of slaves in the space of months or even weeks could overwhelm the outpost and lead to greater tragedies if transportation to Portugal was not readily available and the survival needs (such as sustenance and shelter) could not be met for both the slaves and the garrison. An unexpected trading success resulting in accumulations of large numbers of slaves in the outpost could lead to terrible hardship or even starvation, as in 1509<sup>17</sup>. The personnel of the outpost was at risk as well. The outpost was highly vulnerable to external factors, such as timely supply of provisions and trading truck, Crown policies and regulations, and the relations with the mainland.

The Arguim outpost was situated on a small and barren island, at the southern edge of Atlantic Sahara, some eighty kilometers east of Cape Blanc and immediately east of Cape St. Anne. Arguim (modern Arguin) is the northernmost island of the Arguin archipelago, sitting very low to the sea level. It is surrounded by dangerous shallows and reef «rock gardens», which make navigation hazardous under most conditions. It had a single designated anchorage, off the north-east shore, but the area of deeper water was surrounded by shallows. Even in the later early modern period, the outpost did not have piers or even a jetty: ships had to be loaded and off-loaded by boats. One of its advantages was that the prevailing oceanic Canary trade winds modified the desert Harmattan wind influences, and ensure temperate conditions. The temperatures presently range from a low of 8 °C to a high of 34 °C, and the rate of precipitation is higher than on the surrounding mainland<sup>18</sup>. The mainland shelters

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15. This paper cannot accommodate the extensive discussion that would be necessary to address the ethnic and linguistic complexity of the region. Recent publications on the ethnic history of the area often rely on data too recent to assume they are applicable to the early sixteenth century without a lengthy review. See for example Horta & Freire (2013: 37-53); Freire (2008); Freire (2011a: 35-65); Freire (2011b: 107-122); Freire (2013: 172-191); Lucas & Carvalheira (2013: 192-208); Wolf (1994: 449-469).

16. Pereira (1905 [1506]: 75-76 [Cap. 24]).

17. Francisco de Almada to the King, 22 June 1510. ANTT: Gaveta 20, maço 5, doc. 42.

18. Banc d'Arguin (2011), «Climate».



the island against ocean winds and storms on three sides (north, east, and partially west), but this configuration leaves it open to desert storms. Arguin Island is small and its configuration changes, as parts of it emerge or submerge in response to the ocean, winds, and availability of moisture. In the early sixteenth century it was larger than it is now: Valentim Fernandes stated that it was one *legoa* (5.5 km) wide, two *legoas* (11 km long) and four *legoas* (22 km) in circumference; as opposed to its present-day measurements of c. 2 by 6 kilometers<sup>19</sup>. Satellite images provide a clear explanation of the discrepancy: parts of the island are currently submerged. Unlike some of the other islands of the archipelago, Arguin was completely devoid of vegetation, with the exception of what was most likely *acheb*, the ubiquitous seasonal Saharan ground cover, usually comprised of a combination of mustards (*Cruciferae*) and grasses (*Gramineae*), which is edible for camels but not livestock<sup>20</sup>. All wood had to be brought by ship from Europe or the Atlantic islands, or by boat from the African mainland<sup>21</sup>, where its availability was very limited.

Although barren and devoid of sources of shade, Arguin had one major advantage over the other islands of the archipelago: a reliable source of potable, non-brackish water<sup>22</sup> made it fit for human habitation. Supplemented by stored rain water, the water supply was sufficient even when the transient slave population reached the level of hundreds. Another advantage of the island was its proximity to the mainland: shallow boats, skillfully handled with poles or sweeps, provided connections to different points to the northern and eastern shores. At a low tide, it might have been possible in certain areas to wade through the shallows but this carried considerable dangers that merchants were likely not be prepared to take. The sources do not make it clear whether and how the African suppliers crossed the sea to reach the castle. With the exception of the *almadias* used by the Sanhaja fishermen, it would have been up to the Portuguese vessels either to ferry them back and forth or for the factory staff to cross to the mainland for trading sessions. In the case of larger groups of slaves, the most efficient way would have been for the sellers to cross to the island to view the available merchandise and for the Portuguese to go to the mainland to inspect the slaves<sup>23</sup>. The merchandise had to be carried by boat in either direction. In the case of gold or small numbers of slaves,

19. Fernandes (1997: 23 [orig. f. 66/23v]).

20. Fernandes (1997: 19-20 [orig. f. 64/21v]).

21. Fernandes (1997: 22 [orig. f. 66/23]).

22. Fernandes (1997: 22 [orig. f. 64/21]) «Nesta ylha ha hy hũa fonte de agua doce muy marauilhosa» (on this island there is a spring of sweet and very marvellous water).

23. In the 1508-1511, the Arguin outpost have one *batel de resgate* (trade boat), the purpose of which was to ferry trading parties and goods. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 110; and Transfer of the Arguin outposts from Francisco de Almada to Fernão Pinto, 3 July 1511. ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 27, 70.

it however would have been logistically possible to conduct the negotiation in the fortress, provided the sellers were comfortable with it.

Although only a minor addition to the western trans-Saharan trade network, considered isolated from the rest of the Atlantic oceanic routes, the Arguin Island was deemed suitable enough to hold one of very few Portuguese permanent trading outposts off the coast of Atlantic Africa. The reasons were straightforward: It was able to sustain human life<sup>24</sup>, was defensible (thanks to its geography) and was able to attract enough trade to be economically viable. The trading factory was established on Arguin in the mid-1440s, and was fortified by the mid-1450s. In the early 1460s it was expanded into a castle, which was transformed in the 1480s at the orders of King Dom João into what Valentim Fernandes described as «hũa fortaleza muy forte e fremozza» (a very strong and beautiful fortress)<sup>25</sup>. There is no iconography or detailed description of the fortification as it was in the first two decades of the sixteenth century<sup>26</sup>. The earliest, possibly fictitious, images are included in later sixteenth-century maps, including for example the 1575 map of north-western Africa, ascribed to Sebastião Lopes. They depict a complex of buildings, which seemingly added at different time. It is very different from the better-known seventeenth and eighteenth-century images, which show much more modern fortress, clearly built for artillery warfare, shown in Johannes Vingboons' haunting 1665 painting<sup>27</sup>. It would be tempting to assume that the fifteenth-century castle was simply absorbed into the early modern fortress but as late as the eighteenth-century contemporary maps show the castle and the new fortification as coexisting close to each other<sup>28</sup>.

The staffing needs of the castle suggests a more modest structure than that shown on Lopes' 1575 map. In 1508, its military personnel was limited to twelve. This number included the captain, the commander of the men-at-arms, and ten men-at-arms<sup>29</sup>. There were also about twelve other male staff whose duties were not military but who could presumably be expected to join in defending the fortress against an attack<sup>30</sup>. The inventories of the arsenal indicated

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24. For the pre-history and history of human habitation on Arguin Island and in the Arguin Bay see Vernet (2007).

25. Fernandes (1997: 23 [orig. 66/23v]).

26. For a detailed discussion of the evolution of the Arguin fortification see Monod (1983), Part III.

27. «Aldus verthoon hem 't casteel Argijn uyt der zee» by J. Vingboons, preserved in the Nationaal Archief, Netherlands, 1665.

28. See for example the «Plan de la Baye et Isle d'Arguim, levé par un Pilot François», by Jacques Nicolas Bellin, c. 1757.

29. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 101, 108, 115, 116-119, 122, 125, 127-128, 131.

30. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 101, 109-114, 121-124, 126, 129-130. Ff. 102-106 and 135-138 that might have listed additional personnel are missing. Each of the surviving folios lists one or maximum two staff members, implying the possibility of up to eight additional employees.

that there was only a limited number of defensive artillery pieces (*bombardas*), and that main form of ammunition were stone projectiles<sup>31</sup>. In the 1510s, the inventories show also a limited number of personal firearms, and increased allotments of gunpowder<sup>32</sup>. On the other hand, the records list no specialist gunners. The defensibility of the outpost seemed better guaranteed by its location than military power. The Arguin shallows made the island very difficult for ocean-worthy vessels to attack from the sea. While a few pirate attacks occurred in sixteenth century, Portugal did not lose Arguim to a foreign enemy until 1633, when the Dutch took it over<sup>33</sup>.

Of greater concern might have been the possibility of a large-scale attack from the mainland, but such enemies would first have to cross the shallows as a well. There is evidence that the Portuguese were concerned about possible hostilities. In 1508, an escaped slave sought shelter at Arguim, claiming he wished to convert to Christianity. Al-Mansur, a local leader and a key trading partner of the Portuguese, arrived promptly, threatening to break the peace unless the slave was returned. After tense negotiations, the captain of the outpost had to purchase the slave at three times the standing price for a prime slave<sup>34</sup>. The Portuguese operating on the mainland were at greater risk than those on the island. Captivity and the need for ransom was the greatest threat but casualties, including fatalities, occurred from time to time<sup>35</sup>.

Disruptions of trading and of the supply of meat would have been a greater source of concern than an outright attack. The outpost was vulnerable to food-supply problems, both in terms of sustaining its personnel and feeding the slaves temporarily housed in the fortress. Arguin Island did not permit horticulture, agriculture, or animal husbandry. Fish, sea turtles, seafood,

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31. During the captaincy of Francisco de Almada, who held the office from August 1508 to June 1511, Arguim held 18 *bombardas* and 1 *quintal* and 2 *arrobas* (78.2 kg) of gunpowder. Royal quittance to Francisco de Almada, 2 March 1518, ANTT: Chancelaria de D. Manuel, liv. 9, f. 53v, and ANTT: Livro das Ilhas, f. 210v; published in Braamcamp Freire (1904: 354 [doc. 237]). For metric equivalencies of Manueline measures of weight and capacity see Lopes (2003). – When the command was transferred to Fernão Pinto on 3 July 1511, the inventory lists only 2 *bombardas*, with 2 removable charge chambers, other artillery equipment, 200 stone projectiles and 94 projectiles for *espingardas* (Transfer of the Arguim outposts from Francisco de Almada to Fernão Pinto, 3 July 1511. ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 27, 70). The inventory of July 1513, drawn upon the transfer of the outpost from Fernão Pinto to Estevão da Gama still refers to only 2 *bombardas*, with 4 chambers, 4 *espingardas*, 280 stone and 123 lead shots (Transfer of the Arguim outpost from Fernão Pinto Estevão da Gama, 3 July 1513. ANTT: Corpo Cronológico II, 49, 101).

32. ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 27, 70; ANTT: Corpo Cronológico II, 49, 101.

33. For the seventeenth and eighteenth-century history of Arguim see Monod (1983); Groesen (2014: 57-71); Silva (2014: 549-567).

34. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo. 888, f. 25.

35. ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, I, 13, 31 (3 August 1513); ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, I, 16, 94 (6 November 1514).

and wild birds were the only local source of food. The indigenous fishing community subsisted on fish and kelp<sup>36</sup>, but the residents of the outpost required more dietary diversity. Grain, grain products, and meat had to be supplied externally, as were wine, vinegar, olive oil and legumes. Livestock was purchased on the mainland and was transported to the fortress by boat. Firewood also had to be shipped in.

The supply of grain fluctuated, depending on the estimated needs of the outposts and the availability of transports. Portugal did not produce enough grain to be self-sustaining. It relied on foreign imports since the late fourteenth century. The grain supplied to Arguim was often purchased in Andalusia but in times of scarcity, Portuguese agents were dispatched to try and purchase grain from the Canary Islands and the Azores as well<sup>37</sup>. One of the problems of the grain supply was the Crown estimates relied on the available recent consumption figures, which depended on the number of slaves passing through the outpost. The severe lack of cereals Arguim faced during the captaincy of Francisco de Almada<sup>38</sup> were likely the result of fact that its needs were estimated by the amounts consumed under the previous administration, which saw a significant dip in the slave trade volume. In 1507, Valentim Fernandes mentioned grain among the important Arguim export commodities<sup>39</sup>, but it does not appear in the 1507-8 ledgers as part of the trading truck<sup>40</sup>. It appears only in the 1519-20 records of slave purchases, as a complementary item<sup>41</sup>. However, the supply of grain to Arguim increased sharply in the 1510s, compared to the 1500s. During the captaincy of Fernão Soares (May 1499 – December 1501), Arguim received only 298 *moios* (235,420 l) of grain and purchased 668 slaves (253 per year)<sup>42</sup>. In comparison, the hard-pressed Francisco de Almada, received during his captaincy of the same duration (August 1508 – June 1511), 798 *moios* and 35 *alqueires* (630,897 l), but his purchases of slaves were substantially higher: 1,540 (548 per year)<sup>43</sup>.

36. Fernandes (1997: 20 [orig. ff. 64/21v-65/22]).

37. See, for example, ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 37, 191 (4 March 1513); ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 104, 82 (13 October 1522).

38. Francisco de Almada to the King, 22 June 1510. ANTT: Gaveta 20, maço 5, doc. 42.

39. Fernandes (1997: 23 [orig. f. 66/23v]).

40. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 12-18v, 19-23v, 32-36v, 46-47v, 61-62.

41. From May to October 1519, 14 slaves (out of 899) were purchased in exchange for grain. The prices ranged from 15 *fanegas* (790.5 l) for young men and women in good condition to 2 *fanegas* (102.4 l) for middle-aged women, presumably in poor health, and 4 to 5 *fanegas* (210.8-263.7 l) for children as young as five and six. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 13v, 14v, 15r, 17v, 19r, 22r, 27v, 30v, 33v, 47r.

42. Royal quittance to Fernão Soares. 20 March 1503. ANTT: Leitura Nova, Livro de Ilhas, f. 42. Published in Braamcamp Freire (1904: 353-354 [doc. 235]).

43. Royal quittance to Francisco de Almada, 2 March 1518, ANTT: Chancelaria de D. Manuel, liv. 9, f. 53v, and ANTT: Livro das Ilhas, f. 210v; published in Braamcamp Freire (1904: 354 [doc. 237]).

The waters of the Bay of Arguin are very rich in different kinds of fish and provided not only an easily available food supply to the inhabitants of Arguim<sup>44</sup> but also a steady supply of exports to Portugal<sup>45</sup>. The outpost maintained three fishing boats, including one for moving in very shallow waters. The indigenous fishing community paid to the outpost a *quinto* (20%) in tribute<sup>46</sup>. Between January and August of 1508, the staff were issued between as much as 60 and as little as 16 *caçones* of fish per month, the most in March and August, the least in February<sup>47</sup>. Seafood was also abundant and deemed to be superior quality. Sea turtle meat was greatly valued for its taste and diversity of cuts<sup>48</sup>, but it was seasonal item, as were different species of birds and fish. During the nesting season, the residents of Arguim has access to a wide range of eggs, collected also from the uninhabited islands of the Arguin archipelago<sup>49</sup>.

The personnel were also provided with meat, from the livestock purchased on the mainland. The meat component of the staff diet was limited. In 1507, the purchase of meat ranged from none in September to as many as 33 head of livestock in October, 22 in November, and 14 in December. In the same month, the outpost was able to purchase a bull and a ram for the festive season<sup>50</sup>. In 1508, the outpost acquired 28 heads of «gado miudo» (goats or sheep) and 2 cows in January, 21 heads of livestock in February, 24 heads in April and 22 in May, but only 5 in March and 3 in June. Even discounting the Church-prescribed meatless days, these purchases account for less than a single goat or sheep available per day to feed thirty or more staff, and often much less. The summer 1508 expedition to Amtarota was able to purchase 9 heads of livestock to supplement its diet, all of them in May<sup>51</sup> but in 1507 only 4, all in July<sup>52</sup>.

The social life in the outpost was very limited. With a maximum of forty Portuguese personnel of differing social status, who lived there without their

44. Fernandes (1997: 20-21 and 23 [orig. ff. 64/21v-65/22, 66/23r]).

45. On 6 October 1505, for example, the square-rigger *Corpo Santo*, under Joham Roiz, in addition to 61 slaves, also took aboard for transport to Lisbon over 3,000 fish (*Conhecimento* to Joam Roiz, 6 October 1505, ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 172-173v. In October 1506, *Samta Maria de Rosairo*, under Rodrigo Afonso, carried almost 6,000 fish, in addition to 74 slaves (*Conhecimentos*) to Rodrigo Afonso, 14 and 15 October 1506, ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 175 and 176v. See also ANTT: *Corpo Cronológico*, II, 28, 79 (29 November 1511); ANTT: *Corpo Cronológico*, II, 31, 93 (10 April 1512); ANTT: *Corpo Cronológico*, II, 12, 173 (26 May 1517).

46. Fernandes (1997: 20 [orig. ff. 64/21v-65/22]).

47. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 64-64v.

48. Fernandes (1997: 20-21 [orig. ff. 64/21v-65/22]).

49. Fernandes (1997: 24-25 [orig. ff. 67/24v]).

50. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 599, ff. 87-88. The records for May and June 1507 are mostly missing.

51. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 61-62.

52. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 599, f. 87.

families and who were supposed to be rotated out every three years<sup>53</sup>, the outpost could not develop a long-term community structure, despite the presence of a few *moradores* (residents), who were privileged but not paid by the Crown. There were also three Crown-paid *mulheres do castelo* (castle women), one of them a slave<sup>54</sup>. Desertion was a problem, as was misconduct. In 1506, the pilot Rodrigo Afonso, as part of cargo, received four prisoners (including two mens-at-arms) to deliver to the first judge or justice agent available<sup>55</sup>. In 1508, for example, two members of the staff ran off to join one of the Muslim groups on the mainland<sup>56</sup>, perhaps out of boredom. There were few off-duty distractions. In 1508, the Crown provided the personnel a *pipa* (436 litres) of wine each month<sup>57</sup>. Undifferentiated by rank, this would amount to c. 14.5 liters per person per month or 0.5 liters per day. However, it is unlikely that the wine rations were intended to relieve the social isolation through intoxication, but rather to decontaminate the drinking water, similarly to the «beiveirage» served on English navy vessels in the seventeenth century<sup>58</sup>.

There is no explicit documentation to comment on sexual access to the slaves. The officers could and did requisition slaves (priced well above the trade rate) as part of their salary. The captain, Gonçalo de Fonseca, selected between January and August eight slaves, presumably as part of his salary. Only one of them was male, a boy of 10 or 11. Of the seven female slaves, five were in their twenties, one a teenager of 15-18, and one young girl of 10-11<sup>59</sup>. The slaves were assessed by a committee consisting of the scribe of the outpost, and the master of the *caravelão* at 8,000 *réis* for the adults and 3,000-3,200 *réis* for the two children. These were the average prices for prime slaves resold in Portugal. Of the six other staff members who were paid in slaves in 1508, the *jagafafe* (judge of slaves) chose a prime male at 8,000 *réis*, the barber a male at 7,000, and one of the men-at arms a near-prime female slave, at 7,000 *réis*. The other three opted for children, assessed between 3,000 and 4,300 *réis*. The scribe picked a female child of 10 or 11, the chaplain a female child as well, and one of fishermen a male child<sup>60</sup>. It cannot be established whether any of the owners intended to use their slaves sexually. Homosexuality was punishable

53. Fernandes (1997: 24 [orig. f. 67/24]).

54. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 132, 133, 134.

55. ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 4, 23 (16 October 1506).

56. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 140-141.

57. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 60-60v.

58. «Beiveirage» was a 1:5 mix of wine and water, sometimes diluted by unscrupulous ship pursers to as little as 1:14. Vinegar would have served as well but the outpost had very little of it. In 1508, the captain permitted only 1 *quarto* of vinegar to be «spent» in June and a whole *pipa* in August. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 66.

59. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 15-15v.

60. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 101, 107v, 111, 112, 115, 130.

by death and rape (including rape of slave women) could technically result in death penalty as well, although exile (*degredo*) was the more common punishment. Even promiscuity, prohibited by both secular and canon law, would be difficult to hide in a small and transient community in the castle. In any case, here is no record of the sexual conduct in the outpost<sup>61</sup>. It is more likely the slaves were sent to Portugal for re-sale, to lock in the profit. This was a common practice: In 1511-1514, between 4 and 11 % of the slaves from the cargo of each of ten ships which arrived in Lisbon from Arguim were part of someone's salary or pension. In one case, the ship that arrived on 23 August 1514, the percentage was as high as 44.4 but the slaves represented the balance of the outgoing captain's salary<sup>62</sup>.

The ships arriving from Portugal constituted the only contact with the home country. In the 1500s, often only two ships ported in Arguim annually, often under Rodrigo Afonso, who travelled back and forth between the outpost and Portugal for a least fifteen years, piloting different ships<sup>63</sup>. The traffic intensified considerably in the following decade (see Table 3 below). Some Portuguese did not resent the isolation: Joham Rodrigues, a royal *reposteiro* and Fernandes' chief source of information about the island and the adjacent mainland, had spent two years in Arguim between 1493 and 1495 and liked it so much that he returned there often<sup>64</sup>. The captains were rewarded well for their service there. In addition to a high salary or share of proceed, they could hope for a substantial pension after completing their term in office<sup>65</sup>.

The degree to which staff were occupied by their duties depended on their position and the business of the factory. While the fishermen<sup>66</sup> and those responsible for the daily operations of the outpost could be assumed to have followed a regular daily routine<sup>67</sup>, the duties of those responsible for trading and protection depended on the availability of trading and on security needs. Part of the outpost personnel would conduct annual trading expeditions to the mainland (most commonly «Amtarota», the present-day Nouakchott Bay), usually between May and August, that took anywhere between six weeks and three months, bringing back slaves, gum arabic, and very limited amount of gold. The sea-going personnel were paid well: in 1508, the master of the

61. For a more detailed discussion, see Elbl (1996: 61-86).

62. ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 29, 64.

63. Mendes (2004: 29-30 [Anexo]).

64. Fernandes (1997: 19 [orig. f. 64/21]).

65. See for example the royal order that Fernão Pinto be paid a *tença* 15.000 réis. 10 May 1511. ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, I, 10, 32.

66. In 1508, there were two well-paid fishermen, each earning 8,000 réis per year. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 129-130.

67. In 1508, these included a chaplain, the captain's page, barber, miller, tailor, *perteiro*, and the three castle women. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 107, 111, 113, 114, 120, 132-134.

*caravelão* earned 14.000 réis, the master of the *batel do resgate* (trade boat) 9,000 réis, and the three master mariners 8,000 réis each<sup>68</sup>.

The business that came to Arguim itself was spaced irregularly. While in 1508 the trading was particularly slow, the pattern of daily transactions in trade goods and the livestock for local consumption was irregular and days of inactivity easily outweighed days of business activity. In January, for example, there were only eight business days and six in March, as opposed to eighteen in May and twelve in June.

Table 1. Daily Trading in Arguim, January to August 1508<sup>69</sup>

		Slaves		Gold (dobras)		Gum Arabic (sacks)	Livestock	
Month	Day	Arguim	«Amtarota»	Arguim	«Amtarota»	«Amtarota»	Arguim	«Amtarota»
January								
	9						9	
	13	1					3	
	17	1						
	19						9	
	21						2 cows	
	24						8	
	25	1						
	30			1.25				
February								
	2						8	
	5	1						
	8						1	
	11						10	
	13	1						
	15	5						
	16						3	
	19	2						
	24	1		6				
	25	1						

68. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 109-110, 121-124. On the concept of *resgate* in the context of trade with Africa see Saunders, 1982.

69. Source: ANTT: Núcleo Antigo 888, ff. 12-18v, 19-23v, 32-36v, 46-47v, 61-62.



		Slaves		Gold (dobras)		Gum Arabic (sacks)	Livestock	
Month	Day	Arguim	«Amtarota»	Arguim	«Amtarota»	«Amtarota»	Arguim	«Amtarota»
March								
	5						5	
	12	6						
	22	1						
	25	1						
	28	2						
	30	1						
April								
	4			2.5				
	6			93				
	7	1						
	8	1		19.35				
	9	1		15				
	12	1						
	20			2.75			6	
	21	1						
	22	1						
	27						18	
May								
	4	1					5	
	7						3	
	9	1						
	10						7	
	11	2		746				
	12			67.75				
	13			77.5				
	14							5
	15	1						
	20	2	1					
	21		2					
	23						7	

		Slaves		Gold (dobras)		Gum Arabic (sacks)	Livestock	
Month	Day	Arguim	«Amtarota»	Arguim	«Amtarota»	«Amtarota»	Arguim	«Amtarota»
	24			2.5				
	27					1		
	28							3
	29					6.83		
	30		3			3		
	31					6.5		1
June								
	1					2.5		
	4		1		4.5			
	5					4		
	6					7.5		
	7		1		6.25	5.5		
	8	1			18			
	12		10					
	13		2				3	
	15		1					
	17							
	21	1						
	24			4.75				
	29		2					
July								
August								
	4		6					

Unlike gold, which was acquired in few large transactions, the largest in May, slaves were purchased in smaller groups or even individually, throughout the year. Of these, only a limited number saw trade in slaves, ranging from 2 in July of 1508, 3 in January, 5 in March and May, and 6 in February and April. In the first three months of 1520, at the peak level of the trade, the number of slave trading days rose only moderately, but the factory was much busier in the second half of 1519 when each month saw between 9 and 20 trading days,

with an average of 14.6 days. Gum arabic was purchased almost entirely during away-from-the-outpost expeditions, whereas livestock was largely brought to the outpost by local suppliers. Trading expeditions bought livestock only to supplement the food supply<sup>70</sup>.

Because of the steady trickle-in of slaves on offer, they accounted for most the active trading days in Arguim, next to purchases of livestock. The first six months of 1508, for which the record of daily transactions is available, were extraordinarily slow, with only five or six days in February, March and April. May saw eight trading days, if the local trade is combined with that conducted at Amtarota; and June eight days as well. January seems to have been the slowest month, with only three days of trading in 1508 and seven days in 1520. In 1519, at the peak of slave purchases, the number of trading days increased sharply. June 1519 was the busiest month, with eighteen slave-buying days at the outpost and seventeen on the trading expedition. July 1519 followed closely, with eighteen days at the outpost and eleven on expedition. Most slaves were bought in the summer months as well. These data however are too fragmentary to correlate with weather conditions. While the summer months were the hottest and driest, November 1519 was busier in Arguim itself than either June or July. It is however significant that both in 1508 and 1519 most slaves were bought in June, at the beginning of the hottest time of the year. The Arguim personnel could do little about the timing of slave purchases. Whether trading at the outpost or on expedition, the sellers would come when convenient for them and only if they felt it was advantageous.

The small size of the garrison raises the question of controlling the slaves. Despite the attempts to assure rapid transit to Portugal, slaves could spend weeks or even months awaiting transport. Between February and August 1508, six slaves died while awaiting transport, five of them females, three of them in their twenties (and so was the only male who perished. Two female toddlers died as well<sup>71</sup>. Three of the six deaths occurred in August, coinciding with a period of very low grain rations<sup>72</sup>. In June 1510, Francisco de Almada was frantically requesting a ship to take to Portugal the 123 slaves remaining at that point in the fortress, and an emergency shipment of 200 *moios* (154,004 l) of grain to feed the slaves over the fall and winter. He expected that there would be 200 slaves or more before the ship arrived<sup>73</sup>.

Although the island itself would have served as a confinement area, and even if the slaves made it to the mainland, they faced capture and re-enslavement,

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70. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 62 («Resgate de carne que Pero de Fomsequa resgatou em Amtarota para despeza de gente do navio»).

71. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 30.

72. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 58v.

73. Francisco de Almada to the King, 22 June 1510. ANTT: Gaveta 20, maço 5, doc. 42.

Table 2. Arguim Monthly Slave Trade in 1508 (January to July), 1519 (May to December), and 1520 (January to March)<sup>74</sup>

Year	Buying Days Arguim factory	Buying Days Expeditions	Slaves Bought	Prime Slaves		Buying Days Arguim factory	Buying Days Expeditions	Slaves Bought	Prime Slaves	
				Total	%				Total	%
January	3		3	3	100	7		28	12	42.9
February	6		11	10	90.1	9		33	7	21.2
March	5		11	11	100	4		12	5	41.7
April	6		5	2	40					
May	5	3	12	11	91.7	5+		43	9	20.9
June	2	6	20	12	60	18	17	214	39	18.2
July						18	11	200	54	27
August		1	6	2	33.3	13	12	157	43	27.4
September						9		63	13	20.6
October						12		78	22	30.1
November						20		96	26	27.1
December						12		73	24	32.9
<b>Total</b>			<b>68</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>75</b>			<b>924</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>24.9</b>

74. Sources: ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 12-18v; ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 889, ff. 3v-53v and 74-88v (Arguim factory), 54-72 (expedition to the mainland). For details and a full tabulated summary of the data see Elbl (2022).

if they did not perish of thirst, hunger, or exposure. However, there is evidence they were kept in the fortress, in the section designated as the «slave house» (*casa dos ecravos*)<sup>75</sup>, rather than in a slave village or outdoor pens. There is no information available on the specific housing arrangements (such as the separation of sexes) or on sanitation. However, there is no record of a major outbreak of disease in first two decades of the sixteenth century. The 1511 inventory of the *casa dos ecravos* lists a limited number of restraint instruments, but no cots or bunks, blankets, clothing, or any other items of personal comfort. The number of shackles and other instruments of restraint makes it highly unlikely that the immediate personal mobility of most slaves was restricted. They were expected to perform chores while in the outpost, sometimes in making biscuits. The fact that two of the personnel were killed between 1507 and 1508<sup>76</sup>, one of them during a slave uprising, suggests that the slaves were not kept in full confinement. Given that the man killed during the 1507 uprising was the miller (*tafoneiro*), and he that he died at his workplace, the *atafona* (the stone grain mill)<sup>77</sup>, suggests that food might have been one of the grievances.

Feeding the slaves was often a problem. The ledgers of 1507 and 1508 suggest that slaves were fed considerably less of carbohydrates (flour, biscuits) than the crew. While the wheat supplied to the staff (who numbered under thirty at the time) ranged in 1508 from 176 to 217 *alqueires* (2,317.4 to 2,827.2 l) per month, averaging between 7 and 9 *alqueires* per day (92.2-118.5 l), amounting to c. 3.5 liters of daily grain per staff member, a very adequate supply of carbohydrates<sup>78</sup>. The slave wheat rations were much less and oscillated widely, from 13 to 93 *alqueires* (171.1 to 1,224.5 l) per month from May to December 1507<sup>79</sup> and 67 to 113 *alqueires* (882.2 to 1,487.9 l) from January to August of 1508<sup>80</sup>. This suggests not only a significant difference in grain allocation to between staff and slaves but also inadequate food supply for the slaves. In the case of grain scarcity in the outpost, the slave bore the brunt of it. From 15 July to 15 August 1508, for example, the slaves were on short rations of 3 *alqueires* (39.5 l) a day, because «there was little left». The rations were briefly doubled to 6 *alqueires* a day (79 l) once a supply ship arrived from Portugal<sup>81</sup>. The problem is in linking the grain rations to the number of slaves. A correlation is possible only were the grain releases can be linked to the number of slaves present in the fortress. At 29 January 1508, 33 slaves left Arguim. They had

75. Transfer of the Arguim outpost from Francisco de Almada to Fernão Pinto, 3 July 1511. ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 27, 70.

76. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 599, f. 53, and ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 139.

77. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 599, f. 53.

78. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 55-56.

79. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 599, ff. 84-84v.

80. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 57-58v.

81. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 58v.

been fed 84 *alqueires* (1,106 l) of grain between 8 and 29 January, amounting to 4.2 *alqueires* (51.1 l) per day, c. 1.5 liter per slave daily<sup>82</sup>.

It is not clear whether slaves were given any red meat (which had to be purchased from the mainland). However, there was plenty of fish, birds, and various forms of seafood, including giant sea turtles (a favourite of many of the Portuguese)<sup>83</sup>. While some of these sources of animal protein were seasonal, the outpost and the Sanhaja fishing village adjacent to the castle was likely able to secure enough catch to sustain the island population. Given the availability of alternative foods, feeding the garrison or the slaves should not have been an insurmountable problem. However, in Christian medieval culture, bread (a prime source of complex carbohydrates) was a fundamental element of nutrition, and famine was often defined by its scarcity or unavailability. The other issue is the nutritive role of complex carbohydrates as sources of energy. Still, Francisco de Almada's claim that slaves actually starved in 1509 while awaiting transport to Portugal<sup>84</sup> is puzzling: even if the grain had run out, alternative sources of food were available and should have prevented outright starvation. In times of sufficient supply, grain was actually part of the trading truck of the factory but the sales were limited. The problem is that the grain was provided by the Crown and its officials in Lisbon estimated Arguim's need by past patterns of consumption. During the captaincy of Gonçalo Fonseca (1505-1508), the slave trade volume was atypically low. The trade picked up as Francisco de Almada took over as captain but it took time for the Crown officials to note the change and act on it, creating conditions of disturbing scarcity in the outpost, which primarily affected the slaves transiting through there.

The smooth functioning of the outposts greatly depended on the availability of transportation between the outpost and Lisbon, both for outfitting the outpost and shipment of merchandise. While gold could wait in storage, the transportation of slaves out of the factory help urgency that the Crown was sometimes slow to address. In the first decade of the sixteenth century, only two ocean-going ships per year appear to have been available to transport slaves to Lisbon, a matter on which the outpost ledgers and the surviving bills of lading agree. One of them was the *caravelão*, a three-mast vessel with a combination of lateen and square rigging, assigned to service the outpost. The ship was nearing the end of its functional life in 1510<sup>85</sup>. In 1511, Arguim was supported by 4 *caravelões*<sup>86</sup>, some intended largely for coastal shipping.

82. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 57.

83. Fernandes reported that slaves were fed the meat of the abundant wild birds. Fernandes (1997: 25 [orig. f. 67/24v]).

84. Francisco de Almada to the King, 22 June 1510. ANTT: Gaveta 20, maço 5, doc. 42.

85. See Monteiro & Castro & Génio (2011: 359-374).

86. Royal quittance to Francisco de Almada, 2 March 1518, ANTT: Chancelaria de D. Manuel, liv. 9, f. 53v, and ANTT: Livro das Ilhas, f. 210v; published in Braamcamp Freire (1904: 354 [doc. 237]).

Table 3. Ships Carrying Slaves from Arguim to Portugal, 1506-1520<sup>87</sup>

Year	# of Ships	Documented Ships and Slave Cargo										
		Ships	Number of Slaves		Sources	Document Copies	Additional Ships	Number of Slaves		Sources		
			Departure	Arrival				Departure	Arrival			
1505	1	1	61		NA 888, 172-173v							
1506	2	2	111		NA 888, 174-175v	CC II 11 17; CC II 11 148						
1507	1	1	52		NA 888, 173v							
1508	1	1	33		CC II 14 22							
1509												
1510	1	1	111		Gav. 20 5 42							
1511	3	3	198	188	CC II 29 64 and CC II 28 89							
1512	[3]	1	111	109	Almeida Mendes, 2004, 29		2	220	210	CC II 29 64		
1513	[5]	3	443	434	Almeida Mendes, 2004, 29		2	273	266	CC II 29 64		
1514	[5]	2	177	177	Almeida Mendes, 2004, 29		3	376	369	CC II 29 64 and CC II 62 92		
1515	[4]	1	139	137	Almeida Mendes, 2004, 29		3	278		CC II 62 92		
1516	7	7	1093	987	Almeida Mendes, 2004, 29	CC II 65 39						
1517	8	8	652	644	Almeida Mendes, 2004, 29							
1518	12	12		1395	Almeida Mendes, 2004, 29-30							
1519	12	12	1745	1696	Almeida Mendes, 2004, 30							
1520	5	5	478	471	Almeida Mendes, 2004, 30							

87. Almeida Mendes did not provide references to specific documents, listing only the two major archival collections containing them: ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, and ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, not the specific document references. The records of voyages can be identified with the specific sources only the internal information, such as date, ship name, pilot, and number of slaves carried. The column «Additional Ships» of Table 3 contains information on voyages not included by Almeida Mendes. The reconciliation is only partial, for the period of 1512 to 1515. Sources: Included in the table.

The problems were eased in the 1510s (see Table 3). After 1516 the number of slave transport ships increased sharply, as evidenced by the surviving bills of lading tabulated by Almeida Mendes, and receipts issued by royal officials in Lisbon. While not all records of voyages survived or have been located, bills of lading are reliable indicators of the minimal volume of slaves exports, especially if they can be correlated to the documented purchases of slaves, either in factory ledgers or in the letters of quittance issued to the captains of the outpost. The ships carried an average of 94 slaves, but their cargoes differed considerably, ranging from 33 slaves per voyage to as much as 220. Many of the ships carried other goods as well, including gold, gum arabic, and large quantities of fish.

The increased numbers of slaves per ship in the 1510s likely put additional pressure on provisioning the vessels with food and water – a potential important problem. The problem was not so much the water itself but rather the storage containers. In July 1510, Francisco de Almada informed the king that the lack of water jars prevented him from boarding more than 111 slaves, leaving 123 of them in the fortress<sup>88</sup>. The factory chronically tended to be short of casks and other water containers. All cooperage items had to be accounted for and even the broken items to be returned to Lisbon, while the *Casa da Índia e Guiné* was slow in providing adequate replacements<sup>89</sup>. It is impossible to determine how much water per slave was deemed necessary for them to survive for approximately three weeks at sea. The factory was supposed to provision the slaves with both food and water for the voyage but the records only mention biscuits, and on only one occasion<sup>90</sup>. The shipping manifests do not inventory travel supplies, only merchandise and returns. There are no records of slaves being issued blankets or other coverings to protect them at sea. The only exception are the occasional gifts of old clothing, to slaves serving as enforcers (*magalhos*), or to privileged slaves, for example converts to Christianity<sup>91</sup>.

While the slave transit mortality from Arguim to Portugal was much lower than that on voyages covering greater distances, it ranged widely – from 0 to 5 % of the human cargo (for the annual losses in transit see Table 3). Almeida Mendes calculated the average mortality at 4.05 % but the reason for the figure are the losses sustained by two large-capacity ships in 1516. These

88. Francisco de Almada to the King, 22 June 1510. ANTT: Gaveta 20, maço 5, doc. 42.

89. In April 1506, for example, Rodrigo Afonso carried back to Portugal, in addition to 73 slaves, 14 empty *pipas*, 52 old casks, 1 damaged cask, and 200 small casks (*Conhecimento* to Rodrigo Afonso, 22 April 1506, ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 11, 14). See also *pipas*, 52 old casks, 1 damaged cask, and 200 small casks (*Conhecimento* to Rodrigo Afonso, 22 April 1506; ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 71, 136 [26 September 1517]; Corpo Cronológico, II, 98, 147 [18 November 1521]).

90. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 59.

91. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 599, ff. 96-96v; ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 53-54v.



losses do not count those slaves who arrived ill and had to be nursed back to health. The information on morbidity is rarer than the data on mortality, but glimpses are available. On 20 May 1513, for example, the *Aguoa de Lupe* was reported to have lost five slaves at sea and brought back three so ill that their price could not be set on arrival. The slave ship that ported in Lisbon on 11 January 1514 lost –out of the original cargo of 137 slaves– two slaves at sea and 1 after arrival. Among the survivors were seven slaves who were «muito doentes e enfermes» (very ill and infirm) and additional five who were in such a poor condition that they could not be sold for the price at which they had been evaluated<sup>92</sup>. The mortality rate may be linked to the composition of the cargo and the sailing conditions during the voyage. Crowding should have contributed to the mortality and morbidity rates, but there is no clear correlation between the number of slaves a ship carried and losses in transit in this period. For example, the mortality of the eight voyages between November 1511 and August 1514, during the captaincy of Fernão Pinto, ranged 0% to 5%, with no link to the size of the cargo, except in the *Santa Maria de Rosario* in April 1514, which carried only 33 slaves. The eight voyages during Pinto's captaincy respectively lost 4.9% of 102, 5% out of 121, 3.7% out of 109, 3.1% out of 160, 1.4% out of 145, 2.2% out of 137, 0% out of 31; 2% out of 146 respectively<sup>93</sup>. Two exceptionally disastrous voyages occurred in 1516, when one of the ships coming from Arguim lost 24.1% of its original cargo of 220 slaves, and another 14.7% out of 150<sup>94</sup>. Two severe losses also occurred in 1517 when a ship originally carrying 166 slaves lost 19.3% of its cargo, and another 18.3% out of 120. In the same year, however, there is four voyages with no losses in transit, all with small slave cargoes (100, 80, 59, and 47 respectively)<sup>95</sup>.

Another possible link involved the demographics of the growing volume of the slave. The increase was made possible by purchasing more lower-valued slaves, including more children, adolescents and young adults in less than optimal physical condition. In the 1510s the sex, age, and pricing patterns were much closer those prevailing in Senegambia and Guinea Rivers. Arguim was dependent on local arrangements and contacts to attract the supply of slaves, and could not exercise its preference for prime slaves, as it did in the first half of 1508 when the Portuguese were able to purchase an unusually high percentage of prime slaves. The political situation and wars in the supply-pool region generated a significant number of slaves because of wartime enslavement.

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92. «Comta de Fernam Pynto para ho hu porcemto». 8 November 1511 to 28 August 1514, ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 29, 64.

93. «Comta de Fernam Pynto para ho hu porcemto». 8 November 1511 to 28 August 1514, ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 29, 64.

94. Mendes (2004: 29).

95. Mendes (2004: 29).

However, there were many other markets for them, regionally, in the sahel belt, and across the Sahara. The Arguim outpost had to employ various means to remain competitive and had to be prepared to be more flexible when it came to the age-sex profiles and condition of the slaves on offer. The sellers had to have a reasonable expectation of successfully divesting themselves of all or most of their human merchandise if they were to undertake the long track to Arguim.

Of particular importance to the Arguim trade was the institution of *alformagem*. Specific to Atlantic North-west Africa, *alformagem* guaranteed and validated friendship and fidelity between parties of conflicting religions. The *alformas* served either individual Muslim traders or Muslim groups, and combined the functions of commercial intermediaries, guides and brokers. The importance of the *alformas* is clearly reflected in the pattern of gifts and commissions given out on important purchases. In 1508, the most important *alforma* of the Portuguese was al-Mansur, the leader of Amtarota (Nouakchott Bay). In recognition of his role in the success of the 1508 expedition, he received in *alformagem* a gift amounting to 21.5 *dobras* in merchandise, largely riding equipment, which included a saddle with all appurtenances and a pair of gilded spurs. The regard gift was equivalent to the price of 1.5 slave, out of the 29 acquired during the expedition, an equivalent of 5.2 commission<sup>96</sup>. Al-Mansur's son received a gift worth of almost a dobra in merchandise (bordate cloth and a beret) for serving as *alforma* while his father was occupied with the Portuguese<sup>97</sup>. Other *alformagem* gifts were smaller. An «alarve homrado» (honoured Arab) who brought six slaves to Arguim was given 10 *covados* (c. 7 metres) of bordate cloth, a mirror and 1 comb. Abu Ayre who served as an *alforma* to the Sanhaja received two separate gifts/commissions in 1508: first, he received the same gift as al-Mansur's son for bringing four slaves, and another for bringing seven slaves later on<sup>98</sup>.

The slave trade in Arguim was largely a sellers's market: they had a number of alternative options, whereas the Portuguese had to rely on what offerings were brought to them. While the merchandise the outpost provided in return was convenient, particularly everyday metal objects, such as barber's basins and chamber pots, it was available from alternative suppliers. This is a particularly important consideration in considering textiles, especially sewn garments, which for the most part originated in Atlantic Morocco. A scarcity of Moroccan goods could seriously undermine Arguim's place in both the gold and slave trade. In June of 1510, Captain Francisco de Almada anxiously pleaded with the Crown to provide a broad range of trade goods, worried that

96. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 51.

97. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 51.

98. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 50 and 51.

the poor inventory would alienate the merchants who then would direct their business elsewhere. While he was more concerned about gold merchants, who had to come across greater distances, the same rationale applied to slave suppliers as well<sup>99</sup>. In 1514, a Jewish intermediary was engaged to purchase a large number of *abanas* and cloth made in Marrakesh to supply Arguim's needs via Safi, where to royal factor was to pay for them and defaulted<sup>100</sup>.

However, the trade goods tended to be a major problem in Arguim mostly only in the gold trade. The slave prices, expressed in *dobras*, allowed enough flexibility to compose a «shopping cart» composed of acceptable goods that represented a good option for both the buyers and sellers. In the Portuguese case, the hope for profit resided in the prospective high resale value of the slaves, keeping operating costs low, and in an advantageous margin on the purchase of both the slaves and of the merchandise. The slave sellers expected to profit both from the differential in the acquisition and selling price of the slaves and from the resale of the Arguim merchandise, factoring in the operating costs. The range of options for the contents of the «shopping cart» was the source of satisfactory outcome for the sellers, provided the slaves they had brought were sold. The Portuguese could bargain for low prices for low-quality slaves.

The key problem was than an increased volume of purchase meant buying lower-quality slaves. While the Crown policy was for the factory to acquire prime slaves (bought for the full 15 *dobras*), the supply market seldom permitted such selectivity. The one exemption were the opening months of 1508, when between 90 and 100 % of slaves purchased by the factory in January, February, March and May were evaluated as prime<sup>101</sup>. However, the percentage changed once the slaves purchased during the expedition to Amtarota were factored in. While in May 1508, the Portuguese were able to buy there only prime slaves (but only five of them), in June the percentage dropped sharply to 60 % and 33 % in August<sup>102</sup>. In the period from May 1519 to March 1520, the share of prime slaves averaged as low as 26 % in 1519 and 35 % in 1520<sup>103</sup>.

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99. Francisco de Almada to the King, 22 June 1510, ANTT: Gaveta 20, maço 5, no 42.

100. Mail Levi to the King, 14 November 1514. ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, I, 16, 110.

101. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 12-18v; for a summary see Table 2.

102. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 18v and 19-23; for a summary see Table 2.

103. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 889, ff. 4-53v and 74-88v (Arguim factory), 54-72 (expedition to the mainland).

Table 4. Arguim, May to December 1519: Slave Prices by Sex and Age<sup>104</sup>

Price	Age Groups														Percentage	Price Group					
	0 to 9		10 to 14		15 to 19		20 to 24		25 to 29		30 to 34		35 to 39				40 plus		Total		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female			Male	Female			
2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	0.6		
3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.2	6.8	
4	9	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	17	1.9		
5	8	8	4	2	3	0	1	1	6	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	37	4.1		
6	5	6	5	3	3	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	3		
7	5	5	10	2	3	1	1	0	7	4	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	42	4.7	19.6	
8	2	1	13	10	8	4	7	2	5	4	2	7	1	0	0	0	0	66	7.3		
9	0	0	9	4	10	7	0	6	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	41	4.6		
10	0	0	5	3	18	22	11	1	6	7	4	6	0	0	0	0	0	83	9.2		
11	0	0	0	0	8	6	7	6	4	5	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	39	4.3	32.5	
12	0	0	0	0	17	15	16	8	3	6	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	72	8		
13	0	0	0	0	21	14	19	16	10	11	2	5	0	1	0	0	0	99	11		
14	0	0	0	0	11	12	14	16	15	14	6	5	0	0	0	0	0	93	10.4	10.4	
15	0	0	0	0	30	27	69	31	39	16	8	7	0	0	0	0	0	227	25.3	25.3	
Truck	11	8	0	1	3	3	1	2	1	2	2	6	2	3	1	3	6	49	5.4	5.4	
Total	40	32	48	25	135	111	146	89	99	73	32	50	4	6	3	6	899	100	100		
Percentage	4.5	3.5	5.3	2.8	15	12.4	16.3	9.9	11	8.1	3.5	5.6	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.7	100				
Age Group	72		73		246		235		172		82		10		9		899				
Percentage	8		8.1		27.4		26.2		19.1		9.1		1.1		1		100				

104. Source: ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 889, ff. 3v-53v and 74-88v (Arguim factory), 54-72 (expedition to the mainland). Additional research, which included previously unavailable folios of Núcleo Antigo 888, added 28 slaves, which are not reflected in this table. See Elbl (2022, Appendix 2).

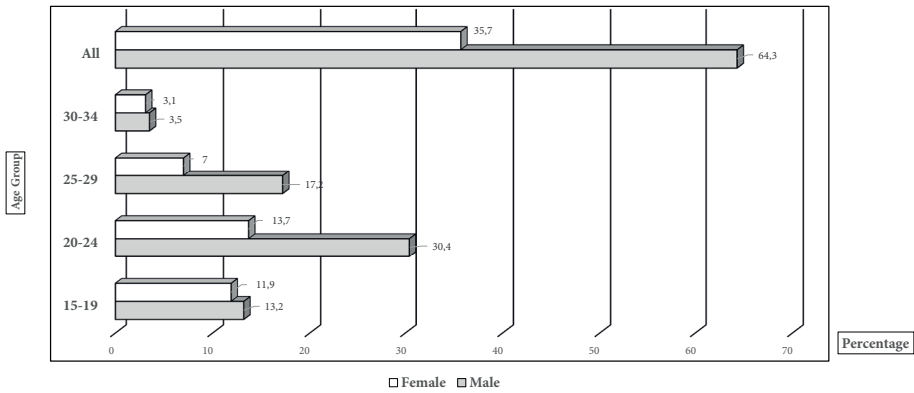
While males formed a majority of the slaves purchased in Arguim, at around 60%, the sex composition differed by age and price group. In May-December 1519, young adults constituted 45.3% slaves purchased at Arguim (men at 27.2 and women at 18% of the overall total). They were bracketed by the 15-19 group (amounting to 27.4% of the total, with much smaller difference between males and females) and the 30-34 group (9%, with a minimal difference between sexes). Over 16% of those sold at Arguim were children. The percentage of young children between 4 and 9 and junior teenagers was almost even, at c. 8% each. In both age groups, males slightly outnumbered females. Adults over 35 years formed only 2% of the total, with women outnumbering men in both the 35-39 and over-40 groups.

Table 5. Sex and Age of a Sample of Slaves Traded in Arguim, 1505-1511, as Reflected in the Bills of Lading<sup>105</sup>

Year	Month and Day	Total		Age													
		# of slaves		0 to 9		10 to 14		15 to 19		20 to 29		30 to 39		40 to 49		over 50	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1505	6-Oct	36	27	0	1	2	4	3	2	22	13	9	7	0	0	0	0
1506	23-Apr	73	27	1	1	1	1	1	0	47	19	20	0	3	6	0	0
1506	15-Oct	42	32	1	0	3	0	0	3	42	12	6	7	0	0	0	0
1507	27-May	19	38	0	0	0	3	3	2	13	24	3	4	0	5	0	0
1508	27-Jan	13	20	0	0	0	0	4	5	7	11	2	4	0	0	0	0
1511	2-Oct	51	51	0	1	0	0	4	8	46	42	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total		234	195	1	3	6	8	15	20	177	121	41	22	3	11	0	0

The patterns reflected in the May-December 1519 purchases are consistent with the sex and age structure of the documented slave shipments between 1505 and 1511, although the composition of each cargo was unique. In this sample, males formed 54.5 and females 45.5% of the total. Males in their twenties significantly outweighed females (177 to 121), and so did men in their thirties (41 to 22). Children formed only 4.2% of the total. Females formed a sharp majority in the over-40 category.

105. Sources: ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, ff. 172-175v; ANTT: Corpo Cronológico, II, 2, 17 (23 April 1506), Corpo Cronológico, II, 11, 148 (15 October 1506), Corpo Cronológico, II, 14, 22 (27 January 1508), Corpo Cronológico, II, 28, 89 (2 October 1511).



Graph 1. Arguim, May-December 1519: Sex and Age of Prime Slaves (15 *dobras*)<sup>106</sup>

More young male adults slaves were deemed to fit the «prime» slave category than young females because fewer «prime» females were sold to the Portuguese. In 1519, the percentage of male slaves of all age groups, who were purchased at the cost of a «prime slaves», was substantially higher (64.3 %) than that of females (35.7 %). The sex percentage difference was the highest in the 20-24 age group, where prime male slaves accounted for over 30 % of the total number of prime slaves, and women less than 14 %. The difference was much less pronounced in the case of the 15-19 and 30-34 groups. In the «near-prime» price group, the sex percentage was close to equal in all age group. The differences are related to the African internal demand for slaves: young women of child-bearing age were more easily absorbed into the master society than young males.

It would be easy to assume that age was the determining variable in determining the price of the slaves and that most males or females in their early twenties can be considered «prime», which is far from true. The average price of the slaves bought in Arguim in May-December 1519 and January-March 1520 was 10.4 *dobras*<sup>107</sup>, reflecting the age and quality composition of the slaves at the peak of the Arguim slave trade volume and providing as a key indicator of the quality and possible resale value of the slaves in Portugal. There was a demand for both prime slaves and for low-priced children and adolescents in southern Europe. However, only a segment of the male and female slave were could be easily funneled into physically intensive tasks, such as field labour.

106. Source: ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 889, ff. 3v-53v and 74-88v (Arguim factory), 54-72 (expedition to the mainland), summarized in Table 4. See note 104 for comments on additional research not reflected in Graph 1.

107. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 889, ff. 3v-53v and 74-88v (Arguim factory), 54-72 (expedition to the mainland).

The Portuguese were able to buy slaves from the groups of most interest to them, merely not exclusively so.

The records demonstrate that the condition of each slave, regardless of age, was given a careful consideration by small «committee», which would include of the captain/factor or a person in command of an trading expedition and factory scribe or another person acting in that capacity. They would be assisted by the *jagarafe dos negros*, an important staff member who as a rule commanded several languages spoken by the sellers and the slaves and thus was able to inquire about the personal history of the individual slaves and either be told or determine their physical age. The *jagarafe* was paid by the Portuguese Crown at the rate of 8,000 *réis* per year in slaves<sup>108</sup>. Aggregate number do not reflect well the broad range of valuation of slaves of the same sex and age. Table 6 breaks the aggregates figures offered in Table 4 to reflect the pricing of individual slaves, as based on their sex, age and deemed condition.

Table 6. Arguim, May to December 1519: Age, Sex and Price in Detail<sup>109</sup>

Sex	Age	Dobras														Truck	Total	
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15			
Males	0-3																	
	4				1													1
	5			1	1												2	4
	6			4	2												2	8
	7			2	3												2	7
	8							1									2	3
	9			2	1	5	5	1									3	17
	10		1		3	1	6	6	2	1								20
	11							1										1
	12				1	3	3	4	4	4								19
	13	1						1										2
	14					1	1	1	3									6
	15				2	3	3	8	6	8		3	4	1			1	39
	16				1				2	7	2	7	3	1	1			24
	17									2	2	1	9	3	10			27

108. ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 888, f. 112.

109. Source: ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 889, ff. 3v-53v and 74-88v (Arguim factory), 54-72 (expedition to the mainland).

Sex	Age	Dobras														Truck	Total
Males		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
	18								2		4	6	5	6	19	2	44
	19									1							1
	20				1		1	7		11	7	13	17	14	65	1	137
	21																
	22											1	1		1		3
	23											2			1		3
	24												1		2		3
	25							2		2	1	1	7	12	25	1	51
	26				5		7	3		4	2	2	2	3	8		36
	27												1		5		6
	28				1	3					1				1		6
	29																
	30	1		2		1		2		4	1	3	2	6	8	2	32
	35			1				1								2	4
	40		1		1											1	3
	Total	2	2	12	23	17	26	38	19	44	20	39	52	46	146	21	507

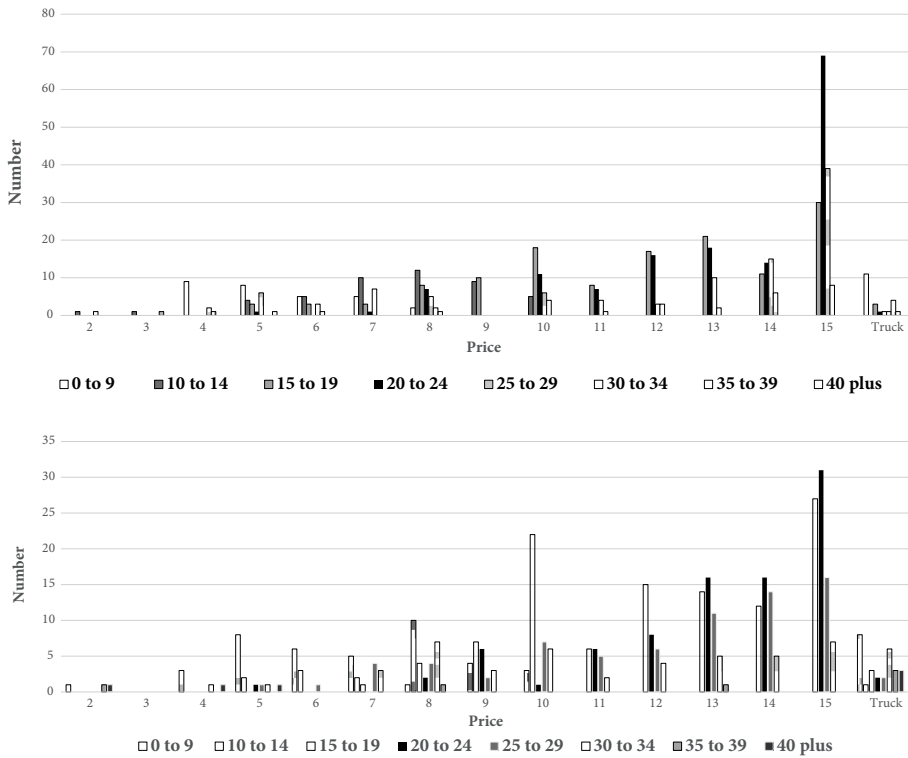
Sex	Age	Dobras														Truck	Total
Female		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
	0-3																
	4															1	1
	5	1		1												1	3
	6			1	1	1										2	5
	7			1	4	1										4	10
	8				1		2										3
	9				2	4	3	1									10
	10				1		2	8								1	12
	11																
	12				1	3		2	1	3							10
	13								1								1
	14								2								2
	15							4	7	9	3	5			2	1	31
	16									5		1	4	1	1	1	13



Sex	Age	Dobras															Truck	Total
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15			
Female	17									6	2	3	6	4	6	1	28	
	18						1			2	1	5	4	7	17		37	
	19											1			1		2	
	20				1			2	5	1	3	7	15	16	21	2	73	
	21																	
	22								1		1	1	1		5		9	
	23										1				2		3	
	24										1				3		4	
	25						1					3	1	7	8	1	21	
	26					1	1	3	1	6	3		6	5	6	1	33	
	27						1	1				2	2	1			7	
	28				1		1		1	1	2	1	2	1	1		11	
	29														1		1	
	30			1	1		3	7	3	6	2	4	5	5	7	6	50	
	35	1						1					1			2	5	
	37															1	1	
	40	1		1	1											3	6	
	Total	3		5	14	10	15	29	22	39	19	33	47	47	81	28	392	

The valuation of the slaves differ sufficiently widely to suggest that a considerable attention was devoted to each purchase. For example, while a male of twenty years could be assumed to qualify as a «prime» slave – any many did – he could also be bought for as little as 5 or 7 *dobras*. Similarly, the price of a woman in her late thirties could range from 2 *dobras* (the minimum) and 13 *dobras*. The price ranges are broad enough to caution against any generalization based on an age group alone, as reflected by the structural complexity visualized in Graphs 2.1 and 2.2.

The pricing of women with children in arms presents a very good illustration. Infants and children younger than three years were sold with their mothers, encumbering the mother's ability to work. This consideration did not seem to influence the price at which the mother was assessed but her condition did. The price of a mother in the early twenties carrying a baby ranged from full 15 *dobras* to a low of 9 *dobras*, the price of a mother in her thirties from 14 to 4 *dobras*.



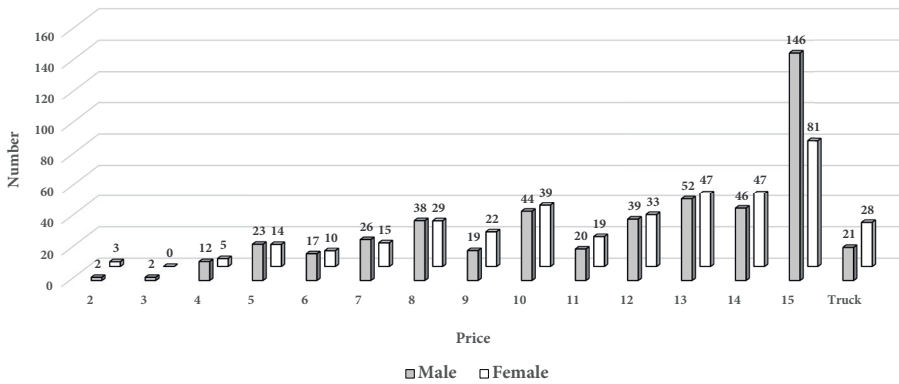
Graphs 2.1 and 2.2. Arguim, May to December 1519: Prices of Male and Female Slave by Age Group<sup>110</sup>

Table 7. Prices (in dobras) of Women with Children from 0 to 3 Years. Arguim, May 1519 to March 1520<sup>111</sup>

Age Group	Dobras								
	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	7	4
15 to 19						1			
20 to 24	3	1		1			1		
25 to 29	1	2	2		1	1	1		
30 plus		1	1	1				1	1

110. Source: Table 4.

111. Source: ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 889, ff. 15r, 35r, 46r, 47v, 48v, 51r, 51v, 60r, 63r, 63v, 67r, 69r, 71r, 72r, 79r, 87r.



Graph 3. Arguim, May – December 1519: Prices of Slaves by Sex<sup>112</sup>

The combination of age and condition of the individual slave was the key determinant of the purchase price and an indicator of the market for which they might be best suited, at least in the short and intermediate term. The price itself is also an indicator of the risk of money invested into each slave. Low price for a slave from a category normally attracting high prices suggested a high-risk purchase. Graph 3 provides visualization to the broad range of pricing involved in the 1519 slave purchases in Arguim.

The combination of age and condition of the slaves influenced the changes of surviving the Atlantic crossing to Portugal, and even more so to the Caribbean. The first documented voyage from Arguim to Puerto Rico left with 68 slaves but landed with only 54, losing 30.6% in transit. If 25% of the survivors were prime slaves, the owners could expect a strong profit margin on only 14 slaves out of the original 68. In the hypothetical eventuality that the contract holders had been able to export 4,300 slaves from Arguim to Spanish America, as granted by the 1519 license, the trans-Atlantic crossing would likely claim a third of them. This does not include those who would have arrived seriously ill. Of the survivors, at the most 25% would have been prime slaves (753 men and women) category would constituted the group most likely to generate satisfactory profit, representing only 17.5% of the original exports.

Despite the promise of a likely success, the 1519-1524 venture to supply slaves to the Spanish America relying on the Arguim outpost as the point of provenance was bound to fail because of the limitations set by geographical realities, logistical issues, and patterns of supply and demand. Arguim was

112. Source: ANTT: Núcleo Antigo, 889, ff. 3v-53v and 74-88v (Arguim factory), 54-72 (expedition to the mainland), summarized in Tables 4 and 5. Additional research, which included previously unavailable folios of Núcleo Antigo 888, added 28 slaves, which are not reflected in Graph 3. See Elbl (2022, Appendix 2).

isolated in a physically hostile setting, and was dependent on the supply of slaves, essential victuals, and trade goods over long distances. In the absence of a good harbor and port facilities, the logistics of embarkation and disembarkation were fraught with difficulties. Most importantly, however, even at the peak of its slave trade volume, Arguim could not provide the number of slaves the contract holders were expected to deliver to Spanish America because the high volume of the exports could only be achieved by compromising on the quality. It is not surprising that both sides were frustrated with each other two years into the contract and that it was abandoned. The Portuguese Crown could not deliver the number of high-quality slaves that Juan Fernández de Castro and his Genoese partners assumed would be forthcoming, and who then in return would not honour the expected payments.