

Cartographic Representations of the South Atlantic in the luso-brazilian cartography: cartographers and the spatial dynamics of the slave trade XVIII–XIX

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As well as the upheavals caused overseas by the Thirty Years War in the seventeenth century, the Treaty of Utrecht, the Seven Years War and the Napoleonic expansion changed the South and North Atlantic commercial networks configurations, and redefined the sea routes and the commercial interest in global scale. In the case of the Portuguese empire, the structural transformation of the slave trade, triggered by the creation of Pombal trading companies, meant the incorporation of the eastern coast of Africa in Atlantic slave trade networks, as can be seen in cartographic coeval documentation.

By the end of the 18th Century the European ports and factories in Africa were fully recorded by the cartographers from Portuguese America with great accuracy, spreading out important nautical and geographical information. Comparing the maps of different maritime empires, what can we deduce about the transformation of the South and North Atlantic commercial networks? What are the differences between the Luso-brazilian mapping and European cartography in the same period? We seek to highlight the circulation of the military, ethnographic and mercantile information. I will try to underline the heuristic potential of the cartographic sources for the study of the slave trade in the second half of the 18th Century.

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