

Demography, Epidemics, and Trade: The Case of Caconda, 1830-1869

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OF THE AUTHOR

Over the last few decades, the transition from slaving trading to “legitimate” commerce has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention.¹ This clearly evidences the historical significance of the shift, which unfolded during different periods of the 19th century in different parts of western Africa. Not every aspect of the transition has, however, received the same scrutiny. Its demographic impact, for example, has almost completely escaped analysis. The reasons for such neglect may well lie in the difficult, sometimes impossible, task of locating appropriate demographic data relating to the period before the late 1800s. Nevertheless, this is not a uniform problem across all of Atlantic Africa.

Indeed, sources required to carry out pre-1900 demographic analysis are far from scarce in the case of the Portuguese colony of Angola. Here they are rather plentiful. For the period between the late 1700s and 1844, for example, over 350 of the censuses that were produced on an almost annual basis on each of the major port-towns and nearly every interior region under effective or nominal Portuguese control are still extant.² The production of censuses continued at a slower pace well into the late 1800s, resulting in proportionately fewer of these post-1844 sources. Nonetheless, what has survived turns Angola into a particularly propitious landscape where the demographic impact of the transition from slaving to legitimate commerce can be investigated in considerable detail, whether on a colony-wide level or in each of the major port-towns and the areas in their respective hinterlands.³ This is not only important in and by itself. Angola also happens to be one of those landscapes where the shift has remained understudied.⁴ With the wealth of census data available, this part of the

¹ The first lengthy analysis of the topic is found in Martin A. Klein, “Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Legitimate Commerce in Late Nineteenth-Century Africa,” *Études d'histoire africaine*. 2 (1971), 5-28. For a collection of more recent studies, listing much of the scholarly literature, see Robin Law, ed. *From Slave Trade to “legitimate” commerce. The Commercial transition in the Nineteenth –Century West Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. See also the studies listed in footnote 4 below.

² José C. Curto, “Sources for the Pre-1900 Population History of Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Angola, 1773-1845,” *Annales de démographie historique* (1994), 319-338.

³ See, for example, the case study in José C. Curto, “The Anatomy of a Demographic Explosion: Luanda, 1844-1850,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 32 (1999) 381-405.

⁴ The studies that deal with the topic in part or at length are: N. de Kun, “La vie et le voyage de Ladislav Magyar dans l'intérieur du Congo en 1850-1852,” *Bulletin des Sciences de l'Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer*. Nouvelle Série, 4 (1960), 605-636; Alfred Hauenstein, “Les voyages en caravane des Tjika,” *Anthropos*. 59 (1964) 926-932; Joseph C. Miller, “Cokwe Trade and Conquest,” in Richard Gray and David Birmingham, eds., *Pre-Colonial Trade in Central Africa*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 175-201; Herman Possinger, “Interrelations Between Economic and Social Change in Rural Africa: The Case of the Ovimbundu,” in Franz-Wilhelm Heimer, ed., *Social Change in Angola*. Munich, 1973, pp. 32-52; Fola Soremekun, “Trade and Dependency in Central Africa: The Ovimbundu in the Nineteenth Century,” in Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons, eds., *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977, pp. 82-96; Jean-Luc Vellut, “Diversification de l'économie de cuillette: mièl et cire dans

continent can thus be given the same attention as West Africa, upon which most studies have concentrated.

My intention in this contribution is to focus on the demographic impact of the transition from slaving to legitimate commerce in Caconda from the ban on the Atlantic slave trade in early 1830 until the end of the 1860s. During these four decades, this region experienced not only a profound economic transformation. Indeed, this very shift resulted in a number of other important changes. One was in its population make-up. The transition to legitimate commerce brought with it a different demographic configuration. Another, inter-related with the first, was epidemiological. The combination of the post-1830 illegal slave trade and the growing legitimate commerce significantly expanded trade routes from Caconda, which opened the area to a series of intense epidemics. Demography, epidemics, and trade were all in motion during this transitory period. My objective is to explore how they interface with one another.

SOURCES

Before proceeding, however, let us deal with the question of documentation. Some decades ago, Douglas L. Wheeler stated that “statistics are scarce for population before the coming of the 20th century.”⁵ Such a conclusion was, to say the least, premature. The Portuguese colonial administration actually produced an abundance of records, population data included, documenting their contacts and presence in West Central Africa before the late nineteenth century. In the case of Caconda, there are eleven extant censuses relating to the period under consideration: 1830, 1831, 1832⁶ and 1836;⁷ 1844;⁸ 1850 and 1859;⁹ and 1860, 1861, 1866 and 1869.¹⁰ Providing information on the size of the local population, as well as its composition by gender, broad age-groups, place of birth, color, legal condition and

les sociétés de la forêt claire d'Afrique centrale (c. 1750-1950),” *African Economic History*. 7 (1979,) 93-112; William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *Slaves, Peasants, and Capitalists in Southern Angola (1840-1926)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; idem, “Capital accumulation and class formation in Angola,” in David Birmingham and Phyllis Martin, eds. *History of Central Africa*. New York: Longman, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 163-199; Linda M. Heywood, “Production, Trade and Power: The Political Economy of Central Angola, 1850-1930,” Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1984; and Isabel C. Henriques, *Percursos da Modernidade em Angola: Dinâmicas comerciais e transformações sociais no século XIX*. Lisbon: IICT, 1997; Maria Emília Madeira dos Santos. *Nos Caminhos da África: serventia e posse. Angola no século XIX*. Lisbon: IICT, 1998; Maria Emilia Madeira Santos, “Abolição do tráfico de escravos e reconversão da economia de Angola: um confronto participado por “brasileiros”, *Studia*, 52 (1994), pp. 221-244; and Susan J. Herlin, “Brazil and the Commercialization of Kongo, 1840-1870,” in José C. Curto and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds. *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery*. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, in press.

⁵ Douglas L. Wheeler, “A Note on smallpox in Angola, 1670-1875,” *Studia*, 13/14(1964), p. 351.

⁶ I would like to thank José C. Curto, who kindly made these this part of his research available to me. These early 1830s censuses are found in Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU), Angola: Cx. 165, Doc. 58; Cx. 174, Doc. 21; Cx. 177, Doc. 11.

⁷ “Mapa do presídio de Caconda relativo ao estado do ano próximo pasado de 1836,” Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU), Angola, Correspondencia dos Governadores, 1^a Secção, Pasta 1, 1835.

⁸ J. Lopes de Lima, *Ensaio Sobre a Statistica das Possessões Portuguezas*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1846, Vol. III, Part I, p. 4-a. This census, which exists now only in published form, has been usually attributed to 1845. However, when its first publication date is considered along with what is known about the pre-1850 production of censuses in Angola, there is little doubt that it relates to the year end of 1844. See José C. Curto and Raymond R. Gervais, “The Population History of Luanda During the Late Atlantic Slave Trade, 1781-1844,” *African Economic History* 29 (2001), 1-59.

⁹ See, respectively: “Mappa Statistico da população aproximada da Cidade de S. Filippe de Benguela e suas jurisdições...referido ao anno de 1850 a 1851,” *Almanak statistico da provincia de Angola e suas dependencias para o ano de 1852*. Luanda: Imprensa do Governo, 1851, p. 9; and Eduardo A. De Sá Nogueira Pinto de Balsemão “Concelho de Caconda,” *Annaes do Conselho Ultramarino*, Parte Não Oficial, Serie III, June 1862, p. 48, with the summary by Bernardo Diogo de Brito, Commander of Caconda, of the census refering to 1859.

¹⁰ “Mapa Statístico do distrito de Benguela segundo os dados fornecidos pela Camara e Chefes dos Concelhos,” Arquivo Histórico Nacional de Angola (AHNA), Cx. 5568; Boletim Oficial de Angola, 1863, n. 7; and AHU, Angola, Correspondencia dos Governadores, 2 secção, Pasta 2 (old numeration).

occupation, these sources offer a rich body of documentation. They constitute the primary evidence around which this paper is based.

As with all demographic data, the mid-1800s censuses of Caconda are not unproblematic. From the late 1700s onwards, when census-taking was implemented throughout the Portuguese colony of Angola, the process of counting people involved two major objectives: for colonial administrators to know how many individuals were available in any given landscape for its defence and so that they could be duly taxed. In mid-nineteenth Angola, these objectives meant that not everyone was necessarily enumerated in any given year. Coverage in the annual population figures should thus not be viewed as all-inclusive. However, this by itself does not invalidate the censuses as appropriate sources of information.¹¹ A time-series as relatively significant as the mid-1800s Caconda censuses can yield important insights on population structures especially when we fall back upon trend analysis.¹²

Yet another caveat that needs to be kept in mind is that the mid-1800s censuses relating to Caconda are far from uniform. Indeed, this was period in which census-taking within this region, as indeed throughout all of Angola, was in a state of flux. In sharp contrast to the period from the late 1790s to 1836, subsequent census-takers neither followed the same guidelines from one year to the next, nor were censuses necessarily undertaken at the beginning of any given year to represent the population at the end of the previous year.¹³ For example, while the 1830s censuses includes data on of gender, color, marital status, birthplace, broad age-groups, legal condition, and occupation, that of 1844 covers only categories of color, legal status, and gender. Similarly, while the censuses of 1850 and 1859 provide information on gender, color, broad-age groups, and legal status, that of 1860 offers but data on gender, color and legal condition. The censuses for 1861, 1866 and 1869 censuses, in turn, were quite different from those of previous years. All were uniform, providing information, on gender, broad age-groups, civil status, and legal condition, amongst other things. Nevertheless, while the traditional color classification was replaced that of country of birth, the last census in the series offered no data at all on enslaved individuals. Such varying classifications make it impossible to draw upon all of the data from one census year to the next. Consequently, we will focus upon the categories that lend themselves to analysis during the whole period under consideration: total population size, gender, color, and legal condition.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Caconda was founded during the early 1680s by the Portuguese as a *presidio* (military-administrative area centered around a fortress) inland from Benguela, Angola's second most important coastal town until the early 20th century. Initially located in the lands of the Hanyá, the *presidio* was transferred in the second half of the 1760s further west to the very edge of the central plateau,¹⁴ densely inhabited by peoples that later would identify themselves as Ovimbundu. Its *raison d'être* was to foster trade from the plateau by providing safe passage through foreign territory and to provide a base from which *sertanejos* and

¹¹ Highlighting that some *sobas*, in Angola, refused to allow census-takers to enumerate the population inhabiting areas under their control, John K. Thornton has stressed that "we should therefore be extremely wary of using census to make estimates of the total population of the area, although this does not mean that the value of the document is lessened with regard to the structure of the population". See his "The Slave Trade in Eighteenth century Angola: Effects on Demographic Structures," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 14 (3), 1980, p. 418.

¹² For a recent application of this methodology in an Angolan setting see Curto and Gervais, "Population History of Luanda."

¹³ See Curto, "Sources for the Pre-1900 Population History of Sub-Saharan Africa."

¹⁴ On this transfer, see Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Códices 8553.

pombeiros, backed financially from Benguela, could further tap the densely populated interior for slaves. This attempt at controlling trade between the coast and the interior was, from the very beginning, based upon the commercialisation of human beings required in Benguela to supply the ever-increasing demand for slaves in the Atlantic world.¹⁵ The overwhelming majority of slaves descending from the plateau to Benguela passed through this *presidio*, as did the trade goods from the coast required to obtain them further inland.¹⁶

By 1830, however, the relationship between Caconda and the Atlantic world had begun to change. Bowing to British pressure, the Brazilian government had committed itself on November 23, 1826, to outlaw slave imports from Africa as of March of 1830.¹⁷ Given that Brazil represented the single most important market for slaves exported from Angola, particularly Benguela, whose slave exports were almost exclusively destined for Rio de Janeiro, such a ban spelled economic ruin for the colony in general and specifically commercial entrepôts like Caconda that were totally dependent upon the trade.¹⁸ Then, six years later the Portuguese government decreed the abolition of the slave exports from its African possessions.¹⁹ During the first half of the 1830s, slave exports from Benguela choked momentarily. But they did not end, since an illegal trade in slaves soon emerged.²⁰ Gustav Tams, a German doctor who visited the port town in 1841, was told by several local dealers that nearly 20,000 captives had been exported therefrom in 1838.²¹ Although this figure seems exaggerated in light of what is known of the illegal slave trade from Benguela, most of these captives would still have been acquired by *sertanejos* and *pombeiros* based in or transiting through the corridor of Caconda. It was only after 1850, when the Brazilian government began to seriously tackle the problem of slave imports, that the slave trade from Benguela came to an end,²² with the role of Caconda as the commercial entrepôt for many of the captives descending the plateau for export to the Atlantic dissipating in the process.

In the 1830s, while both slave exporters in Benguela and their *sertanejo* and *pombeiro* partners in Caconda slowly moved their formerly legal commercial operations into an illegal context, they also began to diversify into more “legitimate” commodities. This shift was given an important impetus in 1836 when the Portuguese government withdrew the crown monopoly over ivory exported from Angola.²³ Along with this commodity, others like

¹⁵ It has been estimated that over eighty-two years between 1730 and 1828, a total of 399,267 slaves were exported from the port town of Benguela. See José C. Curto, “The Legal Portuguese Slave Trade from Benguela, Angola, 1730-1828: A Quantitative Re-appraisal,” *Africa* (Universidade de São Paulo). Nos. 16-17, 1993-1994, pp. 101-116.

¹⁶ David Birmingham, *Trade and conflict in Angola. The Mbundu and their neighbors under the influence of the Portuguese, 1483-1790*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966, p. 138. One of the more important of these items was the Brazilian cane brandy popularly known throughout Angola as *gerebita*. On this latter trade good, see José C. Curto, “Luso-Brazilian Alcohol and the Legal Slave Trade at Benguela and its Hinterland, c. 1617-1830,” in Hubert Bonin and Michel Cahen, eds. *Négoce Blanc en Afrique Noire: L'évolution du commerce à longue distance en Afrique noire du 18e au 20e siècles*. Paris: Publications de la Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 2001, pp. 351-369.

¹⁷ This agreement, signed between the British and Brazilian governments on 23 November 1826, was to take effect at the end March 1830.

¹⁸ Ralph Delgado, *Famosa e Histórica Benguela: Catálogo dos Governadores (1779 a 1940)*, Lisboa: Cosmos, 1940, p. 101.

¹⁹ David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 211-215.

²⁰ See Graph I.

²¹ Gustav Tams, *Visit to the Portuguese Possessions in South-Western Africa*. New York: Negro University Press, 1969, Vol. 1, p. 97.

²² See Graph I

²³ Tito Omboni, who passed by Benguela in February of 1835, but published his travelogue only eleven years later, allowed him to add further information in between, states that this free ivory trade was the second most profitable commercial activity after illegal slaving. See his *Viaggi Nell'Africa Occidentale: Già Medico di Consiglio Nel Regno d'Angola e Sue Dipendenze Membro Della R. Accademia Peloritana di Messina*. Milan: Civelli, 1846), p. 75.

beeswax, gum-copal, orchill weed, and later rubber came to be subsequently shipped in increasingly large volumes through Benguela to supply the expanding industries in the North Atlantic world. And to obtain these “legitimate” goods from the deep in the interior of West Central Africa, the traders in this port town continued to rely heavily upon their *sertanejos* and *pombeiros* based in Caconda well into the 1850s. In 1852, that most famous of the *sertanejos*, Silva Porto, opened a more direct trade route from the kingdom of Mbailundo on the plateau through Kisanje and Kivula to the coast.²⁴ The traditional role of Caconda as the only springboard into the central highlands and beyond thereafter began to wane. Nevertheless, it remained an important corridor in the trade between the coast and the southern areas of the plateau.²⁵

The simultaneous transitions to illegal slaving and legitimate commerce had profound effects upon Benguela and throughout its hinterland. Although operating much like its predecessor, the illegal trade was quite different in at least one aspect. While legal slaving involved predominantly male captives, female slaves predominated during the post-1830 period.²⁶ Slaves could, of course, be made to walk on their own two feet. But that was not the case with ivory, beeswax, gum-copal orchill-weed, or rubber. Lacking beasts of burden, traders throughout central Angola first drew upon a traditional method: forcing the slaves descending from the plateau to carry the legitimate goods. As the appetite of the expanding industries of the North Atlantic grew, however, they then began to mount long-distance caravans with ever increasing numbers of porters to seek these commodities from continuously retreating sources further and further inland. Both the specific gender requirement of the illegal slave trade and the different needs arising from long-distance trade transformed the population of Caconda.

THE POPULATION OF CACONDA IN FLUX

As Graph I shows, the population of Caconda underwent significant shifts during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Between 1830 and 1844, the total population remained relatively stable at about 22,000.²⁷ During the second half of the 1840s, on the other hand, its numbers increased significantly, reaching roughly 60,000 by 1850. Thereafter, the total population entered a prolonged period of decline, culminating in just some 12,000 individuals enumerated in 1866. The following years in this decade were characterized by a rapid demographic recovery, with the population reaching about 28,000 by 1869. Regardless of these fluctuations, this was a population made up almost exclusively by black Africans, as Graph II shows. *Pardos* (mulattos) always represented a small minority within Caconda. And white individuals were few and far in between. Consequently, it was the black population that was most affected by demographic change.

In terms of gender, both males and females saw their respective group undergo significant demographic transformations, as Graph III evidences. From 1830 through 1836, for example, women maintained a ratio of roughly 2 to 1 over males.²⁸ But this preponderance

²⁴ See Maria Emília Madeira Santos, ed. *Viagens e Apontamentos de um Portuense em África*. Coimbra: Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra, 1986, pp. 70-71.

²⁵ Commander Brito in Balsemão, “Concelho de Caconda,” p. 48 informs that Caconda remained in the mid-1800s an important corridor for the movement of beeswax from Ngalenge to Benguela. On the other hand, Jill Dias, “Criando um Novo Brasil (1845-1870),” in Valentim Alexandre and Jill Dias. *O Império Africano, 1825-1890*. Lisbon: Estampa, 1998, p. 459, points out that Caconda in the late 1870s continued as a significant market for slaves descending from the plateau.

²⁶ David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp.174.

²⁷ Indeed, this stability was a carry over from the second half of the 1820s. The Caconda censuses of 1825 and 1827 both list the total population in the range of 22,000. See, AHU, Angola, 1 secção, Cx. 150 Doc. 17, and Cx. 159 Doc. 55.

²⁸ This too was a carry over from the second half of the 1820s. See the 1825 and 1827 Caconda censuses listed in the preceding note, which also give a ratio of about 2 women per male.

of did not last. Thereafter, the number of females decreased dramatically. By 1844, almost three-quarters of their 1830s overall total had vanished. The remaining 1840s, a period of general demographic growth, was to see the number of women multiply roughly by an even more impressive factor of almost 7. But even then, they were unable to attain their former demographic weight. Indeed, while the number of women was rapidly declining between 1836 and 1844, that of males more than doubled and continued to rise appreciably until 1850. The end result was that gender ratio of Caconda's population was subsequently much better balanced, reaching near equal proportions.

With respect to legal condition, as Graph IV illustrates, the majority of Caconda's population was free by 1830. These free individuals experienced demographic mutations similar to those of the total population over the period under consideration. But over time, their proportional weight within the population of Caconda also increased. This process was already in motion by 1844, culminating with only free persons were enumerated in 1869. The enslaved population, on the other hand, experienced a radically different pattern. Although comprising a significant proportion of the total population from 1830 to 1836,²⁹ the number of slaves had fallen appreciably by 1844. A period of temporary demographic growth took place in the late 1840s and early 1850s. But thereafter the number of enslaved persons again tumbled, especially in the late 1850s and early 1860s, until this classification completely disappeared from the censuses.

As Graph V clearly shows, the slave population of Caconda was color specific. Slaves were overwhelming black Africans. Few *pardos* ever found themselves in this condition, as was indeed the case throughout Angola. Nevertheless, this black enslaved population did experience important demographic mutations over the four decades under scrutiny. As evidenced in Graph VI, males predominated within this population group from 1830 through 1836 by a ratio of 2 to 1 over enslaved women.³⁰ Beginning with 1844, however, the enslaved gender ratio essentially equaled out. This was true during 1850, when the number of enslaved appears to have reached its height, as well as following 1860 when the institution seems to have evaporated.³¹

TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION OF CACONDA'S DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

By the late 1820s, slave merchants and local authorities, both African and Portuguese, were already in the midst of reorganizing their commercial activities, since the impending closure of Brazil slave imports threatened to eliminate what had been the single largest market for captives descending from the central plateau to Benguela.³² Nevertheless, the population of Caconda appears to have experienced few demographic changes, with both overall size and gender make-up of the population continuing almost the same between 1830 and 1836.³³ Such stability was most likely the result of the female specific illegal slave export trade and the male specific long distance trade having required a number of years to shift into first gear.

²⁹ The number of slaves within the total population seems to have been on the rise during the second half of the 1802s: between 1825 and 1827, their proportion jumped from one-quarter to slightly over one-third. See, AHU, Angola, 1 secção, Cx. 150, Doc. 17, and Cx. 159, Doc. 55.

³⁰ This seems to have originated in the late 1820s. In 1825, female slaves still outnumbered enslaved males by a ratio of 3 to 2. By 1827, on the other, slave men outnumbered enslaved women by a ratio of 3 to 1. See, AHU, Angola, 1 secção, Cx. 150, Doc. 17, and Cx. 159, Doc. 55.

³¹ The 1855 *Livro de Registro de Escravos* of Caconda, AHNA, Códice 3159, shows 278 male and 309 female slaves.

³² Joseph C. Miller, "The Number, Origins, and Destinations of Slaves, in the Eighteenth Century Angolan Slave Trade," in Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley L. Engerman, eds. *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992, p. 100.

³³ In the 1827, the total population of Caconda was of 22,262 people, while in 1830 it was 22,113.

Between 1836 and 1844, on the other hand, women, who had previously constituted the bulk of Caconda's inhabitants, saw their numbers greatly reduced. This seems to have been part of an intensive outward migration that, with the end of legal slave exports from Benguela, was initiated by a variety of local landowners who, without as many captives descending from the plateau, relocated their agricultural operations elsewhere.³⁴ Since women, both free and enslaved, were at the very basis of agricultural production, it would thus have been they who were at the very center of this outward migration, thereby explaining the losses of the late 1830s and 1840s. Almost simultaneously, however, there was an even larger in-flux of free males between 1836 and 1844. The factors leading to such a significant influx of males remain obscure. One possibility is that a male centered plantation economy was already being set up. But this was also a period of increasing long distance caravans, comprised principally by male porters, searching for legitimate goods deep in West Central Africa. A large influx of males to work in the caravan trade would thus have been required, since Caconda persisted as the only base through which the central plateau could be reached.

The remainder of the 1840s saw the population of Caconda multiply almost threefold, with the number of males nearly doubling and that of females rising by a factor of roughly 7. Such a significant increase could not have been the result of natural reproduction. It could only have resulted from a massive in-migration. Part of this large increase involved slaves, with female captives rising from about 1,800 to roughly 10,300 and enslaved males from 1,600 to some 10,100. As Graph I illustrates this was the last leg of the illegal slave trade from Benguela. In other words, massive numbers of slaves who would otherwise have been shipped into the Atlantic world seem to have been retained in Caconda. At the same time that this process was coming to a close, the quest for legitimate goods reached new heights. Indeed, in the second half of the 1840s, Portuguese colonial authorities enacted a series of policies to stimulate legitimate commerce further and thereby compensate for the losses ensuing from ever decreasing slave exports. Caconda thereby gained in importance as the base from which operated increasing numbers of long distance caravans. With their requirements for porters expanding, these now attracted large numbers of free males and females.

Shortly after the 1850, Caconda began to experience a dramatic population decrease relative to 1844. Part of this decline might well have been the result of disease through the expanding long distance trade. In 1851, for example, the governor of Angola, Adriano Acácio da Silveira Pinto reported that the colony was facing several outbreaks of smallpox.³⁵ He did not, however, specify whether Caconda was affected by this epidemiological event. Similarly, in 1857, José Rodrigues Coelho do Amaral informed that Luanda was facing an intense period of drought, with the usual consequences of starvation and death.³⁶ This may well have affected Caconda too. Yet, disease and drought cannot by themselves explain the totality of demographic losses experienced throughout this decade. A second factor was probably the rise of new economic activities closer to the coast: the collection of orchill-weed which grew abundantly on the trees and bushes within range of the moist sea air; and, especially, the cotton plantations that mushroomed inland from Benguela to Moçamedes.³⁷ Extensively based upon enslaved labor, both of these new activities may well have led to the relocation of a significant proportion of the unusually large slave population in Caconda during the late 1840s and early 1850s. And, last but not least, there was the 1852 opening of the new trade route from the western edges of the plateau through Kivula and Kisanje to the coast. Much shorter than the Caconda route, it was based upon an alliance that Silva Porto had brokered

³⁴ As pointed out by Commander Brito in Balsemão, "Concelho de Caconda," p. 46.

³⁵ AHU, Angola, Correspondência dos Governadores, 1ª Secção, Pasta 17-A.

³⁶ Biblioteca da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa (BSGL), Res 2, mç 6, doc. 8-8.

³⁷ As detailed in John Monteiro, *Angola and the River Congo* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1875), Vol. II, pp. 181-185.

with the king of Bailundu, who offered better security and lower toll taxes for long distance trading within his realm. This led numerous *sertanejos* and *pumbeiros* to relocate in Bailundu on the plateau itself, closer to the sources of the legitimate commodities.³⁸ Along with these *sertanejos* and *pumbeiros* moved not only their free dependents but also their slaves, both male and female. Examples of this kind of movement come from Silva Porto himself, as well as the Hungarian Lazlo Magya who settled in Bailundu in 1849³⁹.

By the end of the 1850s, although a significant proportion of the population had been lost and a new, shorter caravan route had emerged to the north, Caconda nevertheless persisted as an important base for long distance trade operations. With thousands of porters continuing to pass through to the coast from deeper and deeper in West Central Africa, the diseases they carried seem to have become more important upon the demography of Caconda. Between 1860 and 1866, population losses amounted to more than 50%. While a yellow fever epidemic struck Angola in 1860,⁴⁰ Benguela also experienced outbreaks of smallpox between 1861 and 1866.⁴¹ These epidemiological events most certainly affected Caconda, though it is difficult to measure their extent. Monseigneur Keiling, for example, relates hearing a tradition among the Sambo that waves of Bailundu were on the move in the mid-19th century to the region between the Cului and Cunene rivers, escaping epidemics. He specifically highlights the existence of someone called Sambo, which meant “contagious” related to the Bailundu.⁴² But once again, other factors were probably also at play. One was the expansion of slave-based cotton plantations south of Benguela, particularly pronounced until the late 1860s, which could account for much of the disappearance of slaves from Caconda by 1866.⁴³ And of, course, the 1860s was also the decade during which beeswax became a dominant item amongst the legitimate trade goods exported through Benguela, requiring not only more porters, free, freed, and enslaved, but also now a slew of other individuals, including women and children, during their long treks into the interior.⁴⁴

If this was indeed the case, how then can we explain the rapid demographic recovery that took place in Caconda between 1866 and 1869, with the number of its residents

³⁸ See. Alexandre, Valentim e Dias, Jill. *O Império Africano, 1825-1890*. Lisboa: Estampa, 1998, p. 398-402.

³⁹ See Linda Heywood. Porters, Trade, and Power. The politics of Labor in the Central Highlands of Angola, 1850-1914, in Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Paul Lovejoy. *The Workers of African Trade*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985, p. 248.

⁴⁰ Letter by Faustino José de Cabral (Physician-Major of Angola), 03 December, 1860, AHU, Angola, Correspondência dos Governadores, 1^a Secção, Pasta 27.

⁴¹ Faustino José de Cabral, *Relatório sobre a Epidemia de Febre Amarela em Lusanda do anno de 1860*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1861, pp. 27-28, reports cases of yellow fever also in Benguela. On smallpox, see: Ralph Delgado, *A Famosa e Histórica Benguela: Catálogo dos Governadores (1779 a 1940)*. Lisbon: Edições Cosmos, 1940, p. 221; and Saturnino de Souza Oliveira. *Relatório histórico da epidemia de varíola que grassou em Loanda em 1864*. Lisboa: Typhographia universal, 1866.

⁴² Louis Alfredo Keiling, *Quarenta Anos de Africa*. Braga: Edições das Missões de Angola e Congo, n. d., pp. 100-103.

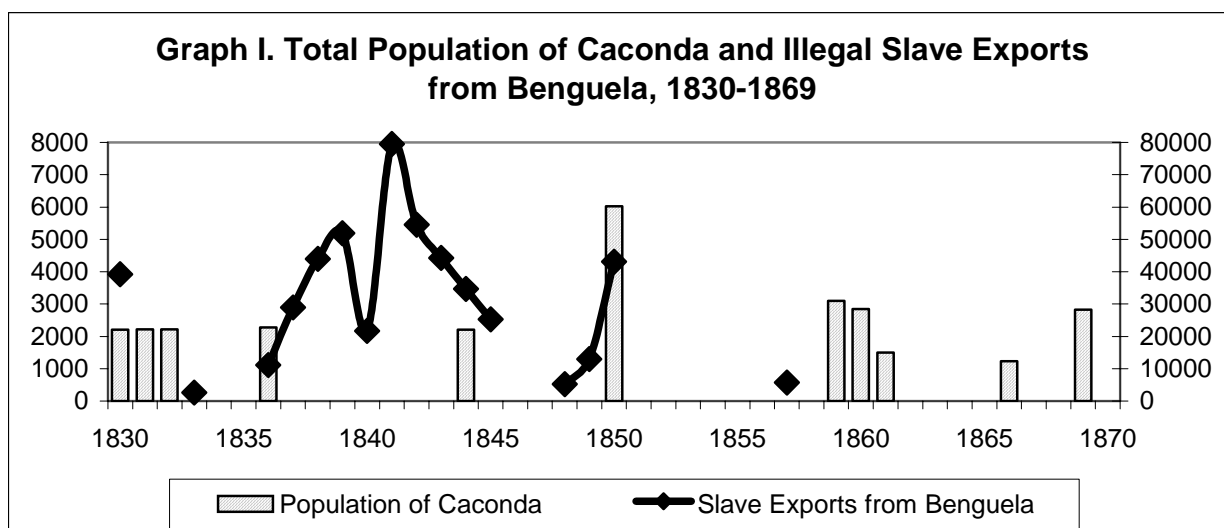
⁴³ By 1866, enslaved people accounted for only 0.87% of the total population. Part of this decrease can be explained by the fact that the institution of slavery in Angola had by then entered a “slow death:” in December of 1854, Sa da Bandeira, the Liberal Minister of the Colonies, ordered all government-owned slaves freed; in 1855-1856, failure to register slaves with the colonial state subsequently turned every non-registered captive into a freed person; in February of 1869, Lisbon decreed all remaining slaves *libertos* (emancipated persons), but with the proviso that they keep on working for their masters and mistresses for another 10 years; then, in the spring of 1876, the status of *liberto* was abolished, with full emancipation scheduled for mid-1878. This official attack upon slavery did result in declining numbers of slaves after the mid-1850s. But in the case of Caconda, not one freed person was registered in its 1861 and 1866 censuses. According to Luiz Jose Mendes Affonso, presidente do conselho do governo slave owners refused to obey the law and continued to hang on to their slaves. *Boletim Oficial de Angola*, n. 39, September 29th, 1866. This suggests that they were being relocated elsewhere.

⁴⁴ J. M. Cerqueira d'Azevedo, *Angola, Exemplo de Trabalho*. (Luanda: Edição do Autor, 1958), pp. 220-369; and Alfredo Margarido, “Les Porteurs: forme de domination et agents de changements en Angola (XVII^e-XIX^e siècles,” *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*. Vol. LXV, 1978, pp. 390-393.

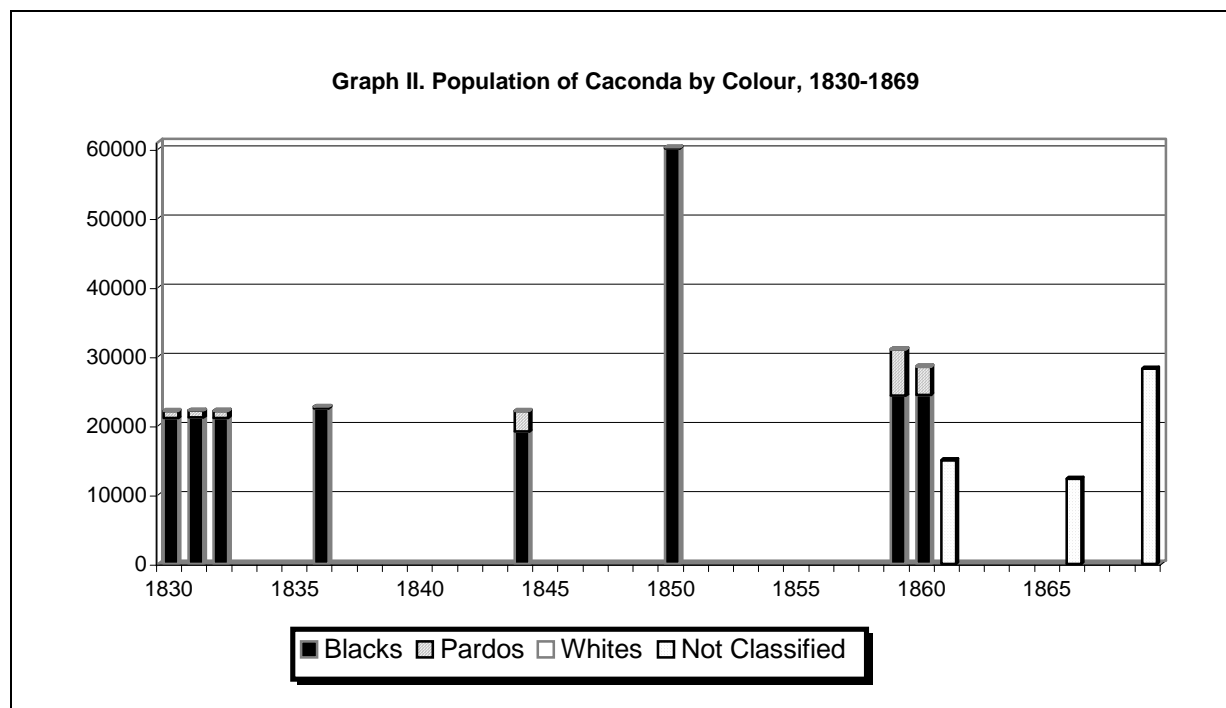
increasing some 133% in just three years? Because of changing classifications, the censuses provide no clue as to which population groups recuperated so fast. All that we can say for sure is that such an increase could not have taken place through natural reproduction. Once again, we seem to be confronting yet another wave of intense in-migration. Were these primarily captives incoming from deep in West Central Africa who, given the official abolitionist stance of the Portuguese colonial government, were not designated as slaves in the censuses? Was this wave of in-migration composed of free people who, following the diseases of 1860-1866, moved back into Caconda? Was it a combination of both of these types of individuals? Or were there some other factors, as yet unidentified, also at play?

CONCLUSION

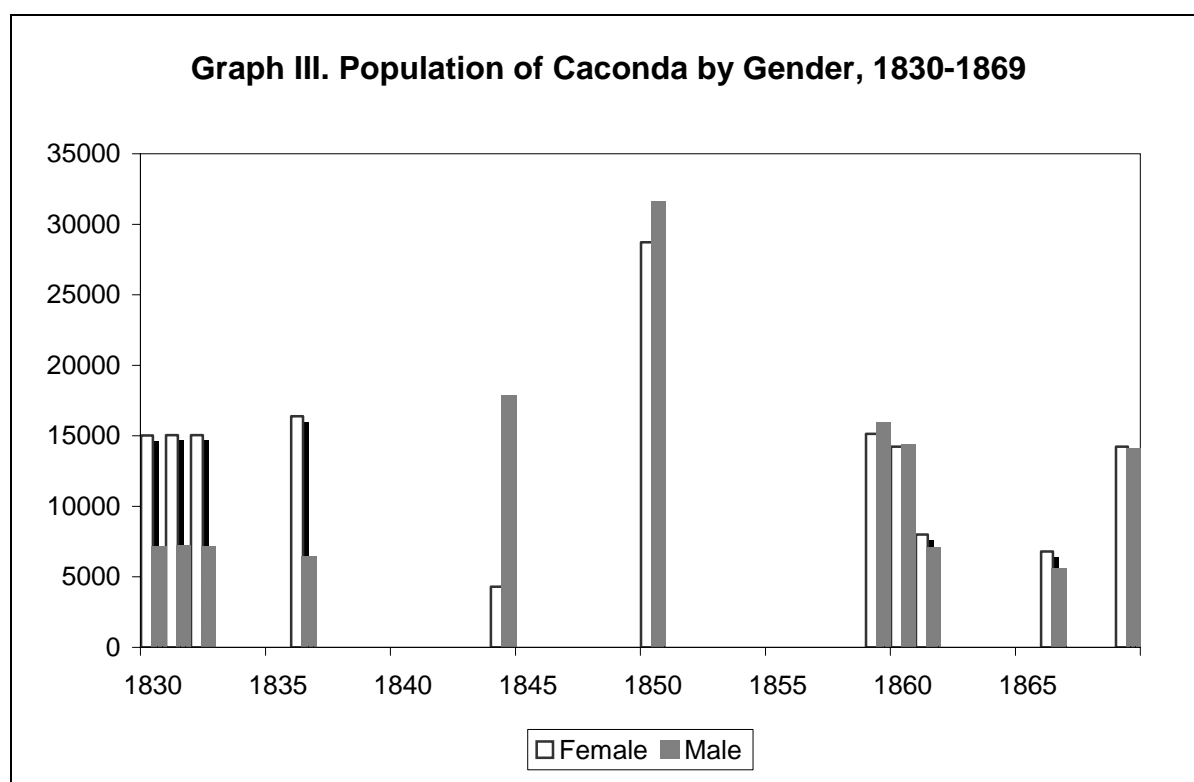
The case of Caconda helps us to problematize the question of demography in West Central Africa. Here, it is difficult to associate demographic decline exclusively with the outbreak of diseases. By 1860, when these epidemiological events became particularly pronounced, the population of Caconda was already under constant change through the interface of a number of factors. Over and beyond disease, the transition from the legal to the illegal transatlantic slave trade was certainly one of these. Another was the longer lasting and even more important transformation to legitimate commerce. As an important commercial entrepot between the central plateau and the port town of Benguela, the demography of Caconda could not but have been significantly affected by the changes overtaking a previously slave-based South Atlantic world.



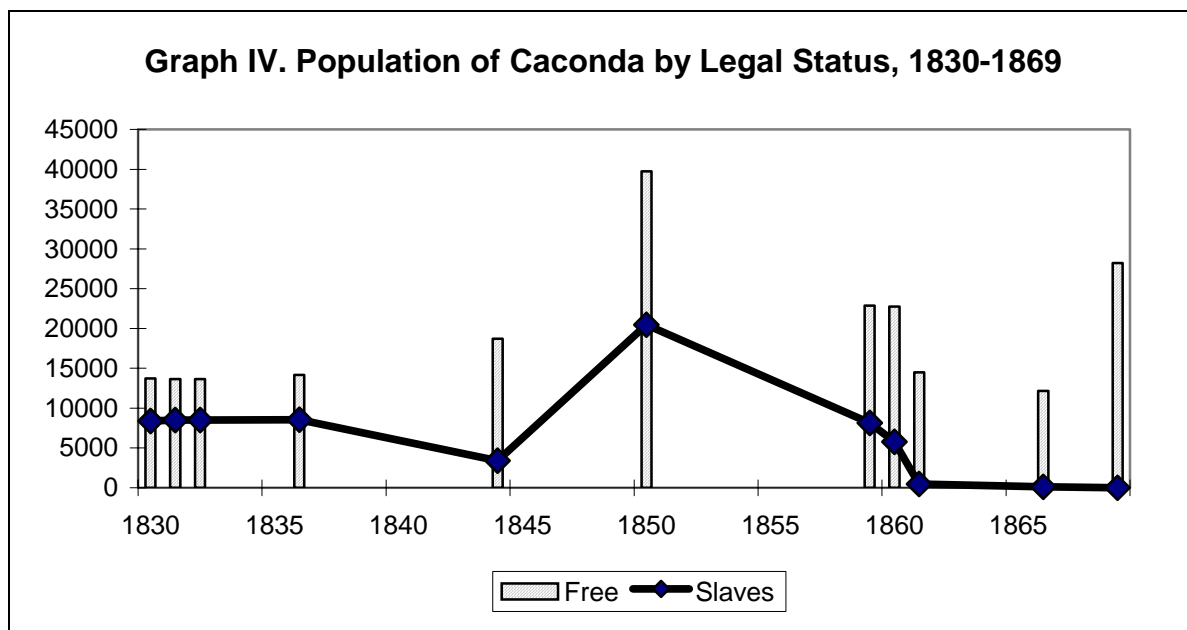
Sources: For the 1830, 1831 and 1832 Caconda censuses see Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU), Angola, 1 secção, Cx. 165, Doc. 58; Cx. 174, Doc. 21; and Cx. 177, Doc. 11 respectively. The 1836 census is available in “Mapa do presídio de Caconda relativo ao estado do ano próximo pasado de 1836,” Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU), Angola, Correspondencia dos Governadores, 1ª Secção, Pasta 1, 1835. For the 1844 census see J. Lopes de Lima, *Ensaio Sobre a Statistica das Possessões Portuguezas*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1846, Vol. III, Part I, p. 4-a. For the 1850 and 1859 censuses see, respectively: “Mappa Statistico da população aproximada da Cidade de S. Filippe de Benguela e suas juridições...referido ao anno de 1850 a 1851,” *Almanak statistico da provincia de Angola e suas dependencias para o ano de 1852*. Luanda: Imprensa do Governo, 1851, p. 9; and Eduardo A. De Sá Nogueira Pinto de Balsemão “Concelho de Caconda,” *Annaes do Conselho Ultramarino*, Parte Não Oficial, Serie III, June 1862, p. 48. For the 1860 census see “Mapa Statístico do distrito de Benguela segundo os dados fornecidos pela Camara e Chefes dos Concelhos,” Arquivo Histórico Nacional de Angola (AHNA), Cx. 5568. The 1861 census is published in *Boletim Oficial de Angola*, 1863, n. 7. For the 1866 and 1869 censuses see, respectively, AHU, Angola, Correspondencia dos Governadores, 2 secção, Pasta 2 and Pasta 40 (old numeration). For the information on illegal slave exportation see David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt, David Richardson and Herbert Klein. *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. A database on CD-Rom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.



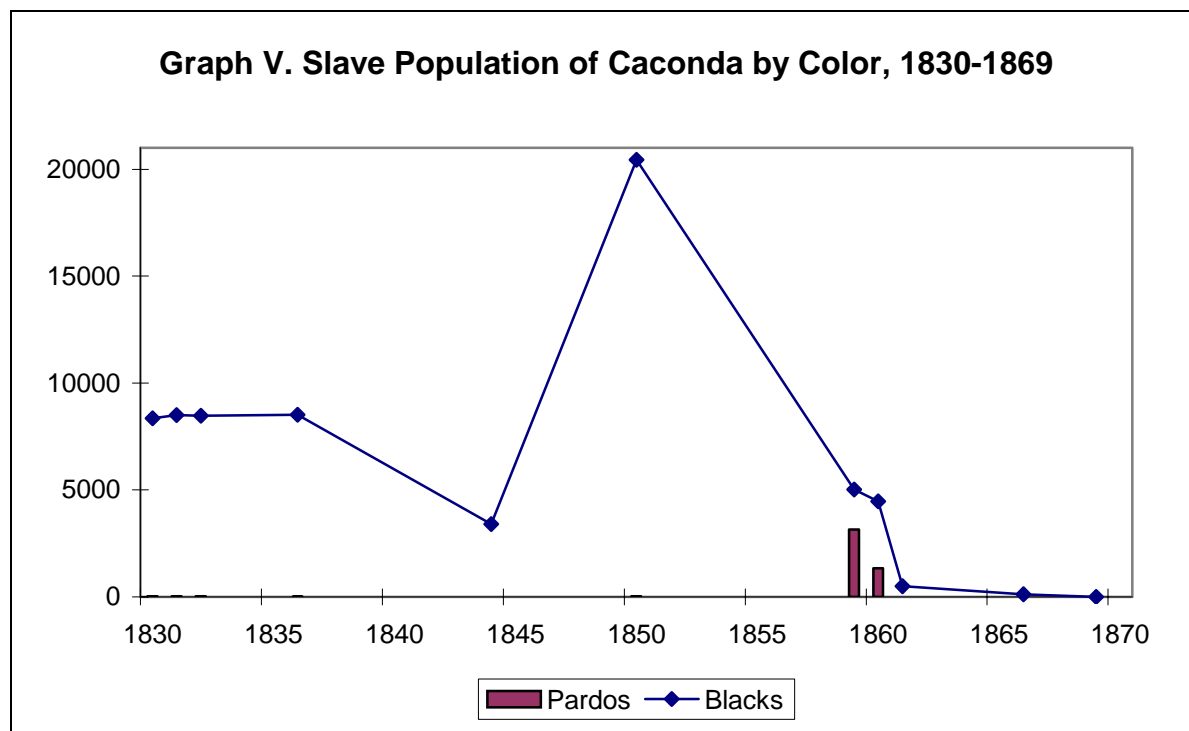
Sources: See the censuses supporting graph I.



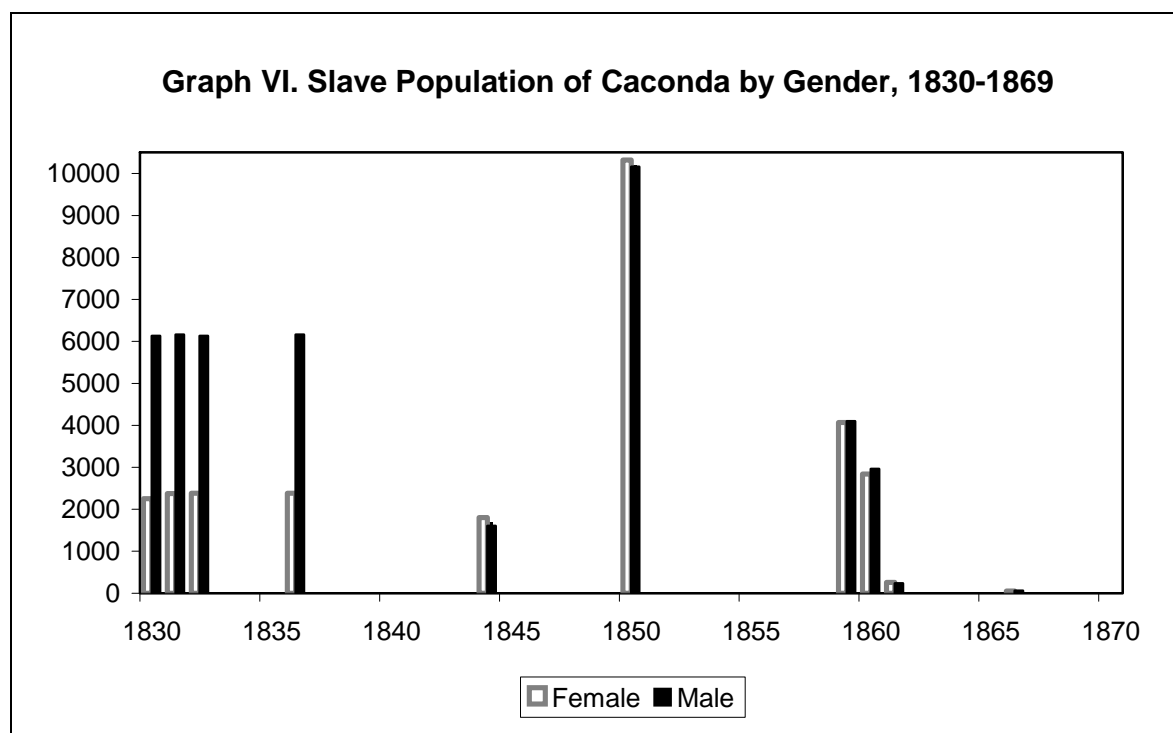
Source: See the censuses supporting graph I.



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