

# THE EARLY DEMOGRAPHY OF MOÇAMEDES, 1839-1869: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS\*

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## ABSTRACT

The history of Moçamedes remains largely unwritten from an Africanist perspective. This contribution draws upon a number of censuses produced by the Portuguese colonial administration to re-construct the demographic past of this southern Angolan port town from its foundation in 1839-1840 to 1869. A close analysis of these colonial sources clearly demonstrates that the coastal town so often depicted in the (still largely colonial) historiography as forced upon the desert by the white man was anything but. Rather, the early decades of Moçamedes were predicated on the blood, sweat, and tears of thousands of black Africans, some freed, but most enslaved or otherwise bonded, who were largely torn away from their societies elsewhere in Angola and forced to labour in a new environment that was radically different from what they had previously known.

**Keywords:** Africa; Angola; Moçamedes; History; Demography.

## RESUMO

A história de Moçamedes permanece em grande parte não escrita de uma perspectiva africanista. Esta contribuição baseia-se em vários recenseamentos produzidos pela administração colonial portuguesa para reconstruir o passado demográfico desta cidade portuária do sul de Angola desde a sua fundação em 1839-1840 até 1869. Uma análise cuidadosa dessas fontes coloniais demonstra claramente

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que a cidade costeira muitas vezes retratada na historiografia (ainda em grande parte colonial) como forçada ao deserto pelo homem branco era tudo menos isso. Em vez disso, as primeiras décadas de Moçamedes foram baseadas no sangue, suor e lágrimas de milhares de africanos negros, alguns libertados, mas mais escravizados ou vinculados, que foram largamente afastados de suas sociedades em outros lugares de Angola e forçados a trabalhar em um novo ambiente, radicalmente diferente do que eles haviam conhecido anteriormente.

**Palavras-chave:** África; Angola; Moçamedes; História; Demografia.

The history of Moçamedes, a port town founded in southern Angola during 1839-1840 as a third springboard for Portuguese colonial penetration into the interior, remains largely unwritten from an Africanist perspective.<sup>1</sup> Narratives on the historical development of this coastal urban space, facing the Bay of Angra do Negro, have almost exclusively focused on the roles played by individuals and by groups of people originating from somewhere else. At the very beginning of this discourse, we thus find Portuguese colonial officials and settlers, as well as Luso-African traders from Luanda and Benguela, as the crucial human elements in the making of Moçamedes. (CUNHA, 1845; GUIMARÃES JR., 1842; CÉSAR, 1967; GARCIA, 1844; SORIANO, 1846 and 1891) A second contingent of *colons*, this time emanating from Brazil in 1849 and 1850, and their immediate off spring, usually follow in this emerging pantheon. (ABREU E CASTRO, 1854 and 1861; VICENTE, 1969; CASTRO ALVES, 1970, FELNER, 1940, v. 2) A third crucial variable in the making of the port town behind Bay of Angra do Negro often involves a cluster of immigrants originating from fishing villages in the Algarve, like Olhão. (IRIA, 1938, 1942, 1965, 1971, and 1987). A fourth contingent of settlers, emanating from the island of Madeira, is eventually also squeezed into the discourse. (d'ALMEIDA, 1880; CUNHA MORAES, 1886; NASCIMENTO, 1892) The African component in the making of this coastal urban space, on the other hand, is rarely ever highlighted.<sup>2</sup> And, yet, as the following

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<sup>1</sup> See, most recently: SIMÕES, 2019, who has posited that “Looking at the former African colonies [and, in particular, the Province of Moçâmedes], we can see that there is a lack of studies concerning colonial society” and BASTOS, 2009, who, by focusing exclusively on white settlement, completely erases the role of Africans in the making of Moçamedes (city, district and, later, province). In the same vein, see the recent works of BRICHTA, 2018 and 2019. Even otherwise seasoned Africanists have difficulty escaping from this pattern: FREUDENTHAL et al, 2007; RODRIGUES, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> This is not only the case of older, major (not to mention colonialist) publications on Moçamedes, including: CANDEIAS DA SILVA, 1973 and MENDONÇA TORRES,

pages demonstrate, the African contribution to the making of Moçamedes was far more significant than has ever been acknowledged.<sup>3</sup> It was, in fact, essential to its early demographic, not to mention socio-economic development.

**Image 1 – Moçamedes in 1858**



Source: Biblioteca da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, Reservados 9-A-10, Costa de Angola.

Indeed, our contribution seeks to redress this historiographical imbalance by pointing to the very centrality of Africans in the making of Moçamedes during the first three decades of its history: 1839-1869. To do so, we draw upon a particular set of sources: censuses. As it happens, these documents were produced by the same exogenous settlers, not to mention the colonial state under which they operated, that sought, ironically, to minimise, if not eliminate altogether, the role of Africans in the development of this southern Angolan port town. By the middle of the 1800s, census-taking was an institutionalized operation throughout colonial Angola and many of the interior domains nominally “controlled” by the Portuguese colonial state. (CURTO, 1994; DOMINGUES DA SILVA, 2015) In the case of the agglomeration behind the Bay of Angra do Negro, such a custom only took root slowly thereafter. The first population count covering this port town, referring to 1844, was included in the calculations for the newly founded *presídio* or military-administrative unit of Moçamedes published by José J. LOPES DE LIMA (1846, III, part 1,4-A).<sup>4</sup> It was not until 1850-1851 that census data for the port town of Moçamedes became available as part of

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1974. The same is exhibited in more recent work. ALMEIDA DE SOUSA, 2002, devotes but 2% of her thesis, the two volumes of which span some 900 pages, to the African factor in the making of Moçamedes. Little can also be gained on the issue from AZEVEDO, 2014. MARQUES DE OLIVEIRA, 2018, on the other hand, merely shows how Moçamedes (both the port town and the district) was early celebrated in Portuguese colonialist literature as a paradigmatic example of white colonization and its arduous struggle against a rough environment.

<sup>3</sup> Some notable exceptions, although focused on a later period and involving a broader geographical scope, include: CARDOSO, 1964 and 1966; and CLARENCE-SMITH, 1976, 1979, 1985a, and 1985b.

<sup>4</sup> This census was reproduced in OMBONI, 1845, 409. A more readily available and recent reproduction is included in PÉLISSIER, 1977, 32.

a colony-wide census undertaken then.<sup>5</sup> Early in 1855, the Governor of the District of Moçamedes ordered a census of the town be carried out, referring to the previous year (1854); following the elevation of settlement around the Bay of Angra do Negro into the status of municipality in March 1855, its urban population was thereafter enumerated on an almost annual basis until 1860.<sup>6</sup> Last, but not least, the colonial administration undertook further colony-wide population counts in 1861, 1863, 1866, and 1869, all of which included demographic data on this southern Angolan coastal agglomeration.<sup>7</sup> The port town of Moçamedes is thus endowed with a relatively decent series of census data for the 1850s and 1860s. Along with the singular data from the mid-1840s, enough information exists to reconstruct its early demographic evolution, thereby further adding to the growing literature on the pre-1900 demographic past of Angola.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> **Almanak Statístico da Província d'Angola e Suas Dependências para o Anno de 1852.** Luanda: Imprensa do Governo, 1851, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Extracto do um Offício do Governador Interino de Mossamedes, o Capitão F. da Costa Leal, dirigido ao Ministerio da Marinha e Ultramar em data de 3 de Janeiro de 1855. In: **Annaes do Conselho Ultramarino**, Parte Official, 1857, 200; Statistica do Districto de Mossamedes, referida ao anno de 1857. In: **Boletim Official de Angola**, No. 662, 05-06-1858, 4; SILVA REGO, 1974, 49 also for 1857; Mappa Statistico do Municipio de Mossamedes no fim do anno de 1858 In: **Annaes do Conselho Ultramarino**, Parte Não Official, 1859-1861, 59-60; Mappa Statistico do Municipio de Mossamedes, referido ao fim do anno de 1858. In: **Boletim Official de Angola**, No. 724, 13-08-1859, 4; SILVA REGO, 1974, 70-71 also for 1858; Mappa Statistico do Districto de Mossamedes referido ao anno de 1859: Habitantes da villa e suburbios. In: **Boletim Official de Angola**, No. 761, 05-05-1860, 6-7; Mossamedes, Estatistica do Districto, Relativa ao anno de 1860: Habitantes da villa e suburbios. In: **Annaes do Conselho Ultramarino**, Parte Não Official, 1862, 51; Mappa Statistico do Districto de Mossamedes referido ao anno de 1860: Habitantes da villa e suburbios. In **Boletim Official de Angola**, No. 815, 08-05-1861, 3-4. See also footnote 10 below.

<sup>7</sup> Mappa Estatistico da População de Angola, 1861. In **Boletim Official de Angola**, 4 July, 1863, inserted between pp. 212-213; Mappa Estatistico da População da Província d'Angola, referido ao dia 31 de Dezembro de 1863, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [hereinafter AHU], Angola, Correspondencia dos Governadores, 2a Secção, Pasta 35; Mappa Estatistico da População da Província d'Angola Referido ao Dia 30 de Junho de 1866, AHU, Sala dos Códices, Conselho Ultramarino, Pasta 2 (1855-1866 Angola, Moçambique, India); Mappa Estatistico da População da Província d'Angola Referido ao Dia 31 de Dezembro de 1869, AHU, Angola, Correspondência dos Governadores, 2a Secção, Pasta 40.

<sup>8</sup> For the period before the early 2010s, see: THORNTON, 1977a, 1977b, 1980, and 1981; HEYWOOD and THORNTON, 1988; CURTO, 1991, 1994, and 1999; CURTO and GERVAIS, 2001. Since then, academic production on the pre-1900 historical demography of Angola has increased significantly: MATOS and VOS, (2013; VOS 2014; CURTO, 2014; DOMINGUES DA SILVA, 2015; MENZ and LOPES, 2018; CURTO, 2018; CORRÊA, 2018 and 2019.

**Table 1** – Population of Moçamedes:  
*Presídio* 1844 and *Districto* 1850-1851

	<i>Presídio</i> de Mossamedes, 1844	<i>Districto</i> de Mossamedes, 1850-1851
Hearths	600	166
White Males	20	218
White Females	0	58
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>276</b>
Free <i>Pardo</i> Males	12	10
Enslaved <i>Pardo</i> Males	0	7
Free <i>Pardo</i> Females	4	7
Enslaved <i>Pardo</i> Females	0	0
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>
Free Black Males	3500	250
Enslaved Black Males	120	108
Free Black Females	4200	312
Enslaved Black Females	310	142
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>8130</b>	<b>812</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8166</b>	<b>1112</b>

Source: see footnote 6.

The particular circumstances leading to the production of the censuses in question are not well known. The colony wide censuses of 1844 and 1850-1851, for example, seem to have followed years of the Portuguese metropolitan government requesting that such quantitative documents be produced. (CURTO, 1994; CURTO and GERVAIS, 2001; DOMINGUES DA SILVA, 2015) Similarly, the municipal censuses of 1854-1860 were the direct result of previous appeals from the central government in Lisbon for municipalities overseas to chronicle their recent past, including providing data on their residents. (SILVA REGO, 1974) Presumably, a continued preoccupation on the part of the government in mainland Portugal with ascertaining the size of its colonial population(s) led to the production of the colony-wide censuses of 1861, 1863, 1866, and 1869. Such a concern, however, did not necessarily result in the production of uniform censuses.

**Table 2 – Population of Moçamedes (Town and Suburbs), 1854-1860**

	1854	1857	1858	1859	1860	Average
White Adult Males	153	272	146	375	381	265.4
White Adult Females	45	40	54	64	68	54.2
White Minor Males	28	42	52	63	74	51.8
White Minor Females	30	36	47	65	73	50.2
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>421.6</b>
<i>Pardo</i> Adult Males	3	2	3	3	7	3.6
<i>Pardo</i> Adult Females	7	5	3	8	8	6.2
<i>Pardo</i> Minor Males	9	28	29	36	44	29.2
<i>Pardo</i> Minor Females	10	23	20	27	33	22.6
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>61.6</b>
Black Adult Free Males	48	123	9	10	15	41.0
Black Adult Free Females	9	7	20	21	31	17.6
Black Minor Free Males	2	6	14	13	35	14.0
Black Minor Free Females	0	0	1	6	13	4.0
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>76.6</b>
<i>Liberto</i> Adult Males	49	80	40	76	76	64.2
<i>Liberto</i> Adult Females	44	23	27	26	30	30.0
<i>Liberto</i> Minor Males	24	12	19	24	24	20.6
<i>Liberto</i> Minor Females	18	31	21	15	18	20.6
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>135.4</b>
Enslaved Adult Males	236	450	601	727	187	440.2
Enslaved Adult Females	85	186	268	303	351	238.6
Enslaved Minor Males	120	207	280	331	365	260.6
Enslaved Minor Females	20	92	110	123	145	98.0
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>1259</b>	<b>1484</b>	<b>1048</b>	<b>1037.4</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>1665</b>	<b>1764</b>	<b>2316</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1732.6</b>
Total of Minor Females	78	182	199	236	282	195.4
Total of Minor Males	183	295	394	467	542	376.2

Source: see footnote 6.

Indeed, the extant censuses for the period under consideration exhibit three quite different sets of demographic data. Each of these sets correspond to the data presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3. The first set is specific to the colony-wide censuses of 1844 and 1850-51. Both of these censuses used exactly the same census categories. The population was first divided into the three colour groups that characterised previous enumerations in Angola: white, *pardo* (or mulato), and black. Each of these phenotypes was subsequently subdivided according to gender: male and female. Moreover, a third category relating to the gendered *pardo* and black population groups referred to their legal status: free and enslaved. With respect

to the Moçamedes data, in particular, the 1844 and 1850-51 census do not cover the exact same landmass. While the first purports to cover the *presídio* (military-administrative area) centered upon the initial settlement behind the Bay of Angra do Negro, the second relates to a more extensive district administered from that port town. At first glance, this inconsistency would seem to invalidate both censuses from any demographic analysis of the emerging port town. However, as we will see below, both censuses provide enough clues that allow us to infer a number of important characteristics relative to Moçamedes (the port town).

The 1854-1860 censuses, as can be seen in Table 2, exhibit quite different demographic categories. Produced through the efforts of local district administrators, they pertain exclusively to the town/municipality of Moçamedes and its suburbs. All also offer data on exactly the same categories. The first census in this series, carried out towards the end of 1854 under orders from Captain Fernando da Costa Leal, then Governor of the District of Moçamedes, set the model for subsequent enumerations. The first census category detailed the number of inhabitants according to the, by then, usual phenotype groups: whites, *pardos* (or mulattoes) and blacks. The last population group, however, now referred specifically to free blacks. By the mid-1850s, the expansion of the bonded black population in Moçamedes and its suburbs had led census-takers to include two new socio-legal categories in their enumerations: one related to *libertos* (or liberated Africans)<sup>9</sup> and slaves of the Colonial Treasury, as well as individuals deported from various parts of the Portuguese “empire”; the other covered enslaved persons owned by residents of the town/municipality and its suburbs. Within each of these five categories, the population was further subdivided according to gender. Moreover, in each of the phenotype and socio-legal categories by gender, the population found itself again split into two very broad age-groups: *maiores de 18 annos* or adults 18 and over and *menores de 18 annos* or minors under 18. The classification system developed in 1854 remained largely in place during the 1857, 1858, 1859, and 1860 censuses carried out on behalf of the district administration of Moçamedes.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> On the making of this socio-legal group of individuals, “rescued” from the bowels of illegal slaving ships operating on the coastal waters of colonial Angola, see CURTO, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Other censuses were also produced during this period. Thus, towards the end of 1856, an enumeration was undertaken on behalf of the Municipal Council of Moçamedes. The criteria followed did not draw upon that used in 1854: rather, the urban population

## Images 2 and 3 – Moçamedes in 1865



Source: João Camacho Pereira and Luciano Ribeiro, *Colecção de Gravuras Portuguezas: VI, Além-Mar*. Lisboa: Litografia Júlio de Amorim, 1950, Estampa 21.

was then divided into free and enslaved categories, each by gender, with *libertos* constituting a third, albeit ungendered classification. See: *Resumo dos Fogos, População e Predios Urbanos... na Villa e Arrabalde... no fim do anno de 1856*. In: **Annaes do Conselho Ultramarino**, Parte Não Oficial, 1854-1858, 490; SILVA REGO, 1974, 37. The Municipal Council had another population count undertaken before the end of 1857, as was customary. But here, too, a different classification format was adopted with residents enumerated into free, enslaved, and *liberto* categories, each by gender, and the free population (but not the bonded) further subdivided by colour. See SILVA REGO, 1974, 49. The data offered by these censuses are, consequently, not comparable to those in our larger series, which emanate from the governorship of the District of Moçamedes.

The enumerations undertaken between 1861 and 1869, on the other hand, were characterized by a great deal of innovation, likely reflecting the contemporaneous transition in Portugal from a proto-statistical era to the period of modern statistics (VEIGA, 2004, 9-17; BANDEIRA, 1996, 139-146). All four of these extant censuses were produced by the central colonial government in Luanda, where data originating at the district, if not municipal, level were consolidated to represent colony-wide enumerations. Demonstrating an attempt on the part of the colonial administration to capture the changing demographic realities of Angola, they exhibit a larger number of and more refined census categories with each succeeding census. This must have not only complicated the work of enumerators, but also makes comparisons between the census years difficult. Nevertheless, a number of important categories are common to all four censuses.<sup>11</sup> These include, as shown in Table 3, the total annual population of the municipality of Moçamedes according to gender. A second, not to mention novel, demographic classification of note is that of *Naturalidade* or place of birth, with sub-categories pertaining to: *Filhos do Pais* or sons and daughters of the land (that is, Angola); *Reino e Ilhas* or Kingdom and Islands; *Coloniais* or colonials; and *Estrangeiros* or foreigners. A third, and also new demographic category, is found in the cryptic term *Criados de Servir* or disenfranchised labourers, with these listed under sub-classifications of *livre* or free, *liberto* or liberated, and *escravo* or slave. A fourth major classification involves *idades* or age, but with individuals now enumerated according to more specific age-groups: 0-05, 05-15, 15-25, 25-35, 35-50, 50-70, and over 70 years old. The fifth important demographic category developed captured the civil status of the enumerated: that is, single, married, or widowed. With the exception of the data on age, the other major demographic classifications were further discriminated by gender. These innovations are, of course, particular to a specific chronological period. Nevertheless, as we will see below, they also throw a great light on the pre-1870 demography of the port town of Moçamedes.

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<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that the 1863 enumeration is highly problematic. Not only are most of its census fields blank, but the limited data provided are seldom harmonized. Hence, the 1863 census can only be used for the total number of inhabitants, their gender and their socio-legal status.

**Table 3 – Population of Moçamedes, 1861-1869**

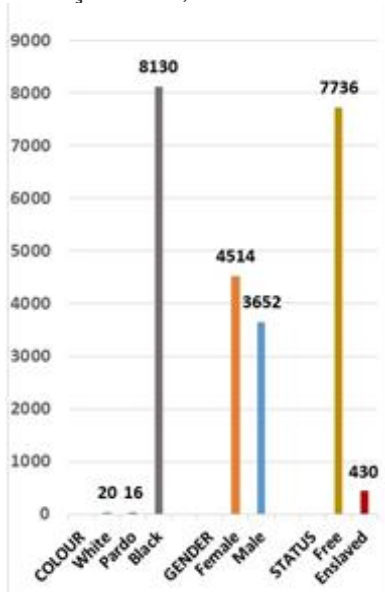
		1861		1863		1866		1869	
Gender	Males	2604	77.2%	2374	75.5%	4033	61.6%	3779	64.3%
	Females	770	22.8%	773	24.5%	2507	38.4%	2094	35.7%
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>3374</b>		<b>3147</b>		<b>6540</b>		<b>5873</b>	
Place of Birth	Sons of the Land	Males	2253			3572		3287	
		Females	500			2226		1873	
	Kingdom & Islands	Males	455			533		476	
		Females	143			200		220	
	Colonials	Males						11	
		Females							
	Foreigners	Males	3				7		6
		Females							
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>3354</b>				<b>6538</b>		<b>5873</b>	
Servants	Free	Males	2		1135	48.2%	112		15
		Females							7
	<i>Libertos</i>	Males	76	4.3%	130	5.5%	1830	29.0%	
		Females	24	1.4%			980	15.5%	1436
	Enslaved	Males	1152	65.8%	1089	46.3%	2396	37.9%	
		Females	496	28.3%			996	15.8%	
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>1750</b>		<b>2354</b>		<b>6314</b>		<b>1458</b>	
Age Groups		00-05	52			983		351	
		05-15	443			1386		834	
		15-25	500			828		1240	
		25-35	1200			998		1756	
		35-50	820			856		1317	
		50-70	260			920		329	
		>>>70	99			560		37	
	<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>3374</b>				<b>6531</b>		<b>5864</b>
Marital Status	Married	Males	68			209		111	
		Females	68			98		94	
	Widowed	Males	3			19		21	
		Females	3			15		14	
	Single	Males	2527			3805		3647	
		Females	699			2394		1986	
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>3368</b>				<b>6540</b>		<b>5873</b>	

Source: see footnote 7.

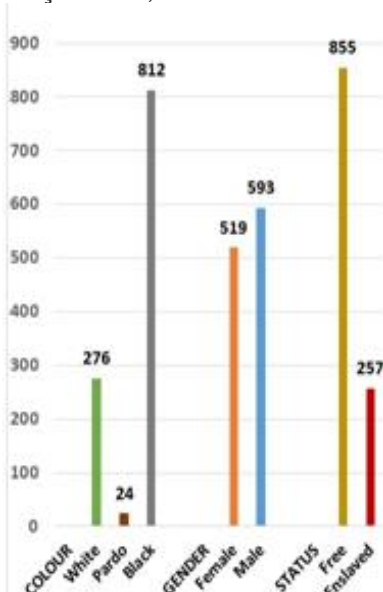
Given the different demographic categories drawn upon for the 1844 and 1850-51, 1854-1860, and 1861-1869 censuses, our methodology thus first analyses each of these sub-series in isolation and thereafter develops the inter-connections between them. Moreover, the varying demographic classifications from sub-series to sub-series impose a further analytical caution. None of the data found in these mid-nineteenth century sources, regardless of category, year, or provenance can be considered absolute. Too many imponderables regarding their production preclude such a posture. Rather, as previous work on pre-1850 Angolan demographic sources demonstrates, the patterns evidenced by the serialized data are always far more significant than the actual numbers specific to any category or any census year. This will be the guiding principle in the pages that follow.

In 1844, the port town of Moçamedes had a population of 150 inhabitants, including some 50 soldiers. The members of this incipient community would have originated, of course, mainly from elsewhere. The 1844 population data gathered by Lopes de Lima (1846, III, part 1, 4-A), although covering the “whole” of the new presidium, provides a glimpse into what its early demographic make-up was like. The number of white inhabitants remained small with only 20 such individuals, all of whom were males. An even smaller number of *pardos* or mulatos, 16 in all, were found throughout the whole of the presidium: all were free persons, including the 4 females. The overwhelming majority of the population, on the other hand, was constituted by 8,130 black folk: of these, 7,700 were free persons, including 4,200 women, and a further 430 were enslaved individuals, 310 of whom were females. In other words, the small 1844 population of the port town of Moçamedes would have been comprised by a handful of white males, an equally small number of mulato men and, to a certain extent, women, as well as a majority of black persons. Amongst the latter, free female individuals would have initially predominated alongside an appreciable number of enslaved women.

**Graph 1 – Population of Moçamedes, Presídio1844**



**Graph 2 – Population of Moçamedes, Distrito 1850-1851**



Source: See Table 1.

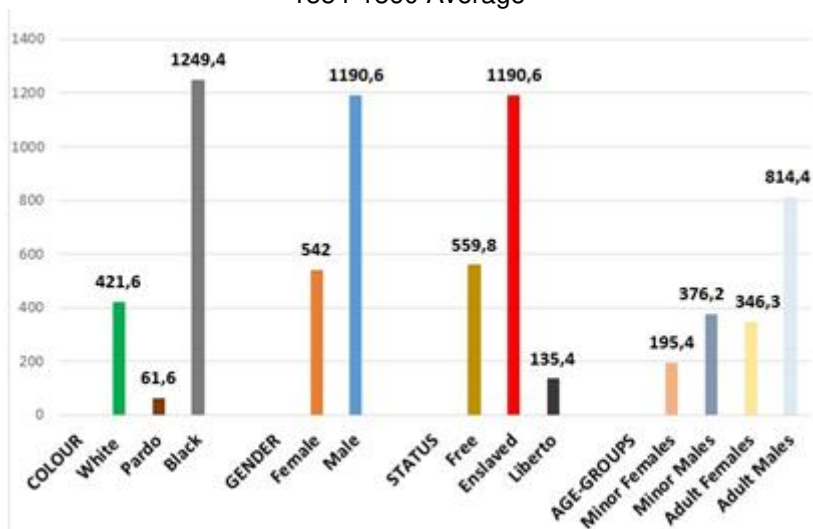
By 1850-1851, or a mere decade following the founding of Moçamedes, this demographic profile had experienced significant transformations. The town then boasted 166 hearths, one church, and 1,112 residents. The number of white inhabitants had risen to 276, 21% of whom or 58 were females. The mulato (*pardo*) population, on the other hand, had undergone but a slight increase to 24 individuals, of whom 10 males and 7 females were free persons and another 7 males were enslaved. The most noteworthy changes, however, fell upon its black inhabitants. Their numbers rose to 812 persons, including a majority of 454 females, representing 73% of the urban population. Of this latter group, 108 males and 142 females happened to be enslaved individuals: this translates into 22.5% of the total population. In other words, within a decade of its foundation, the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the port town of Moçamedes were not only black, but enslaved individuals from this particular colour group also came to represent an appreciable (and growing) proportion of the urban population.

The late 1854 data assembled by the Governor of the District of Moçamedes, indicates that the population of the town had decreased to 940 persons. Of these, 256 were white folk, which represents a slight decline compared to 1850-1851. Although the proportion of white women had risen to nearly 30%, most of the individuals within this phenotype happened to be adults: only 58, or 22.6% were “minors”. The mulato population, in turn, experienced a small increase to 29 individuals, including 12 males and 17 females. This female specific increase took place alongside two other developments within the mulato inhabitants: first, all enslaved *pardo* males seem to have disappeared; and second, 10 or nearly 35% of the total, were mulato girls under the age of 18 or “minors”. Free blacks, on the other hand, saw their number tumble to but 59 individuals: of these, 48 were adult males. Not only were free black females a rarity by the end of 1854, but there were no free black girls under 18 years of age. By contrast, the overall number of bonded individuals rose significantly to 596, representing 63.4% of the total urban residents. Of these, 135 happened to be liberated Africans, slaves owned by the Colonial Treasury, and deported black persons. This socio-legal group of persons, forcibly relocated to Moçamedes by the colonial state of Angola to help expand the town, both demographically and economically, happened to exhibit a better gender balance, with 73 males and 62 females, as well as a more balanced age-structure, with 93 adults and 42 minors. The second group of bonded persons, and the largest cluster of residents, the enslaved, who then accounted for 461 persons or 49% of the total urban population, exhibited greater discrepancies. All owned by the town’s inhabitants, the gender of the enslaved was quite skewed, with 356 males and 105 females, while only 140 happened to be under the age of 18. By the end of 1854, Moçamedes had emerged in to town where two-thirds of its population was made of individuals bonded to the colonial state and to free residents. With females accounting for only 28% and minors representing but 30.5% of those bonded, the reproduction of such a slave society simply could not occur through natural means.

The demographic losses experienced between 1850-1851 and 1854 were only slightly recuperated by the end of 1856, one year after the agglomeration was elevated to the status of *villa* or municipality. Moçamedes was then made up of 85 hearths, accommodating a total of 958 inhabitants. Of these 272 or 28.4% were free persons, 5.6% or 54 were liberated Africans, and a further 632 (66%) were enslaved individuals. Once again, the majority

of the population was overwhelmingly male. Amongst the free, only 108 or 40% were females. And the disparity was even greater with the enslaved population, where the number of males rose to 475 or 75%. In other words, the slight demographic recovery evidenced by the 1856 data exhibits the continuation of previous patterns, with a population where females were scarce and where bonded individuals predominated.

**Graph 3 – Population of Moçamedes, Town and Suburbs, 1854-1860 Average**



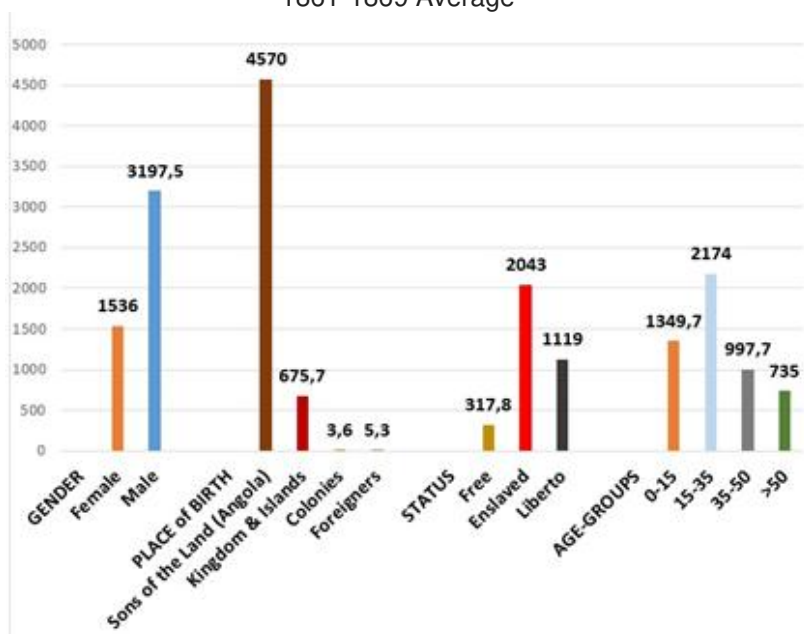
Source: See Table 2.

The following four years saw the population of Moçamedes expand to unprecedented levels. Between 1857 and 1860, an average of 1,787 persons lived in this municipality. The white component accounted for a median of 413 residents or 23%, 258 of whom were male and 52 female. Added to the fact that white women remained scarce, persons under the age of 18 within this phenotype averaged only 50 males and 51 females. In other words, the white population of Moçamedes remained dominated by adult males. The *pardo* (mulato) population, on the other hand, persisted small, with only an average of 64.5 mulattoes, 28 of whom were females. Still, this phenotype seems to have experienced a heavy turn to youngsters, since just 9 of these persons were listed, on average, as adults. Similarly, the free black population, does not seem to have

undergone significant numerical changes. During 1857-1860, it averaged but 68.5 individuals. These included 47.5 free black males and 21 free black females, as well as 49.5 adults and 19 minors. Here too, the domination of males and adults was also the norm. *Libertos* similarly experienced few mutations and displayed similar patterns: they averaged but 128 persons, 79 of whom were male and 49 females, while 89 were adults and 39 were under the age of 18. As could be expected, on the other hand, the most significant demographic transformations took place within the enslaved (black) population. They, alone, averaged 1,113 persons, accounting for 62% of all urban residents. Amongst them were 752.5 males and 360.5 females, as well as 260 boys and 100 girls below the age of 18. Thus while both the sex ratio and the number of youngsters within the enslaved inhabitants were improving, they were still from far from the characteristics of a stable population. Between 1857 and 1860, then, the rapidly increasing population of Moçamedes was largely based on the addition of enslaved persons, especially males. The scarcity of women across all phenotypes and socio-legal conditions also continued. And so did the inability of the urban population to reproduce itself. As was the case before, demographic growth could only be achieved through in-migration, whether voluntary or forced.

The population of Moçamedes experienced even more intensive growth between 1861 and 1869. During 1861 and 1863, the median number of residents reached 3,260.5. Males (2,489) still accounted for much of the total with 76.3%, while females (771.5) represented only 23.7%. But, by then, this was a population largely born in Angola itself, referred to generically as *filhos do país* or sons (and daughters) of the land. (Hespanha, 2019) Although not necessarily having seen the first light of day in Moçamedes, they alone numbered 2,753, representing 81.5% of the 3,374 persons enumerated in 1861. Most also happened to fall into the category of bonded individuals. The 1861 census shows the existence of 100 liberated Africans, along with 1,750 enslaved persons, both representing nearly 55% of the total population. The weight of the bonded relative to the total population was showing signs of decline. Still they alone accounted for 38% of the overall demographic increased from 1857-1860 to 1861.

**Graph 4 – Population of Moçamedes, Town and Suburbs, 1861-1869 Average<sup>12</sup>**



Source: See Table 3.

During 1866 and 1869, the population of Moçamedes increased further still. Emerging as the second largest municipality of Angola, behind Luanda, the capital of the Portuguese colony, it does not seem to have suffered unduly from the smallpox epidemic that otherwise struck much of West Central Africa throughout 1864. (DIAS, 1981, 363-364) Indeed, through natural reproduction and positive in-migration flows, the median number of residents in Moçamedes reached 6,206.5 individuals in the later part of the 1860s. The sex-ratio within this population also became slightly more balanced with 3,906 males or 63% and 2,300.5 females or 37% living in this municipality. The overwhelming majority of this urban population, 5,569 individuals or almost 90%, continued to be labelled as *filhos do país* or sons (and daughters) of the land. A large number also now happened to be liberated Africans: there were 2,810 individuals from this socio-legal group in 1866, representing 43% of the total population enumerated. Among them were 1,830

<sup>12</sup> Data on Place of Birth, Age-Groups, and Civic Status are not available for 1863.

males and 980 females. Another, even more important socio-legal group, continued to be the enslaved: in 1866, their number reached an all time high of 3,392 persons, accounting for 52% of urban residents. Three years later, the heavy weight of the bonded population in Moçamedes was administratively erased to portray the municipality, not to mention the colony as whole, to the international community as places where the institution of slavery was effectively being dealt a slow death. (CURTO, 2020) Indeed, by 1869, the bonded population was largely absent from that particular census. Gone, somehow, were the nearly 3,400 enslaved individuals that resided in the municipality three years before. Similarly gone were 1,830 male liberated Africans found in the 1866 census. All that was left of the bonded population in 1869 was 1,436 women under the new rubric of *criados de servir*, people who would soon find themselves labelled as *serviçaes* so that their bonded existence could continue under the domination of those who had previously owned black African enslaved individuals.

The increasing 1860s population of Moçamedes, dominated as it was by bonded inhabitants and male residents born within Angola, also presents a number of other important characteristics. Few of these urban residents, regardless of gender, place of birth, or socio-legal status, lived in unions sanctioned by the Catholic church. The overwhelming majority were “single”. Of these, some may well have lived in the context of informal or common law unions. But such unions were always circumscribed by the number of female residents, which was always much smaller than that of males. Thus, not only were eligible females at a premium in this port town, but the number of local births also seems to have been correspondingly low. During this decade, three out of every four inhabitants or 74.3% were aged 15 and above; six out of every ten or 60.4% fell between the ages of 15 and 50 years old. In other words, Moçamedes was largely comprised of men, able-bodied men.

In short, until 1869, Moçamedes exhibited many of the characteristics of a frontier town. It was comprised by an overwhelming majority of able-bodied males and a much smaller number of adult females, whose primary task was to build the emerging port town. But the “city imposed by man upon the desert” (GARCIA, 1968) involved few of the white folk so often lauded in the extant historiography for having achieved the deed. As one administrator observed in 1863, white settlers arrived in Moçamedes with high expectations, but had few personal resources, were given little governmental assistance, and suffered high mortality rates: many of those who survived, consequently,

sought a better life elsewhere, where instead of toiling the soil, they could exercise their preferred professions of clerks and the like.(SILVA REGO, 1974,75-83) Rather, the emerging port town was the result of the blood, sweat, and tears of thousands of black Africans, some freed, but most enslaved or otherwise bonded. And these were largely torn away from their societies elsewhere in Angola and forced to labour in a strange environment that was radically different from what they had previously known.

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