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Response Paper 2: Antonil

All groups pertaining to the production of sugar - masters, slaves, and other groups - faced significant social, economic, and/or physical challenges in accordance with the responsibilities they had to bear and carry out on a daily basis, whether they chose to put themselves in that situation or it was forced upon them. Although some parts of Antonil's *Brazil at the Dawn of the Eighteenth Century* contained biases or stereotypes against certain groups that were involved in the sugar production process, his accounts overall do a great job of giving the reader insight into how the sugar plantations functioned in colonial Brazil, and how different walks of life in colonial Brazil were treated.

Antonil notes that slaves were "the hands and feet of the planter, (39)" and without the 150 to 200 slaves (16) located on most plantations, the Brazilian sugar plantations and mills wouldn't be able to produce sugar in such large quantities. In his accounts, Antonil does discuss to some length that a planter's slaves should be well treated and cared for, such as giving them food, medicine when they fall ill, and clothing (41). He also states that the work carried out by slaves should be regulated so it isn't so cumbersome, however he follows up by saying this should be the case "if he [the owner] wishes them to last, (41)," an indication of how people saw slaves as property rather than human beings with rights during that time period. Despite these few cases of somewhat humane treatment, slaves that were a part of the sugar plantation society were mainly subject to terrible treatment by their owners, as well as subject to the stereotypes of

that time. An example of this was how new slaves brought from Africa were given different tasks based on where they originated from, mainly due to perceived stereotypes of the build and intelligence of different groups of African slaves. For example, Antonil notes that slaves from Ardas and Minas are stronger than other groups (39), while slaves from Angola are better suited for skilled craftsmanship jobs (39). He also goes into detail about how those slaves who learn and can fluently speak Portuguese are picked to carry out higher expertise positions (39), and knowing from the lectures that those born in Brazil were also given less demanding and/or higher up positions and jobs, it seems that slaves who were more assimilated into Brazilian society were subject to better treatment and hence received better tasks.

Those that owned sugar plantations (sugar planters) were by no means worse off than the slaves they owned, or the people who worked for the plantation and mill owner; however, those seeking to make a profit from Brazil's lucrative sugar producing economy faced numerous economic and material responsibilities that, if not taken seriously or into consideration, could mean bankruptcy and the end to their financial ambitions. Selecting the right location to build a plantation is vital for a successful plantation. Sugar planters should look for areas that contain pastures for oxen and livestock (cows, goats, sheep, chickens, etc.) to feed on, as well as lands that contain deposits of clay that's necessary for the refining of sugar, are near forests and marshes that provide lumber for firewood and building purposes, and most importantly is the type of soil found on the plantation location, with massapés (black, thick earth soils) soil being the best for growing sugar cane (53-54). Antonil explains that choosing lands that are either good or bad for sugar production and refining could mean the difference in a mill being able to "yield a profit or a loss, (53)." Antonil also notes that carpenters and masons who are hired to build these plantations may "frame their estimates in such a way that it will seem ... easy to build the

sugar mill (17),” enticing possible to-be planters to spend the money to build such mills, only to spend all their money on the construction of the plantation and be left with little to nothing to pay the salaries of his workers, as well as to pay off the other expenses that come with running a sugar plantation (17).

Besides the sugar planters and slaves of the sugar plantations, the other intermingling groups - sugar master, assistant master or banqueiro, assistant banqueiro, head overseer, subordinate overseers, bookkeeper - are all important in the overall functionality of the sugar mill and plantation. Each job comes with a wage, though some positions get a much larger wage than other positions; for example, the sugar master makes the most with earning around 130 milréis, while the assistant banqueiro usually receives no wage, as the position is generally held by a Creole slave, but if the assistant banqueiro carries out his job successfully, he may be “given some gift at the end of the harvest (35)” for his work; the average wage of the other positions seems to average around 40 to 50 or 60 milréis (28, 32, 35, 36, 38). Each position is vital in maintaining the functionality of the mill, and if the sugar planter chooses someone poorly equipped to handle any one of the mentioned jobs, the sugar plantation as a whole may suffer and could lead to “excessive damage to the estate (25),” ultimately harming the plantation and mill’s ability to output a profit.