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Palmares and Cucaú: Political Dimensions of a Maroon Community in Late Seventeenth-century Brazil(*)

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Brazilian historians have not paid much attention to the history of maroon communities. Until quite recently, these groupings of fugitive slaves were seen as political and social spaces completely “outside” the world of slavery: the fugitives sought isolation in the forest, distancing themselves from the farms and sugar mills to protect the freedom they had achieved, and only returned to the farm and fields if they were recaptured. Exalting the actions of resistance against slavery, Brazilian historiography in the last 100 years privileged above all the study of the big maroon communities, highlighting the most combative leaders.

Since the 1990s, however, some historians have shown that, in many cases, the maroon communities engaged in commerce with local warehouses or frequented the forests around the closest farms. Beyond the obvious economic implications, these exchanges and contacts constituted the base of some strategies of political and military defense of the fugitives and their important ties with the world of the slaves¹. In recent years, studies have

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¹ The pioneer study in this respect is that of Flávio dos Santos Gomes, *Histórias de Quilombolas: mocambos e comunidades de senzalas no Rio de Janeiro, século XIX*. Rio de Janeiro, Arquivo Nacional, 1995. A panoramic view of the most recent research on the theme can be found in the collection organized by this

not only been preoccupied with the relations between fugitives and slaves, indigenous peoples and other social groups, but also with the diverse modes of life in the maroon settlements, their conditions of survival and political organization; some historians have even established differences between “self-sustaining” and “dependent” maroon communities². Yet, studies of Palmares have not been touched by this movement of historiographical renovation.

Since the eighteenth century, the history of Palmares has been narrated for various reasons: to demonstrate the military capacity of a governor who achieved political success,³ to distinguish and attest to the capacity of people from the state of Pernambuco⁴, or to reiterate the great tenacity and bravery of people from the state of São Paulo⁵. Throughout the twentieth century, the destiny of the longest and most renitent maroon community in the history of Brazil was closely linked with a markedly militant historiography, which transformed Palmares into a symbol of the survival of African cultural traditions in Brazil⁶ and the capacity of slave resistance⁷. Zumbi, one of its last leaders, became a great hero of the black struggle in Brazil. Since 1978, the date of his death has been instituted as the National Day of Black Consciousness: an occasion to remember the heroic struggle against slavery and denounce racism and the precarious citizenship of Blacks in Brazil⁸.

author and by João José Reis, *Liberdade por um Fio. História dos quilombos no Brasil*. S. Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1996.

² See, for example, Márcia Amantino, “Sobre os quilombos do sudeste brasileiro nos séculos XVIII e XIX” in: Manolo Florentino e Cacilda Machado (eds.), *Ensaio sobre a escravidão*. Belo Horizonte, Editora UFMG, 2003, pp. 235-262.

³ Consult, for example, *Relação verdadeira da guerra que se fez aos negros levantados do Palmar em 1694*. Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Cod. 11358 n. 37, fls. 75-101 (published by Maria Lêda Oliveira, “A primeira Rellação do último assalto a Palmares” *Afro-Ásia*, 33 (2005): 270-324); and Sebastião da Rocha Pita, *História da América portuguesa [1730]*, São Paulo, EDUSP/Itatiaia, 1976, pp. 213-219.

⁴ See, among others, Alfredo Brandão. “Os negros na história de Alagoas”. *Estudos Afro-Brasileiros. Trabalhos apresentados ao 1º Congresso Afro-Brasileiro reunido no Recife em 1934*. [Fac-simile ed.] Recife, Fundaj/Ed. Massangana, 1988, pp. 55-91; Jayme de Altavilla, “A redenção dos Palmares. *Revista do Instituto Arqueológico e Geográfico Alagoano*, XI (1926): 58-67 and 59.

⁵ See Affonso de Escragnole Taunay, *História geral das bandeiras paulistas*. São Paulo, Typ. Ideal - Heitor L. Canton, 1936, tomo 7, p.136. Ernesto Ennes, *As guerras nos Palmares. Subsídios para sua história*. São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional, 1938. Also note from the same author, “The Palmares 'republic' of Pernambuco its final destruction, 1697”. *The Americas*, 5 n. 2 (1948): 200-216.

⁶ The principal works are: Nina Rodrigues, “As sublevações de negros no Brasil anteriores ao século XIX. Palmares” *Os africanos no Brasil*. [1905]. 5th ed. São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional, 1977; Arthur Ramos, “O espírito associativo do negro brasileiro”. *Revista do Arquivo Municipal*, 47 n. 4 (1939): 105-126; Edison Carneiro, *O Quilombo dos Palmares* [1947] 2nd ed. São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1958; Mario Martins de Freitas, *Reino Negro de Palmares* [1954]. 2nd ed. Rio de Janeiro, Biblioteca do Exército, 1988.

⁷ See, especially, Clóvis Moura, *Rebeliões da Senzala. Quilombos, insurreições, guerrilhas*. S. Paulo, Edições Zumbi, 1959; Décio Freitas, *Palmares. A guerra dos escravos*. [1973]. 5th ed. Porto Alegre, Mercado Aberto, 1984; Ivan Alves Filho, *Memorial dos Palmares*, Rio de Janeiro, Xenon, 1988; Flávio dos Santos Gomes, *Palmares. Escravidão e liberdade no Atlântico Sul*. São Paulo, Contexto, 2005.

⁸ In 1996, completing a process begun in the nineteenth century, Zumbi officially became a *national* hero and not just a reference for militants in the Black Movement, since the law determined that his name be “written in

As a symbol of the reaction of slaves against the slave system, Palmares has been understood as a historical phenomenon whose meaning is inherent in its very name: an object constituted in a self-evident way. As a result, its connection with the larger colonial historical context has been lost: interpreted eminently as a struggle of slaves against masters, its analysis does not include, for example, the disputes between the organs of the metropolitan government and the colonial authorities or between them and the slave and sugar mill owners in Pernambuco.

As the most important episode of slave resistance, Palmares has lost its connection to the colonizing process in the Americas, with the forms of Portuguese colonization in other parts of the Portuguese empire, and, paradoxically, with the very dynamics of the development of Atlantic slavery in the seventeenth century. Under the rubric of “resistance”, the history of Palmares has been constituted as a narrative of a unique “*quilombo*”⁹, that arose at the beginning of the seventeenth century, grew during the wars that culminated with the expulsion of the Dutch from Pernambuco, confronted diverse military expeditions and was finally defeated in 1694. It is a linear history of a singular maroon community whose leaders are highlighted for their bellicose capacity in the obstinate struggle for freedom, understood as the unquestionable antinomy of slavery. In the historiographical script of Palmares and its leaders¹⁰ established throughout the twentieth century, the episode of the peace treaty between Gangazumba and the government of Pernambuco in 1678 has received only secondary attention.

Briefly mentioned by Nina Rodrigues, Edson Carneiro and Benjamin Peret,¹¹ the treaty was analyzed more extensively by Décio Freitas, Ivan Alves Filho, Gérard Police and Flávio Gomes.¹² Even so, none of them dwelt in careful details regarding the terms agreed

the *Livro dos Heróis da Pátria* [*Book of the Heroes of the Fatherland*] which is found in the Panteão da Liberdade e da Democracia [Pantheon of Freedom and Democracy]”. Cf. *Coleção das Leis da República Federativa do Brasil*, Brasília, Imprensa Nacional, 1996, v. 188, n. 11, nov. 1996, p. 5726. In: <http://www.camara.gov.br/internet/InfDoc/novoconteudo/legislacao/republica/Leis1996vCLXXXVIIIIn11p714/parte-2.pdf>

⁹ The term *quilombo*, originally *Ovinbundu*, was commonly employed to designate maroon communities only from the eighteenth century onwards. In the seventeenth-century sources, Palmares was called as *mocambo*, from a Kimbundo word meaning “hideout”. The word *quilombo* was employed to refer to Palmares only in the papers related to the contract of Domingos Jorge Velho, signed in 1687. See “Capítulos e condições que concede o senhor governador João da Cunha Souto Maior ao coronel Domingos Jorge Velho, em 3 de março de 1687”. *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, 47 (1884): 19-24.

¹⁰ For an historiographic survey of the history of Palmares, see Gérard Police, *Quilombos dos Palmares. Lectures sur un marronnage brésilien*. Guyane, Ibis Rouge, 2003, especially Chapter 2 and Andressa Mercês Barbosa dos Reis, *Zumbi: historiografia e imagens*. Master Diss., Franca, UNESP, 2004.

¹¹ Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, pp. 83-84; Edson Carneiro, *O quilombo dos Palmares*, pp.77-80; Benjamin Péret, *La commune des Palmares. “Que fut le quilombo des Palmares?”* [1st ed. 1956], Paris, Editions Syllepse, 1992, pp. 51-53.

¹² D. Freitas, *Palmares. A Guerra dos Escravos*, pp. 118-121 e 126; I. Alves Filho, *Memorial dos Palmares*, pp. 88-92; G. Police, *Quilombos dos Palmares*, pp. 145-147; F. S. Gomes, *Palmares*, pp. 123-136.

upon in 1678, maintaining the interpretation of Edson Carneiro and Décio Freitas, which reaffirmed its limitations and focused on the opposition of Zumbi and other leaders of Palmares to Gangazumba's decision¹³. Understood as a betrayal, the peace accord and displacement of the inhabitants of Palmares to the region of Cuaú continued to be characterized as the "anti-Palmares so hopefully founded by the colonial authorities"¹⁴.

This type of approach is so marked in Brazilian historiography that, contrary to the analyses of fugitive communities in other parts of the Americas, there are no studies in Brazil of the negotiations between maroons and the colonial and imperial authorities. In a 1996 collection of essays about maroon communities in Brazil, edited by João Reis and Flávio Gomes, there are no articles dealing with the negotiations with fugitive slaves¹⁵. In this collection, the article by Richard Price diverges from all the others, constituting an honorable historiographic exception in imagining, with a base in his studies about the Saramaka, what Palmares could have been if the treaty agreed upon by Gangazumba had lasted¹⁶.

Taking advantage of this historiographic silence, my research has concentrated on the investigation of this forgotten event in the history of Palmares that has been practically excluded from the slave experience in Brazil. The results were surprising not only in relation to the peace accord of 1678, but also with the discovery of various other initiatives of negotiation with Palmares, before and after 1678. This presentation focuses on only some of the results in discussing the political dimensions of the relations between Palmares and the colonial authorities in Pernambuco.

I begin with the sources. The disinterest in the historiography for the agreement of 1678 was accompanied by a complete disregard for the documentation. Its text was not included in any of the collections of sources about Palmares¹⁷ and of all the authors that mentioned the peace accord only Ivan Alves Filho referenced it in a footnote without, however, spending much time in analyzing its terms. The event was always narrated on the

¹³ It is symptomatic that the text of the accord has never been included in the collections of published documents related to Palmares even though it was evidently consulted by Edison Carneiro, Décio Freitas and Ivan Alves Filho.

¹⁴ D. Freitas, *Palmares. A Guerra dos Escravos*, p. 128.

¹⁵ Cf. J. J. Reis and F. S. Gomes (eds.), *Liberdade por um Fio*, passim.

¹⁶ R. Price, "Palmares como poderia ter sido", in: J. J. Reis and F. S. Gomes (eds.), *Liberdade por um Fio*, pp. 52-59. The parallel between Palmares and the Saramakas was also made by Flávio Gomes and Gérard Police, but without going so far as Price does in this article. Cf. G. Police, *Quilombos dos Palmares*, pp. 26-27 e 250-254; e F. S. Gomes, *Palmares*, pp. 117-125

¹⁷ I refer here, especially, to the annexed document published by Edison Carneiro, *O Quilombo dos Palmares, 1630-1695*. São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1947 and to the works of Ernesto Ennes, *As Guerras nos Palmares: subsídios para a sua história*. São Paulo, Cia. Ed. Nacional, 1938 and *Os Primeiros Quilombos (subsídios para a sua história)*. Mimeograph, [1951]; and also Décio Freitas, *República dos Palmares. Pesquisa e comentários de documentos históricos do século XVII*, Maceió, Edufal, 2004.

basis of a chronicle written in 1678 with a published version from 1859, maybe the most well-known text about Palmares, which was invariably read and quoted as a truthful testimony without taking into account the context of its creation. The available sources, however, are rich and very interesting. From this group of sources, I highlight here three types of documents: the very text of the peace accord, the chronicle written in 1678 and three letters from the government of Pernambuco sent to the authorities in Palmares in this same year.

What first calls attention in examining these sources is that the accord was produced in the realm of the secretary of the government of Pernambuco: there is a registered copy in the books of this secretary and another that was annexed to a letter sent by the then governor of Pernambuco, Aires de Souza de Castro, to the Portuguese Prince on June 22, 1678.¹⁸ We are not dealing here with a formal accord or a “peace treaty”: more than simply registering a victory over the enemy or establishing an end to the hostilities, the text demonstrates a form of coexistence of political leaderships that recognized each other as such. The document is designated as being a “paper”¹⁹ in which Aires de Souza de Castro, in the name of the Prince Regent, declares the terms agreed upon with the ambassador sent by Gangazumba and asks for confirmation and agreement so that the accord can be implemented.²⁰

The “paper” exposes the result of the negotiations between the representatives of the two political powers: it documents the *concessions* and *promises* made, and indicates the necessity of a firm and secure commitment between the parts. The simultaneous remittance of the copies to Lisbon and Palmares confirms the necessity of the ratification of the accord by superior instances on both sides. The governor of Pernambuco spoke in the name of the Prince Regent – and was in a hurry to notify him about the development of events in Brazil. In the same way, the sons of Gangazumba spoke in the name of their father, who led other

¹⁸ The manuscript which is in Lisbon must have been produced at the same time as that sent to Palmares. It is the most complete and is signed by Aires de Souza de Castro, the reason for which I preferentially adopt it in my references in this paper. The register of the secretary of the government of Pernambuco only survived through a copy made in the eighteenth century, today held in the Archive of the University of Coimbra. Cf. “Cópia do papel que levaram os negros dos Palmares”. Document attached to the letter of Aires de Souza de Castro June, 22 1678. Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (henceforth AHU), AHU_ACL_CU_015, Cx. 11, D. 1116; “Papel que escreveu ao principal dos negros dos Palmares sobre as pazes que determinavam fazer, em 22 de junho de 1687”. *Disposições dos governadores de Pernambuco*, vol. 1 (1648-1696), fls. 334-334v, n. 6. Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra, Coleção Conde dos Arcos, (henceforth AUC, CCA), VI - 3^a - I - 1 - 31.

¹⁹ According to the *Vocabulário português e latino* de Raphael Bluteau (Coimbra, Collegio das Artes da Companhia de Jesus, 1712. Fac-simile ed., CD-Rom, Rio de Janeiro, UERJ, s.d.), the term designates a piece of paper in which something is written, but it can also signify “what is written or printed on it”.

²⁰ The initiative for the peace accord is a controversial question. The “paper” indicates that peace was “offered” by Gangazumba, but Aires de Souza de Castro in the letter written to the Prince Regent mentions that a “proposal” was brought to the “blacks”. “Cópia do papel que levaram os negros dos Palmares” and Carta de Aires de Souza de Castro de 22 de junho 1678. AHU_ACL_CU_015, Cx. 11, D. 1116.

“potentates” and had the power to oblige them to follow the agreement with the Council of the Captaincy.

The internal hierarchy of Palmares was not questioned; to the contrary, it was respected and taken into consideration:

“Your sons and family promised in your name that all the blacks of these Palmares and the most potentates of them came in peace, and that you obliged them in the case that somebody did not want to do it, and that you promised to deliver back all the blacks of these captaincies that had fled to Palmares.”²¹

The peace agreement (even with the threat of taking up the war again) implied the return of Gangazumba and his people to “obedience” to the Portuguese sovereign. Installed in the region of Cucaú, the inhabitants of Palmares became “residents” (*moradores*), with the right to plant and have “the same profits as the other vassals” of the Portuguese prince, without being obliged “by force to provide any particular service except for that of the said master”. Such autonomy was reinforced by a dual movement that at the same time recognized a political and cultural difference – which imposed the necessity of translators, for example – and associated the obtained servitude to the ritual of baptism:

“And so that you see the esteem with which we hold black people, which operates under our obedience, I send to you these two, a sergeant major and another captain of the infantry, very honorable and ancient soldiers because as they know the language better they will explain to you your conveniences, and the firmness of this whole paper, with which I have nothing more to say to you, and I will wait for you to do the honors that I did to your sons, who gained so much in this visit that they made here that they are already baptized by the grace of God.”²²

The agreement with the terms of the accord was given to Gangazumba less than one month later and the promises made in June 1678 were reiterated in an exchange of letters and presents between the government of Pernambuco and the leaders of Palmares, between June and November of the same year.²³ Written in the context of the comings and goings of “captains and soldiers” from both sides – from the officials of the “terço dos Henriques (black military regiment of Pernambuco) and the warriors from Palmares – the three letters from Aires de Souza de Castro to Gangazumba and Gangazona registered in the secretary of the government of Pernambuco follow the rituals of administrative writings and of the

²¹ “Cópia do papel que levaram os negros dos Palmares”. AHU_ACL_CU_015, Cx. 11, D. 1116.

²² Idem, *ibidem*.

²³ Cf. “Carta de Aires de Souza de Castro a Gangazumba sobre a vinda dos negros dos Palmares, de 24 de julho de 1678”; “Carta de Aires de Souza de Castro a Gangazumba sobre a sua chegada a Cucaú, de 12 de novembro de 1678”; “Carta de Aires de Souza de Castro a Gangazona sobre a sua vinda, de 12 de novembro de 1678”. *Disposições dos governadores de Pernambuco*, vol. 1 (1648-1696), AUC, CCA, VI - 3ª - I - 1 - 31, respectively fls. 336v, n. 13; fls. 337-337v, n. 15; e fls. 337v, n. 16.

dialogue between authorities with equivalent power and credits. The textual elements are clear: the deferential treatment in the second person plural, the vocative “friend” in the letters of November 1678, the enunciation of desires and conditions, the notices and description of the providences taken, - everything follows the practice of official correspondence, indicating the continuity of negotiations and the articulation of military force and diplomatic action.

The respect of Aires de Souza e Castro for the military and political hierarchy of Palmares is evident. Whether in Palmares or in Cucaú, the leadership of Gangazumba was not contested. To the contrary: known and named, his leadership is reaffirmed by the accord, by the letters and by the ritual characteristics in the relation between governmental authorities. On the side of the practical measures for the dislocation of people from Palmares to Cucaú, the governor and Gangazumba exerted themselves in the exchange of presents²⁴ and precautions.²⁵

The knowledge of the internal hierarchies of Palmares on the part of the colonial authorities was not something new. At the beginning of the 1660s, the governor Francisco de Brito Freire had proposed to the “chiefs of the *mocambos* (fugitive slave settlement), also in the name of the Portuguese Crown, the concession of freedom and lands where they could plant and install their *aldeias* (villages) in exchange for peace. On this occasion, however, the negotiations were not very successful.²⁶ The “leader of a *mocambo*” wanted to “deal with the accord” and a priest was sent as an ambassador.²⁷ But “the blacks, lacking reason, did not know how to evaluate [the proposal] because they not only left contemptuously and with scandalous words [as] they even obstinately sent their greater leader, who governs everybody, to decapitate the *cabo* [military leader] of a *mocambo* and another companion for wanting to accept the accord”.²⁸

²⁴ There are not many details about the “things of the house” sent by Gangazumba to the governor. Gangazumba received the “material for a dress” and, probably, an axe that he had requested. The sources indicate a ritual exchange of gifts between authorities with a clear political intention. The use of certain clothes was a sign of distinction among the Mbundo and thus the gifts could have had a special significance for Gangazumba. On the other hand, axes were not a traditional weapon among these people; those that had a blade in the form of a half moon were used by the Imbangala and by the warriors of Matamba. Cf. Beatriz Heintze, “A cultura material dos Ambundu segundo as fontes dos séculos XVI e XVII” *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, 10/11 (1989): 15-63.

²⁵ Aires de Souza de Castro is always preoccupied in mentioning the precautions taken with the wife and sons of Gangazumba who remained in his company during the negotiations. Cf. “Carta de Aires de Souza de Castro a Gangazumba de 12 de novembro de 1678”. AUC, CCA, IV, 3^a-I-1-31, fl. 337-337v, doc. 15.

²⁶ “Edital de 6 de dezembro de 1662”. AUC, CCA, IV, 3^a-I-1-31, fl. 86v-87, doc. 123.

²⁷ “Carta de 17 de abril de 1663”. AUC, CCA, IV, 3^a-I-1-31, fl. 91, doc. 137. Cf. Also carta de 18 de abril de 1663, AUC, CCA, IV, 3^a-I-1-31, fl. 74, doc. 85.

²⁸ “Carta de 23 de agosto de 1663”. AUC, CCA, IV, 3^a-I-1-31, fl. 93v-94v, doc. 144. This episode is briefly commented on by J. Antônio Gonsalves de Mello, “Brito Freyre, a sua história e Pernambuco” in: Francisco de Brito Freire, *Nova Lusitânia. História da guerra brasileira*. 2^a ed. Recife, Secretaria de Educação e Cultura,

The military term “*cabo*”²⁹ is used here to designate a chief of the fugitive slave settlements, but clearly there is a “greater” leader that governs “everybody”, above the leaders of particular *mocambos*. The documentation from the end of the decade of 1670 is much more detailed and precise. It indicates that the Portuguese authorities dealt directly with the “principal”, “great”, “major” or “king”, that not only governed the *mocambos*, their leaders and inhabitants, but also led a network of kin, which, in turn, occupied political and military posts.

The chronicle written in 1678 is particularly important in this context. Directed to a Portuguese audience, in the context of the return of the governor *dom* Pedro de Almeida to Lisbon, it was intended to describe the victory against Palmares and the peace accord celebrated with Gangazumba as a political triumph.³⁰ For this very reason, Palmares is characterized as a powerful enemy that “internally” threatened the colonial order – as feared as were the Dutch, recently expelled from the captaincy. The localization of the *mocambos*, the extension of their territory, their growth since the time of the Dutch occupation, their internal organization – everything shows that the peace accord achieved after the defeats inflicted by Fernão Carrilho in 1677, was not a simple victory against fugitive slaves, but a “happy restoration of these captaincies [of Pernambuco]”. The term “restoration” is significant: it was used to describe the war against Spain in 1640, the expulsion of the Dutch from Angola in 1648 and from Pernambuco in 1654. The victory against Palmares was, therefore, a military and political feat comparable to these others.

The description offered in this chronicle is organized in such a way to demonstrate that Palmares had Faith, Law and King. The *mocambos* did not just have a “king”, but also “ministers of Justice as well as of War”; and a “chapel, in which they sought relief from their sufferings” with images of the baby Jesus, of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception and of Saint Brás. The rhetorical scheme through which the Portuguese used to evaluate the degree of “civilization” of the people with which they had contact was used in this text in an inverse

1977, appendix; and M. C. Medeiros, *Igreja e dominação no Brasil escravista. O caso dos oratorianos de Pernambuco, 1659-1830*. João Pessoa, Idéia, 1993, p. 110.

²⁹ The term designates “one of the first places in the army”. Cf. R. Bluteau, *Vocabulário português e latino*, in the entry “cabo”.

³⁰ Anonymous document, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Manuscritos da Livraria, n.1185, *Papéis Vários*, tomo 1º, fls. 149-155v. The most well-known version of this chronicle is that published with the title “Relação das guerras feitas aos Palmares de Pernambuco no tempo do governador *dom* Pedro de Almeida de 1675 a 1678 (M. S. oferecido pelo Exm. Sr. Conselheiro Drummond)”. *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, 22 (1859): 303-329.

meaning to that used to disqualify Brazilian indigenous peoples.³¹ Palmares had “all the pretences of any Republic” and its inhabitants had not lost their “recognition of the Church”. Qualified as such, it constituted a State – and the victory achieved in 1678, as well as the peace accord with Gangazumba, were thus more glorious and honorable feats.³²

For this very reason, this text is rich in details. It reveals the names of the chiefs of the various *mocambos* under the government of Gangazumba, the relations of kinship and the place they occupied in the political and military hierarchy of Palmares: Acotirene, mother of Gangazumba; Gangazona, his brother; Tuculo, his son; Andalaquituxe and Zumbi, his nephews; Osenga, Dambrabanga, Pacassa, Dambi, great potentates, the chiefs of the *mocambos*. One of the prisoners is designated as “Gangamuissa, chief of all the people of Angola and son in law of the king, married to his two daughters”.³³ The royal kindred, sparsely referred to in various documents related to Palmares, was highlighted in this chronicle, possibly because it “ennobled” even more the political feat of Pedro de Almeida.

The kinship network had political dimensions: they were sons and brothers of the king that led the embassies and spoke in his name and two of Gangazumba’s sons remained in Recife to attest to the veracity of the words pledged. The political and military hierarchy of Palmares was thus known and accepted by the government of Pernambuco, and accompanied their installation in the lands of Cucaú. Gangazumba was “king and master” of a governing line, with power and jurisdiction over lands and people.³⁴

The existence of this lineage, as well as the Central African names, does not appear to worry the colonial authorities. All the sources converge to attest to the fact that the inhabitants of Palmares were people who came from Central Africa, especially from Angola.³⁵ In fact, since the end of the sixteenth century, the Africans imprisoned in this

³¹ Various Portuguese texts written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as that of Pero de Magalhães Gandavo (1576) and Frei Vicente do Salvador (1627), refer to the lack of the letters F, L, and R among indigenous peoples to attest to the absence of Faith, Law and King among them, in such a way as to accentuate their barbarity and justify the necessity of dominating them and indoctrinating them with the catechism.

³² The narrative procedures of this text are not, however, the fruit of an ethnocentric European and colonial outlook, incapable of understanding Africans or African Americans, as is affirmed in general in the historiography of Palmares. For an example of a formulation of this type of interpretation, see Robert Nelson Anderson, “O mito de Zumbi: implicações culturais para o Brasil e para a diáspora africana”. *Afro-Ásia*, 17 (1996): 99-119.

³³ Anonymous document, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Manuscritos da Livraria, n.1185, *Papéis Vários*, tomo 1º, fl. 153.

³⁴ In a recent article, Thornton explores the military dimension of the organization of Palmares. Cf. John K. Thornton, “Les États de l’Angola et la formation de Palmares (Brésil)” *Annales*, 63 (2008): 769-797.

³⁵ In a letter dated June 1, 1671, Fernão de Souza Coutinho, governor of Pernambuco, affirms, for example, that Palmares was formed by “blacks from Angola who fled the rigor of captivity and the factories of the sugar mills of this captaincy”. AHU_ACL_CU_015, Cx. 10, D. 917.

region were the principle labor force utilized in Brazil. "Without blacks there is no Pernambuco and without Angola there are no blacks" the priest Vieira once said.³⁶ This famous phrase synthesizes in an eloquent form what the statistical figures of the African slave trade in this period indicate. Throughout the seventeenth century, slaves from Angola represented 50 to 60% of all the African slave trade realized by Europeans. According to the rhythm of wars in Central Africa, between 9 and 12 thousand slaves a year were transported, totaling in exceptional occasions up to 15 thousand a year.³⁷ From the total of all the Africans exported from Central Africa, around 550 thousand landed in Brazil throughout the seventeenth century;³⁸ of these more than 150 thousand disembarked in Pernambuco.³⁹

The master spring of the presence of the Portuguese in Central Africa, the slave trade depended on the skilful combination of wars and political and military alliances. If, on the one hand, wars were the principal instrument to obtain slaves for the Portuguese colonies and for the African potentates, the Portuguese military power was also fundamental in submitting the *sobas* to pay tributes – paid in great part with prisoners. The political dominion over the Central African kingdoms and *sobados* also guaranteed privileges for Portuguese interests in the *feiras* (fairs) and commercial routes. Without wars and vassalage accords, as Beatriz Heintze, Linda Heywood and John Thornton have shown,⁴⁰ the slave ships that weighed anchor to the Americas could not have been furnished. There was, however, a syntax that conjugated war and peace, and articulated Portuguese authorities and local lineages from the Kongo, Ndongo, Matamba and Kasanje.

The presence of "tongues" (translators), mentioned in various passages of the documentation in relation to the peace accords with Palmares, indicates the recognition of the

³⁶ "Carta de Antonio Vieira ao marquês de Niza, de 12 de agosto de 1648". João Lúcio de Azevedo (ed.), *Antonio Vieira. Cartas*, Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, Casa da Moeda, 1970, vol. 1, p. 234.

³⁷ Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*. Nova York, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 268 and pp. 160-168.

³⁸ Cf. David Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment" *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 n. 1 (2001): 23-26 and Table III, p. 45; and David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrend, and David Richardson, "National participation in the Transatlantic slave trade: new evidence" in: José C. Curto e Renée Solodre-La-France (eds.), *Africa and the Americas. Interconnections during the slave trade*. Trenton, Africa World Press, 2005, pp. 13-41.

³⁹ Maurício Goulart estimates that between 1601 and 1652 about 108,000 slaves entered Pernambuco: "75,000 from 1601 to 1630; 6,000 from 1631 to 1636; 23,163 from 1637 to 1645; 2,000 in 1646-47; and not more than 2,000 from 1648 to 1652." Mauro estimates that in Pernambuco 75,000 slaves entered before 1630 and 108,000 between 1600 and 1652. Consult Maurício Goulart, *A escravidão africana no Brasil das origens à extinção do tráfico* [1950] 3ª ed. São Paulo, Alfa-Omega, 1975, p. 112 (The analysis that results in these numbers is found on pp. 109-111); Frédéric Mauro, *Le Portugal, le Brésil et l'Atlantique au XVIIIe siècle (1570-1670)*. Paris, S.E.V.P.E.N., 1960, pp. 174-180.

⁴⁰ In addition to L. M. Heywood and J. K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, especially Chapter 3, see Beatrix Heintze, "Angola nas garras do tráfico de escravos: as guerras do Ndongo (1611-1630)" *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, 1 (1984): 11-58; and, from the same author, "The Angolan vassal tributes of the 17th century". *Revista de História Econômica e Social*, 6, (1980): 57-78.

existence of a distinct and well characterized cultural and political field. Gangazumba negotiated and behaved correctly in the execution of the accord in a similar way to many African leaderships in front of the Portuguese authorities on the other side of the Atlantic. As such, he was identified by the colonial authorities as “king” of the Palmares, retainer of political powers vested in a network of family relations, which permitted him to speak in the name of his “subjects”.

As in Central Africa, the vassalage that Gangazumba submitted himself to implied, at the same time, a political and military relation. It involved “obedience” to the Portuguese government, the acceptance of its ecclesiastical mandates, the obligation to not flog fugitives, and military assistance in case of war. In exchange, the people of Palmares continued to maintain a relative autonomy in relation to internal questions and obtained the promise to not be attacked. Evidently it was an unequal relation and the clauses with sanctions applied only to the new vassals and not to the Portuguese.⁴¹ Therefore, to a greater extent than the rituals common to the Ancient Regime, the writing of the accord, the exchange of letters and presents, the deference between the parts are mainly imprecated in a political syntax that articulated war and vassalage which was conjugated in the two margins of the Atlantic to construct a form of colonial dominion.

Such a syntax, however, was not the only one operating in this case. If the Central African mode prevailed for Gangazumba, for the authorities in Pernambuco, however, it was interrelated to other ways of acting in relation to the inhabitants of the colony – as in the case of the indigenous *aldeias* or of the incorporation of natives and freed slaves in autonomous military regiments.

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Portuguese legislation recognized the freedom of indigenous people that were outside of colonial dominion. The legal texts discussed if such freedom was complete or not, but they were almost all unanimous in denying it if they refused Portuguese dominion, even establishing the terms and conditions of their enslavement.⁴² For those that were convinced by dialogue or by force of arms they had

⁴¹ In this respect, see Beatriz Heintze, “Luso-African feudalism in Angola? The vassal treaties of the 16th to the 18th century” *Revista Portuguesa de História*, 18 (1980): 111-131; and, from the same author, Heintze, Beatriz “Ngola a Mwiza: um sobado angolano sob domínio português no século XVII”. *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, 8/9 (1988): 221-233. Catarina Madeira Santos, “Escrever o poder. Os autos de vassalagem e a vulgarização da escrita entre as elites africanas Ndembu”. *Revista de História*, 155 (2006): 81-95.

⁴² Cf. Beatriz Perrone-Moisés, “Índios livres e índios escravos: os princípios da legislação indigenista do período colonial” in: Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (ed.), *História dos Índios no Brasil*. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras/SCM, 1992, pp.115-132; and also Mathias C. Kiemien, *The Indian policy of Portugal in the Amazon region, 1614-1693*. N. York, Octagon Books, 1973.

to agree (or were forced) to be dislocated from the interior to places close to the coast for their freedom and political autonomy to be legally admitted, and had to install themselves in *aldeias*, under the governance of Jesuit priest or of missionaries - or even lay administrators – according to the royal determination in vigor.⁴³

Localized in function of the interests of the colonial administration for the defense of the territory or of the colonial population in taking advantage of indigenous labor, the *aldeias* had certain lands recognized as territories under special jurisdiction.⁴⁴

Governed in the name of the Portuguese sovereign by priests, captains or even by indigenous peoples, they constituted a differentiated place in relation to other colonial villages and cities who were under the responsibility of the municipal councils (*câmaras*). The regime of the mission served in this way interests that combined Christian proselytism, the avid need for labor, and the more general concerns about the defense of colonial territory against the attacks of “uncivilized” indigenous peoples or of blacks from the *mocambos*.⁴⁵

The same ideas appear to have been utilized in relation to the establishment of the “*aldeia* of Cucaú”. In the letter in which Aires de Souza de Castro sent the text of the peace accord to the Prince in June 1678, he affirmed that there had been so much death of so many people and destruction, in addition to the prison of “women and children of the *principals*, that they [had been obliged’] to *come down* themselves and ask for peace with an unexpected fear”.⁴⁶ “*Principal*” was the term used to designate the chiefs of the *aldeias* – such that the word appears in the *Vocabulário* of Raphael Bluteau as “the title that is given in Brazil to the most esteemed people of the *aldeia* and govern it as the captain.”⁴⁷ The expeditions that explored the back country to “rescue” the indigenous peoples and force them to establish themselves in the missionary *aldeias* were called “*descimentos*” (“descents”).⁴⁸ As such, even

⁴³ At the beginning, the only people responsible for the missions were the Jesuits, but soon after other religious orders joined them. The law of 1611 restricted the jurisdiction of the priests to spiritual topics and determined that the government be exercised by a captain – in general a respected resident of the region. The law of April 9, 1655, for the state of Maranhão, and the provisions of October 17, 1653 and the law of September 12, 1663 prohibited the designation of captains and determined that the villages be governed by missionaries and by the “principals” of the indigenous nations. B. Perrone-Moisés, “Índios livres e índios escravos”, p. 119.

⁴⁴ This is one more topic that varied according to the laws promulgated, but it was always contemplated in legislation. Cf. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, “Terra indígena: história da doutrina e da legislação” in: *Os direitos dos índios. Ensaios e documentos*. São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1987, pp. 58-61.

⁴⁵ Georg Thomas, *Política indigenista dos portugueses no Brasil, 1500-1640*. São Paulo, Loyola, 1982, chaps. 5 e 6.

⁴⁶ “Carta de Aires de Souza de Castro de 22 de junho 1678”. AHU_ACL_CU_015, Cx. 11, D. 1116.

⁴⁷ R. Bluteau, *Vocabulário português e latino*, in the entry “principal”.

⁴⁸ See John Manuel Monteiro, *Negros da terra. Índios e bandeirantes nas origens de São Paulo*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1994, chap. 2; Nádia Farage, *As muralhas dos sertões. Os povos indígenas no Rio Branco e a colonização*, Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra/Anpocs, 1991, chap. 1; Ângela Domingues, *Quando os índios eram vassallos. Colonização e relações de poder no norte do Brasil na segunda metade do século XVIII*, Lisboa, CNCDP, 2000, chaps. 1 and 2.

though we can consider that the people of Palmares descended from the hills to Cuaçu, the verb *descer* (to descend) is an expression directly related to the great population dislocations that occurred as a result of the Portuguese indigenous policies. Cuaçu appears to have been understood under this rubric by the colonial authorities – and maybe this may explain the fact that the freedom conceded to those born in Palmares did not rouse any great discussion until the moment in which the *aldeia* of Cuaçu was demolished and its residents captured (around April 1680).⁴⁹

Also significant is the mention of the desire of the people of Palmares not only to “become vassals and live under protection” of the royal regime, but also to receive the “*baptismal water*”. The conversion did not impede the process of enslavement of Africans, who were baptized before or after their voyage across the Atlantic. Many authors at that time consider that slavery could have been even a means of instruction and salvation in the Christian faith.⁵⁰ For the indigenous people, the submission to the Portuguese was followed by conversion without losing their freedom (at least from the legal point of view). In their *aldeias*, fixed in lands with their own jurisdiction, converted and living under the tutelage of religious orders, they could be incorporated in the colonial universe.⁵¹

This massive conversion, implicated in the settlement of *aldeias*, was also present in the establishment of Cuaçu. The text of the peace accord indicates clearly the intention of the

⁴⁹ The reenslavement of the inhabitants of the village of Cuaçu sparked a long debate about freedom and the captivity of blacks in Palmares, which culminated in the court order (*alvará*) of March 10, 1682. This legal text considered the accord of 1678 a mere “favor” conceded by the governor of Pernambuco to those that submitted themselves to royal obedience, but maintained the freedom conceded to the “blacks and mulattoes, their wives and children and descendents” who had sought royal “obedience”. Those who disrespected the royal concession ended up being considered traitors, lost their freedom and were condemned to death. In more general terms, the court order reiterated the principal of captivity for all those who were slaves before going to Palmares, as well as for those “children and descendents of captive women, following their birth.” Alvará de 10 de março de 1682. Silvia Hunold Lara (ed.), “Legislação sobre Escravos Africanos na América Portuguesa in José Andrés-Gallego (ed.), *Nuevas Aportaciones a la Historia Jurídica de Iberoamérica*. Madrid, Fundación Histórica Tavera/Digibis/Fundación Hernando de Larramendi, 2000 (CD-Rom). The date of the destruction of Cuaçu is estimated from the letter of the governor of the captaincy of Pernambuco, Aires de Sousa de Castro on April 22, 1680. AHU_ACL_CU_015, Cx. 12, D. 1163. The document is illegible and its content is summarized in the “Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino de 8 de agosto de 1680”. AHU_ACL_CU_Consultas de Pernambuco, Cod. 265, fl. 29v.

⁵⁰ For a general vision of the polemics surrounding the legitimacy of the captivity of indigenous peoples and of Africans in Portugal, see A. J. R. Russell-Wood, “Iberian expansion and the issue of black slavery: changing Portuguese attitudes, 1440-1770”, *The American Historical Review*, 83 n.1 (1978): 16-42; and also Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *O trato dos viventes. Formação do Brasil no Atlântico sul*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2000, pp. 155-187.

⁵¹ Cf. B. Perrone-Moisés, “Índios livres e índios escravos”, pp.115-132; and also M. C. Kiemen, *The Indian policy of Portugal in the Amazon region, 1614-1693*. For a more detailed discussion of the necessity of the tutelage of the missionaries, see Carlos Alberto de Moura Ribeiro Zeron, *La Compagnie de Jésus et l'institution de l'esclavage au Brésil: les justifications d'ordre historique, théologique et juridique, et leur intégration par une mémoire historique (XVIe-XVIIe siècles)*, Doutorado, Paris, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1998.

government of Pernambuco, after the establishment of the village, to “provide priests” so that the people could learn Christian doctrine, and “live and die under the faith of Christ”. A posterior letter of Aires de Souza de Castro allows us to identify that “two priests of the Recoleta of Santo Amaro” were sent to Cucaú – that is, belonging to the Congregation of Oratory, a reformed order of Italian origin, created a few years before, in 1662, with a clear missionary vocation.⁵²

On the other hand, it is necessary to remember that baptism and the attribution of a Christian name to the native leaders in the colonial area, in a more individualized manner, marked the ritual of vassalage and of other forms of incorporation of Africans and indigenous peoples to the Portuguese colonial hierarchical network.

When the Portuguese arrived at the Zaire estuary in 1483 the Kongo was a relatively strong kingdom structured in provinces (such as Soyo, Mbata, Wandu and Nkusu) and governed by local lineages or by chiefs chosen by the king and dependent on him.⁵³ From the end of the fifteenth century, the Portuguese penetration in the Kongo region was consolidated with the conversion of the *mani* Mvemba-a-Nzinga to Christianity in which he was baptized with the name Afonso I. The capital ended up being called San Salvador and the Kongolese nobility, in addition to being incorporated to Christianity, adopted Portuguese names and customs, such as wearing silks and other fine materials, as signs of social differentiation and distinction. The exchange of letters between monarchs, the practice of sending Kongolese infants to study in Portugal, the evangelizing missions and the embassies between the two kingdoms were common in the sixteenth century.⁵⁴ In the seventeenth century, the negotiations between the Portuguese and the kingdom of Ndongo also involved baptism of various members of the royal family - perhaps the most well-known was Njinga, the oldest

⁵² “Carta de Aires de Souza de Castro de 8 de agosto de 1679”. AHU_ACL_CU_015, Cx. 12, D. 1144. This letter is also partially illegible. Its content may be recuperated through a summary made by the Overseer Council in January, 26 1680. AHU_ACL_CU_Consultas de Pernambuco, Cod. 265, fls. 26-27v. About the Oratorians in Pernambuco see Cf. Evaldo Cabral de Mello, “A briga dos Nêris” *Estudos Avançados*, 8, n. 20 (1994): 153-181; and, from the same author, *A fronda dos mazombos*, chap. 3. Also consult Maria do Céu Medeiros, *Igreja e dominação no Brasil escravista*.

⁵³ The principal works about the Kongo in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are: W. G. L. Randles, *L'ancien royaume du Congo des origines à la fin du XIXe siècle*. [1968] Paris, École Pratique des Hautes Études/Mouton, 2002; John K. Thornton, *The kingdom of Kongo. Civil war and transition, 1641-1718*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1983; Anne Hilton, *The kingdom of Kongo*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985. For a panoramic vision in Portuguese see Alberto da Costa e Silva, *A manilha e o libambo. A África e a escravidão, de 1500 a 1700*. Rio de Janeiro, Nova Fronteira, 2002, pp. 359-405.

⁵⁴ See also Carlos Alberto Garcia, “A acção dos portugueses no antigo reino do Congo (1482-1543)” *Boletim Geral do Ultramar*, 513 (1968):3-30; 515 (1968):11-36; 516 (1968):77-89; Ilídio do Amaral, *O reino do Congo, os mbundu (ou ambundos), o reino dos “ngola” (ou de Angola) e a presença portuguesa, de finais do século XV a meados do século XVI*. Lisboa, Ministério da Ciência e Tecnologia, 1996, pp. 24-29; Adriano A. T. Parreira, *The kingdom of Angola and Iberian Interference, 1483-1643*. Upsala, 1985, chap. 1.

sister of the king, during negotiations for a peace treaty with João de Souza, governor of Angola in 1622 when she adopted the name Ana de Souza.⁵⁵ Politically skilful, she conjugated with wisdom both a proximity and distance from the Portuguese and from Catholicism: she returned to African customs in associating herself with the Imbangala, and afterwards allied herself to the Dutch, and later, in 1656, converted once again, being buried in a Christian mode in 1663.⁵⁶

On the western margins of the Atlantic, analogous practices were utilized with indigenous leaders. It is easy to record some examples. In the context of the expulsion of the French from Guanabara (1555-1565) the chief Temiminó Araribóia was baptized and adopted the name of Martim Afonso de Sousa, fighting on the same side as Mem de Sá. For his military feats, he received lands and decorations, becoming one of the most prominent people in the city of Rio de Janeiro at the end of the century.⁵⁷ The indigenous leader Potiguaçu, from the Potiguar nation, converted to Catholicism in 1614, adopting the name Antonio Felipe Camarão. Educated by the Jesuits, he achieved great fame from 1630 onwards in leading combatants of his nation in the struggle against the Dutch with victories that gave him honorific titles and other decorations. After his death in 1648, members of his family continued to command the indigenous military regiment “Camarões” until at least 1730.⁵⁸

The constitution of the autonomous military corps was not exclusively an indigenous policy. The ex-slave Henrique Dias, another hero of the war for the restoration of Pernambuco, received titles and decorations, and was named “governor and leader of the creoles, blacks and mulattoes of Brazil”. He commanded the “regiment of black people”, generally known as the “regiment of the Henriques”, in which many black men, free or freed, took part.⁵⁹ They were “black people who operated under the [royal] obedience”: they played

⁵⁵ It was during these negotiations that Njinga sat on the back of a female slave to show herself equal to the Portuguese. Scholars differ as to the sources and significance of this gesture. With respect to this, see L. M. Heywood and J. K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, p. 124-126; and Luís da Câmara Cascudo, “A rainha Jinga no Brasil” *Made in Africa*. Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 1965, pp. 25-32. For a panoramic approach to the trajectory of Njinga see Roy Glasgow, *Njinga. Resistência africana à investida do colonialismo português em Angola, 1582-1663*. (trad.) São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1982; and Selma Pantoja, *Njinga Mbandi. Mulher, guerra e escravidão*. Brasília, Thesaurus, 2000.

⁵⁶ A new overview of Njinga's life is being investigated by Marina de Mello e Souza. See Marina de Mello e Souza, “A rainha Jinga de Matamba e o catolicismo (África Central, século XVII)” in: José Martínez Millán, Maria Paula Marçal Lourenço (eds.), *Las relaciones discretas entre las Monarquías Hispánica y Portuguesa: Las Casas de las Reinas (siglos XV - XIX)*. Madrid, Polifemo, 2009, vol. 3, p. 2085-2114.

⁵⁷ Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida, *Metamorfoses indígenas. Identidade e cultura nas aldeias coloniais do Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro, Arquivo Nacional, 2003, especially chap. 3.

⁵⁸ Ronald Raminelli, “Honras e malogros: A trajetória da família Camarão” in: Ronaldo Vainfas and Rodrigo Bentes (eds.), *Império de várias faces*. São Paulo, Alameda, 2009, pp. 175-191.

⁵⁹ Regarding the “terço dos Henriques” (Regiment of the Henriques), see Kalina Vanderlei Silva, “Os Henriques nas Vilas Açucareiras do Estado do Brasil: Tropas de Homens Negros em Pernambuco, séculos XVII e XVIII” *Estudos de História*, 9 n.2 (2002): 145-194; Hebe Mattos, “Henrique Dias: expansão e limites da

an important part in the defense of the captaincy against the Dutch, against “blacks who rose up” that lived in the *mocambos*, even ending up in auxiliary expeditions on the other side of the Atlantic.

Thus the vassalage of Gangazumba and Gangazona, as well as with the baptism of their sons, did not constitute an exception. We know little yet about the destiny of people in Palmares who remained linked to the colonial authorities. One of the sons of Gangazuma who took part in the embassy that negotiated the peace accord died around November 1678, but it is possible to find some vestiges of his companions in later documents. Domingos Loreto Couto, in the middle of the eighteenth century, in highlighting the “valorous” “black men” of Pernambuco mentions *dom* Pedro de Souza Castro Ganazona (sic), born in Cucaú, son of Gangazumba, and Brás de Souza Castro, brother of Gangazona and also son of Gangazumba. Both had fought against “rebel blacks”.⁶⁰ Free and Christian, mixing Central African and Christian names, these black men could occupy political and military positions similar to those conceded to Felipe Camarão and Henrique Dias and their successors.

The incorporation of the fugitives in the military regiments, as part of the process of submission to Portuguese dominion, was also not a new thing. In 1640, to finish off some *mocambos* which had formed in the region of the San Francisco river, the Marquis of Montalvão, vice-king of Brazil, proposed the sending of a Henrique Dias regiment and of a Jesuit priest “that knows the language of the blacks”, so that they could “deal with them and reduce them” in exchange for freedom and enlistment in the freed men’s regiment. Enlisted and freed, they could remain in the *mocambo* if they “did not admit more fugitive blacks”.⁶¹ The proposal did not last, in part because of the opposition of the municipal council of Salvador – but the fact that it had been made indicates that it was within the range of political alternatives available in the period.

These elements permit us to make two important observations. In the first place, they point out the possibility of establishing a new chronology for the history of Palmares, formulated from the internal characteristics of the *mocambos* and not from the wars realized against them, as the historiography has traditionally done.

justiça distributiva no Império Português” in: Ronaldo Vainfas; Georgina Silva dos Santos; Guilherme Pereira das Neves (eds.), *Retratos do Império. Trajetórias individuais no mundo português nos séculos XVI a XIX*. Niterói, EDUFF, 2007, pp. 29-46.

⁶⁰ Domingos Loreto Couto, *Glórias de Pernambuco e desagrvos do Brasil* [1757], *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional*, 25 (1903): 107. The information also appears in Ivan Alves Filho, *Memorial dos Palmares*, p. 91.

⁶¹ Termo da câmara de Salvador de 25 de novembro de 1640. (Arquivo Municipal de Salvador, Livro de atas do senado da câmara de Salvador, livro 3, armário 62) in: Luiz Viana Filho, *O negro na Bahia*. 2ª ed. São Paulo, Martins/ INL, 1976, pp.139-140.

It is quite probable that the first fugitives from the beginning of the seventeenth century had been inspired by the maroon communities of Imbangala to regroup themselves and continue living far from slavery, as Stephen Palmié and Stuart Schwartz have suggested.⁶² In this period the *mocambos* were dispersed and did not achieve a singular unity. As some historians have already noticed, the term “*palmar*”, a grove of palm trees, or “*palmares*” appears many times in the official correspondence to designate areas covered with palms in the region of Alagoas and Pernambuco.⁶³ There were thus many “blacks of the *palmares*”. Just in 1612, in writing his report about the captaincies of Brazil, Diogo de Campos Moreno was more precise, distinguishing “a site between hills which is called Palmares”, situated 30 leagues into the back country, where they were accustomed to hide fugitive slaves from the captaincy of Pernambuco.⁶⁴ The fame of these “revolted blacks of the *palmar*” was slowly configuring a specific nomenclature. In becoming a particular group with a known locale, Palmares also began to be a population contingent, which was computed in different moments to be between 10 and 30 thousand people.⁶⁵ The estimates appear however to have been more connected to a political evaluation of the danger that these revolted blacks represented than the actual data about the population of Pernambuco, present in the contemporary sources or the results of historical research.⁶⁶

The identification of the group and the dimensions of its population preceded the more detailed knowledge about who were their leaders and what was the form of their organization. The sources indicate with clarity that, at the end of the 1670s, we are no longer dealing with people without roots and without lineages, as in the *mocambos* in the first half of

⁶² See, especially, Stephen Palmié, “African States in the New World? Remarks on the Tradition of Transatlantic Resistance” in: Thomas Bremer e Ulrich Fleischmann (eds.), *Alternative cultures in the Caribbean. First International Conference of the Society of Caribbean Research, Berlin 1988* Frankfurt, Vervuert, 1993, pp. 55-67; and Stuart B. Schwartz, “Rethinking Palmares: slave resistance in colonial Brazil”, *Slaves, peasants, and rebels*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1992, pp. 103-136.

⁶³ Raymond K Kent, “Palmares: An African State in Brazil” *Journal of African History*, 6: 2 (1965): 164 and Robert N. Anderson, “The *Quilombo* of Palmares: A New Overview of a Maroon State in Seventeenth-Century Brazil.” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28 (1996): 551.

⁶⁴ Diogo de Campos Moreno, *Livro que dá razão do Estado do Brasil - 1612*. (ed. Helio Vianna) Recife, Arquivo Público Estadual, 1955, pp. 190-191.

⁶⁵ Cf. Gaspar Barléu [Caspar van Baerle], *História dos feitos recentemente praticados durante oito anos no Brasil*. Belo Horizonte, Itatiaia/Edusp, 1974, p. 253; Francisco de Brito Freire, *Nova Lusitânia. História da guerra brasileira*. [1675] Ed atual. e rev. São Paulo, Beca, 2001, p. 177; Documento anônimo, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Manuscritos da Livraria, n.1185, *Papéis Vários*, tomo 1º, fls. 150v. It is quite probable that the descriptions of Palmares by Barléu were partially destroyed by the Dutch expeditions and do not correspond exactly to the Palmares described in the decades of 1660-1680 which we are discussing here.

⁶⁶ In commenting on these figures, Stuart B. Schwartz considered that, if the region possessed approximately 200 mills in the middle of the seventeenth century, with an average of 100 slaves in each one, the number of inhabitants of Palmares would equal the total number of inhabitants in the entire sugar economy of the region. See S. B. Schwartz, pp. 123. Cf. Also João José Reis, “Quilombos e revoltas escravas no Brasil”. *Revista USP*, 28 (1995/6): 16-17.

the seventeenth century. Raymond Kent was correct in observing that in Palmares an independent African state was in formation.⁶⁷ Not just formed from people coming from Central Africa, but as a kingdom with a royal lineage.

It is possible that in 1678 Gangazumba had negotiated to save his lineage and his subjects from complete destruction after the devastating attacks commanded by Fernão Carrilho. It is also probable that, as many Central African *sobas* did, he had procured alliances to solidify his power and make it recognized and respected by his “neighbors”. The two possibilities are not exclusive – and both reveal that, on this margin of the Atlantic, there were men and women who were inspired by a Central African political culture.

This leads us to the second observation. In the last decades, to know if slaves recreated or transformed the African inheritance that they had brought with them, or if they created a new culture, and if it was more or less Africanized, has become a debate permeated by diverse engagements.⁶⁸ A great part of this discussion has been developed in terms of the “cultural baggage” or “cultural set” brought by the slaves to use the expression of Mintz and Price.⁶⁹ What has been highlighted are values and daily customs, patterns of social and family relationships, linguistic practices and religious beliefs. The debate regarding the political dimensions of this “baggage” is present, without doubt, but in a very limited form.

The analysis of the political aspects of the relations between the colonial authorities and the leaders in Palmares on the occasion of the accord of 1678 reveals that, in crossing the Atlantic, Africans brought with them a political grammar: although the “princes and princesses” had not yet been enslaved and without their “courts and monarchies” being transported to the New World, a manner of creating societies and of organizing them could certainly accompany the men and women of the diaspora. Besides being the carriers of “immense quantities of knowledge, information and beliefs” they were also political agents.⁷⁰

The analysis conducted here permits us to verify that there was a political experience that was accumulated in the various margins of the Atlantic occupied by the Portuguese; of diverse modes and varied paths, they crossed the seas. The accumulation of experience was not a privilege of Europeans. Central Africans possessed a political syntax that informed the

⁶⁷ Raymond K. Kent, “Palmares: An African State in Brazil” *Journal of African History*, 6: 2 (1965): 161-175. The article was later published in Richard Price (ed.), *Maroon Societies. Rebel slave communities in the Americas*. New York, Anchor, 1973, pp.170-190.

⁶⁸ For a survey of these debates, see Richard Price, “O milagre da crioulização: retrospectiva”. *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos*, 25 n. 3 (2003): 383-419.

⁶⁹ Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The birth of African-American culture. An anthropological perspective*. [1976] Boston, Beacon Press, 1992, p. 47.

⁷⁰ I make reference here to the observations of S. W. Mintz and R. Price, *The birth of African-American culture*, pp. 18-19.

way they dealt with the Portuguese and other Europeans that were present in Africa and that was refined through contact with them. The men and women coming from Angola to Brazil – and to Pernambuco - brought with them this political culture and applied it in the New World, to survive as slaves, to flee and live in the palm groves.

In Central Africa, the traditional mode of organizing society, through the *kilombos* (military camps) in the case of the Imbangala, or from the royal lineages, in the case of other Central African groups, was combined with a syntax that articulated wars and alliances to form political hierarchies among the Central African kingdoms. The Portuguese connected themselves to this political structure, as political and military partners, interested as they were in obtaining slaves, through their indirect control of the commercial routes and of imposing tributes. From the other side of the Atlantic, acting according to this political grammar, Gangazumba could have negotiated peace in 1678 as an objective to defend or stabilize the kingdom of Palmares. But Aires de Souza de Castro and many others in the Overseas Council in Lisbon saw in this other possibilities. The peace accord opened a space in which they could practice a politics of constructing *aldeias*, as in the case of indigenous peoples, obliging them to “descend” and install themselves in *aldeias* under the tutelage of missionaries. It could also have been a way to militarily incorporate good vassals that could serve the Crown in its necessities of defense against external and internal enemies. The Central African political syntax – as much from the point of view of the colonial authorities as to that of Gangazumba and his people – could not be practiced in the same form on this side of the Atlantic. Not because it was mixed or creolized, but simply because here the political and military context was different.

Cucaú appears to have been constituted as an alternative path in many respects. For many inhabitants of Palmares, maybe it was a form of obtaining freedom, land to work and security to survive and grow. For this very reason, the refuge of men and women that had conquered freedom after so many wars did not only represent a threat to the masters of the sugar mills in Pernambuco, but also generated polemics in Lisbon.

The village of Cucaú was destroyed in a few months and the strategy of Gangazumba failed. But it was not forgotten. In being consulted in 1691 about the suggestion of an Italian religious representative “going to Palmares” to which everything indicates was an attempt to propose a new accord, the priest Antônio Vieira pondered that in fact,

“there was only one effective and efficacious way of truly reducing them, that was his majesty and all his masters conceding to them, spontaneous, liberal and secure freedom, living in these sites as other Indians, free people and that then the priest could have his parishes and indoctrinate them like the others.”

As we can see, more than ten years later, the echoes of the accord of 1678 were still heard. To confront the strong *mocambos* such as Palmares, the Jesuit, faithful to the program of his order, proposed the solution of an *aldeia*. But, at the same time, he recognized that this was an impractical alternative since it

“would be the total destruction of Brazil, since the other blacks knowing that through this means they could be free, each city, each town, each place, each sugar mill, would soon become other Palmares, fleeing and going to the forests with all their stock, that is nothing more than their own body.”⁷¹

The evaluation of Vieira was correct; he only erred on one point: the stock of these men and women who had fled to the bush was much greater than just their own “body”.

⁷¹ Carta do padre Antônio Vieira a Roque Monteiro Paim de 2 de julho de 1691. J. L. de Azevedo (ed.), *Antonio Vieira. Cartas*, vol. 3, p. 639. For an analysis of this report of Vieira see Ronaldo Vainfas, “Deus contra Palmares. Representações senhoriais e idéias jesuíticas” in: J. J. Reis e F. S. Gomes (eds.), *Liberdade por um Fio*, pp. 75-79.