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PALMARES: AN AFRICAN STATE IN BRAZIL*

R. K. KENT

WITHOUT slaves from Africa, reported an early Portuguese source, 'it is impossible to do anything in Brazil'.¹ Although prior arrivals are suspected, the first known landing of slaves from Africa on Brazilian soil took place in 1552.² In 1580, five years after the founding of Loanda and on the eve of Brazil's sugar boom, there were no fewer than 10,000 Africans in Brazil.³ Fifty years later, Pernambuco alone imported 4,400 slaves annually from Africa.⁴ It also contained 150 *engenhos*, or a third of the total sugar-mill and plantation complex in Brazil.⁵ In 1630, the Dutch West India Company (WIC) captured Pernambuco, and within a decade Portugal had abandoned Brazil to the Dutch. It was ultimately the decision of local settlers, the *moradores*, to fight the West India Company that led to restoration of Portuguese control in 1654. The Dutch retreat from Brazil, however, was secured through a joint Afro-Portuguese effort which gave the Black Regiment of Henrique Dias its colonial fame. If early settlement and a sugar-based economy could not have been sustained without the African labourer, neither could the Portuguese continue to hold Brazil without the African soldier. The subsequent evolution of Brazil is no less a story of Euro-African enterprise. Exploitation of gold and diamonds in the eighteenth century, pioneering shifts of population from the coast to the interior, dilution of monoculture, formation of mining states or advent of an abolitionist movement in the nineteenth century were all dependent on the same combination.⁶ The blend of race, language and culture in contemporary Brazil confirms this evolution.

Africa's impact on Brazil and, more generally, the role of the Negro⁷

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¹ Quoted by J. A. G. de Neto Mello in *Novos Estudos Afro-Brasileiros*, 1937, II, 205. The original source is *Breve Discurso Sobre o Estado das Quatras Capitánias Conquistadas* (n.d.).

² Artur Hehl Neiva, *Proveniencia das Primeiras Levas dos Escravos Africanos*, Anais, Instituto Historico e Geographico Brasileiro (1949), IV, 491-2.

³ Pedro Calmon, *Historia do Brasil* (1959), II, 347.

⁴ Charles R. Boxer, *Salvador de Sà and the Struggle for Brazil and Angola, 1602-1686* (1952), 225.

⁵ Frederic Mauro, *Le Portugal et l'Atlantique, 1570-1670* (1960), 193 (Table).

⁶ The standard English-language works are: Charles R. Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil* (1961); Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* (1956); and Arthur Ramos, *The Negro in Brazil* (1939).

⁷ 'Negro', as a term used in colonial Brazil, did not apply to *pretos* ('Blacks') alone. It included sometimes *pardos* or *gente do cor*, people 'of colour' not easily accepted as either *pretos* or *brancos* ('Whites'). It also applied to *crioulos* or those born in Brazil of African or mixed parentage, to *ladinos* or those who spoke Portuguese and usually espoused the Catholic faith, and to the *Africanos* or those who were neither Portuguese-speaking nor native to Brazil.

in Brazilian history and society are subjects of an extensive literature.⁸ Its principal stress is on assimilation rather than divergence, and frequently the early colonial society has been postulated from descriptions left by European and North American travellers who visited Brazil much later.⁹ It is hence not surprising that active Negro resistance to slavery in Brazil has not received comparable attention and is consequently less known.

According to one working definition, there were three basic forms of active resistance, namely fugitive slave settlements called *quilombos*, attempts at seizure of power, and armed insurrections which sought neither escape nor control but amelioration.¹⁰ The latter two prevailed in the first half of the nineteenth century, a period of political transition in Brazil and of accelerated slave trade with Africa.¹¹ They encompass, for example, nine Bahian revolts between 1807–35, which involved a number of Hausa, Yoruba and Kwa-speaking groups, as well as the Ogboni Society, Muslim *alufas* and even a back-to-Africa movement.¹² The *quilombos* constitute a pre-nineteenth-century phenomenon and are of considerable interest to the African historian. They came closest to the idea of recreating African societies in a new environment and against consistently heavier odds. Once formed, the *quilombos* were regarded as a threat to the Portuguese plantation, an inducement for escape from the slave hut. They were rarely, therefore, allowed to last a long time. Of the ten major *quilombos* in colonial Brazil, seven were destroyed within two years of being formed. Four fell in the state of Bahia in 1632, 1636, 1646 and 1796. The other three met the same fate in Rio in 1650, Parahyba in 1731 and Piumhy in 1758. One *quilombo*, in Minas Gerais, lasted from 1712 to 1719. Another, the 'Carlota' of Mato Grosso, was wiped out after existing for twenty-five years, from 1770 to 1795.

Nothing, however, compares in the annals of Brazilian history with the 'Negro Republic' of Palmares in Pernambuco. It spanned almost the entire seventeenth century. Between 1672–94, it withstood on the average one Portuguese expedition every fifteen months.¹³ In the last *entrada* against Palmares, a force of 6,000 took part in 42 days of siege.¹⁴ The Portuguese

⁸ For a recent summary in the pages of this Journal, see José Honório Rodrigues, 'The Influence of Africa on Brazil and of Brazil on Africa', *J.A.H.*, III (1962), 49–67.

⁹ Cf. J. Codman, *Ten Months in Brazil* (Boston, 1867); L. Couty, *L'Esclavage au Brésil* (Paris, 1881); C. H. Dent, *A Year in Brazil* (London, 1886); G. Gardner, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil, 1836–1841* (London, 1849); D. P. Kidder, *Sketches of Residence and Travels in Brazil* (London, 1845); H. Koster, *Travels in Brazil, 1809–1815* (Philadelphia, 1817, 2 vols.); A. de Saint-Hilaire, *Voyages dans l'Intérieur du Brésil* (Paris, 1852); and J. B. von Spix and C. F. P. von Martius, *Travels in Brazil, 1817–1820* (London, 1824, 2 vols.).

¹⁰ Edison Carneiro, *O Quilombo dos Palmares, 1630–1695* (1947), 13.

¹¹ Alfredo Gomes, *Achegas para a Historia do Trafico Africano no Brasil*, Anais, I.H.G.B. (1950), v, 56 (Tables I and II).

¹² See: Etienne Ignace Brasil, *La Secte Musulmane des Malês et leur Revolte en 1835*, Anthropos (1909), IV, 99–105 and 405–15; A. E. de Caldas Britto, *Levantos de Pretos na Bahia*, Revista, I.H.G.B. (Bahia) (1903), XXIX, 69–90; and Nina R. Rodrigues, *Os Africanos no Brasil* (1945) for pertinent chapter.

¹³, ¹⁴ Sebastião da Rocha Pitta, *Historia da America Portuguesa* (first edition 1730), 1880, Book VIII, 239; Robert Southey, *History of Brazil*, III, 1819, 27; Ernesto Ennes,

Crown sustained a cumulative loss of 400,000 cruzados,¹⁵ or roughly three times the total revenue lease of eight Brazilian Captaincies in 1612.¹⁶ As Brazil's classic *quilombo*, Palmares gained two more distinctions. It opened the study of Negro history in modern Brazil. Minutes of the Brazilian Historical Institute reveal that Palmares caused lively discussions in 1840, and that search for written materials relative to it began in 1851.¹⁷ Important gaps in knowledge persist, but enough primary sources have been found and published to trace the development of Palmares, to examine it as a society and government, and to suggest its significance to both Brazilian and African history.¹⁸

I

Early writers attributed the birth of Palmares to Portuguese-Dutch struggles for Pernambuco, from which slaves profited by escaping in groups.¹⁹ They made no reference to Palmares as a *quilombo*. Southey came across the term in a Minas Gerais decree of 1722.²⁰ An official letter, sent from Pernambuco to Lisbon in 1692,²¹ contains the first and only definition of Palmares as a *quilombo* in primary sources. The point is worth stressing. The accepted definition of a *quilombo* as a fugitive slave settlement has been continuously applied to Palmares since the turn of this century, and the problem of interpretation has been more difficult as a result. An early nineteenth-century historian, for example, could easily classify Palmares as the 'unusual exception, a real government of escaped Blacks on Brazilian soil'.²² But subsequent identification of the state 'The Palmares "Republic" of Pernambuco: Its Final Destruction', *The Americas* (1949), v, 209-10.

¹⁵ Ernesto Ennes, *As Guerras nos Palmares* (1938), 113.

¹⁶ Engel Sluiter in preface to the 'Report on the State of Brazil, 1612', *Hispanic American Historical Review* (1949), xxix/4, 521; full Portuguese text reproduced, 521-62. It is generally accepted the Diogo de Campos Moreno, aide to governor Diogo de Meneses (1608-12), penned the 'Rezão do Estado do Brasil'.

¹⁷ *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* (1841), III, 151-4; (1851), XIV, 491.

¹⁸ First-hand descriptions (1645), 'Diário da Viagem do Capitão João Blaer aos Palmares', actually written by Jürgens Reijmbach (extract from the *Brieven en Papiere uit Brasilien*, translated into Portuguese by Alfredo de Carvalho for the *Revista do Instituto Arqueológico Pernambucano* (1902), x, 87-96; (1675-8) 'Relação das Guerras feitas aos Palmares de Pernambuco no tempo do Governador d. Pedro de Almeida', *R.I.H.G.B.* (1859), xxii, 303-29. Material from the Municipality of Alagoas: (1668-80) 22 'Documentos' from the *Segundo Livro de Veracões* (n.d.). Material from the Arquivo Histórico Colonial in Lisbon: (1671-97) 95 'Documentos' collected and published by Ernesto Ennes (1938), 133-484. First-hand descriptions and materials from Municipality of Alagoas have been printed together in the document appendix to Edison Carneiro's *O Quilombo dos Palmares*, 2nd edition (1958), 201-68, and will be quoted from that volume. Material of dubious value: 'Memória dos feitos que se deram durante os primeiros anos da Guerra com os Negros quilombolas, dos Palmares', *R.I.H.G.B.* (1876), xxxix, 293-322. This would-be 'Memória dos feitos' has been discredited as a doctored copy of the 'Relação das Guerras', published in the same *Review* seventeen years earlier.

¹⁹ Cf. Pitta, 1880, Book VIII, 235; Southey (1819), III, 23; Dominicos Do Loreto Couto, *Desaggravos do Brasil e glorias do Pernambuco* (1757), Book VIII, chap. 4; and F. A. de Varnhagen, *Historia geral do Brasil*, 1930 ed., III, 319.

²⁰ *History* (1819), III, 248 and 248n.

²¹ Montebello to Overseas Council, 5 Sept. 1692, in Ennes (1938), 243.

²² Ferdinand Denis, *Résumé de l'Histoire du Brésil* (1825), 147.

which was a major historical event with a mere colony of escaped slaves could not provide a framework to fit the problem. *Ki-lombo*, according to Cavazzi,²³ was a Jaga war camp, and there is no lack of sources which have translated it correctly as 'arrayal'.²⁴ Could a historico-linguistic link between a *Palmares* in a formative stage and the Jaga *ki-lombo* perhaps be assumed, *faute de mieux*?

Slaves who freed themselves by escaping into the bush became something of a problem several decades before the Dutch took Pernambuco. In 1597, a Jesuit Father, Pero Rodrigues, was able to write that the 'foremost enemies of the colonizer are revolted Negroes from Guiné in some mountain areas, from where they raid and give much trouble, and the time may come when they will dare to attack and destroy farms as their relatives do on the island of São Thomé'.²⁵ Shortly after his arrival from Portugal, governor Diogo Botelho (1602-08) learned from an Amerindian chief named Zorobabé that there was a '*mocambo* . . . of Negroes from Guiné . . . in the *palmares* of river Itapicuru'.²⁶ Zorobabé was asked to destroy the *mocambo* and return with slaves, but 'few were brought back since the Indians killed many and Zorobabé sold some along the way'.²⁷ If the Itapicuru *mocambo* went almost unnoticed by Portuguese authorities, this was not the case with a similar manifestation farther north. In the Captaincy of Pernambuco, reported a high official in 1612, 'some 30 leagues inland, there is a site between mountains called *Palmares* which harbours runaway slaves . . . whose attacks and raids force the whites into armed pursuits which amount to little for they return to raid again. . . . This makes it impossible to . . . end the transgressions which gave *Palmares* its reputation.'²⁸ Diogo Botelho, before he left Brazil, sent a punitive expedition to *Palmares*.²⁹

Clearly, *quilombo* does not appear in the vocabulary of early seventeenth-century Brazil. Instead, the fugitive slave settlement is known as *mocambo*, an appropriate description since *mu-kambo* in Ambundu means a hideout.³⁰ Around 1603, *palmares* was simply any area covered by palm trees. There was no connexion between the Itapicuru *mocambo* south of Sergipe and the *Palmares* of Pernambuco. *Palmares* was not regarded as an ordinary *mocambo*. By 1612, it had a considerable reputation. It was an organization

²³ Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi da Montecuccolo, *Istorica descrizione de' tre regni Congo, Matamba e Angola* (1687), 207; (1690), 163 and 165 (Chi-Lambo Plan).

²⁴ B. J. de Souza, *Dicionario da Terra e da Gente do Brasil* (1939), 267; H. Capello and R. Ivens, *De Benguella a Terras de Iacca* (1881), 130.

²⁵ Quoted by René Ribeiro, 'Relations of the Negro with Christianity in Portuguese America', *The Americas* (1958), XIV/4, 458.

²⁶ Frei Vicente do Salvador, *Historia do Brasil, 1560-1627* (1961 ed.), 315.

²⁷ Do Salvador (1961), 315.

²⁸ 'Report on the State of Brazil', *H.A.H.R.*, XXIX/4, 553; Carneiro (1958), 90; Carneiro worked with an earlier copy.

²⁹ 'Correspondencia do Diogo Botelho, Governador do Estado do Brazil (1602-1628)', *R.I.H.G.B.* (1910), LXXIII/1, 86 and 151.

³⁰ A. M. Perdighão Malheiro, *A Escravidão no Brasil* (1867), part III, 21; Renato Mendonça, *A Influencia Africana no Portugues do Brasil* (1935), 220.

with which the *moradores* could not cope alone. The foundation of Palmares thus appears to have taken place in 1605/06, possibly earlier, but certainly not later. As the report of 1612 indicates, the first Portuguese expedition against Palmares attained little by way of military victory. Nothing else, however, is heard of Palmares until the mid-1630s. Do Salvador's history of Brazil, written in 1629, and recently published official documents for the years 1607-33 are equally silent on Palmares.³¹ In 1634, a Pernambucan *morador* described Palmares as a 'great calamity'.³² The Dutch viewed it as a 'serious danger' in 1640.³³ Increasing *palmarista* militancy after 1630 can safely be associated with slaves who took advantage of the Dutch presence to escape and who eventually found their way into Palmares. It is also certain that Palmares antedates the Dutch in Brazil by at least a quarter of a century. Given an earlier origin, and the absence of *quilombo* from the contemporary vocabulary, it is even less probable that Jagas were the founders of Palmares. It would be tempting to accept a recent claim that the Jagas gave Palmares its ruling dynasty, after being sent to Brazil in 1616 by the Angolan governor, Luis Mendes de Vasconcellos,³⁴ who assumed office in August 1617 and fought against the Ngola *with* Jaga auxiliaries.³⁵ A large contingent of Jagas was sold into slavery after a punitive expedition against Kasanje in 1624³⁶ and may have reached Brazil along with other prisoners from the *guerra preta*. But the account of Andrew Battell,³⁷ who was with the Jagas until 1603, shows nothing to indicate that any of them could have landed in Pernambuco by 1605. There remains the alternative of 'Negroes from Guiné'.

'Negroes from Guiné' were mentioned long before 1597 in connexion with attempted rebellion.³⁸ Rocha Pitta, a contemporary of Palmares, held that it was founded by 'forty Negroes from Guiné' who had abandoned plantations around Porto Calvo.³⁹ But the 'Guiné' of early Portuguese sources is not a fruitful geographical expression. It stood for nearly anything between a limited section of West Africa and the entire continent. 'Slaves from Guiné', according to the 1612 report, 'are bought dearly because of the gifts and duties which must be paid for them in Angola'.⁴⁰ Henrique Dias wrote a letter—in 1648 most likely—which stated that the Black Regiment was composed mainly of 'Angolas' and *crioulos* with a

³¹ Biblioteca Nacional, *Livro Primeiro do Governo do Brasil, 1607-1633* (1958).

³² Francisco de Brito Freire, *Nova Lusitania, Historia da Guerra Brasilica*, 1675, Book VII, 525 n.; also *R.I.H.G.B.* (1841), III, 153 n.

³³ 'A Situação do Negro sob o Dominio Hollandes', in *Novos Estudos Afro-Brasileiros* (1937), II, 217.

³⁴ Jan Vansina, 'The Foundation of the Kingdom of Kasanje', *JAH*, IV/3, 1963, 370.

³⁵ Mario Martins de Freitas, *Reino Negro de Palmares* (1954), I, 266 and 278.

³⁶ See E. G. Ravenstein's 'A Sketch of the History of Angola', published together with *The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell of Leigh* (1901), 167-8.

³⁷ *Strange Adventures*, 1-87.

³⁸ Da Nobrega to Tome de Sousa (5 July, 1559), lines 831-55, in *Cartas dos Primeiros Jesuitas do Brasil* (1954), III, 101, edited by Serafim Leite.

³⁹ *Historia*, Book VIII (1880), 235.

⁴⁰ 'Report', *H.A.H.R.* (1949), 523.

sprinkling of 'Minas' and 'Ardras'.⁴¹ With Loanda as the undisputed slave funnel from the 1580s until well into the seventeenth century,⁴² it is quite unlikely that more than a handful of *palmaristas* originated outside the Angola-Congo perimeter. *Crioulos*—in Pernambuco of 1605—could not have been numerous either. All of this leads to the only plausible hypothesis about the founders of Palmares. They must have been Bantu-speaking and could not have belonged exclusively to any sub-group. Palmares was a reaction to a slave-holding society entirely out of step with forms of bondage familiar to Africa. As such, it had to cut across ethnic lines and draw upon all those who managed to escape from various plantations and at different times. The Palmares which emerged out of this amalgam may be glimpsed in a little more detail during the second half of the seventeenth century.

II

Dutch activities concerning Palmares, from 1640 until the Reijmbach expedition of 1645, are known mainly through Barleus⁴³ and Nieuhof.⁴⁴ They begin with a reconnaissance mission by Bartholomeus Lintz, a Dutch scout who brought back the first rudimentary information about Palmares. Lintz discovered that Palmares was not a single enclave, but a combination of many *kleine* and two *groot*e units. The smaller ones were clustered on the left bank of the Gurungumba, six leagues from its confluence with the larger Paraiba and twenty leagues from Alagoas. They contained 'about 6,000 Negroes living in numerous huts'.⁴⁵ The two large *palamars* were deeper inland, thirty leagues from Santo Amaro, in the mountain region of Barriga, and 'harboured some 5,000 Negroes'.⁴⁶ In January 1643, the West India Company sent its Amerindian interpreter, Roelox Baro, with a force of Tapuyas and several Dutch regulars to 'put the large Palmares through "fire and sword," devastate and plunder the small Palmares'.⁴⁷ Baro seems to have returned without his men to report that '100 Negroes of Palmares were killed as against one killed and four wounded Dutchmen, our force having captured 31 defenders, including 7 Indians and some mulatto children'.⁴⁸ The four Dutchmen and a

⁴¹ Freyre (1956), 301; Mauro (1960), 153. Affonso de E. Taunay dates the letter to 1648 in vol. VIII (1946) of his *Historia Geral das Bandeiras Paulistas*, with pp. 37-169 devoted to Palmares.

⁴² See Dieudonné Rinchon, *La Traite et l'Esclavage des Congolais par les Européens* (1929), 59-80; and Luiz Vianna Filho, *O Negro na Bahia* (1946), for appropriate tables.

⁴³ Caspar Barleus, *Nederlandsch Brazil onder het bewind van Graaf Johan Mauritz* (1923), translated from Latin by S. P. L'Honore Naber. I am indebted to Mr. Bruce Fetter of the University of Wisconsin for his translation of the Dutch text pertinent to Palmares.

⁴⁴ Johan Nieuhof, 'Voyage and Travels into Brazil and the East Indies', in A. & J. Churchill (eds.), *Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1704), II, 1-369. Taunay (1946), VIII, 55, implies heavy borrowing from Barleus' (1647) *Rerum per octenium in Brasilia*.

⁴⁵, ⁴⁶ Barleus (1923), 315.

⁴⁷, ⁴⁸ Barleus (1923), 370. Baro left a subsequent *Relation du Voyage . . . au Pays des Tapuyes* (3 April-14 July 1647), translated from the Dutch by P. Moreau (Paris, 1651).

handful of Tapuyas were found two months later. There was no one with them.

A second Dutch expedition left Selgado for Palmares on 26 February 1645. It was headed by Jürgens Reijmbach, an army lieutenant who kept a diary for thirty-six consecutive days. His task was to destroy the two *groot*e Palmares. On 18 March Reijmbach reached the first and found that it had been abandoned months earlier. 'When we arrived the bush growth was so thick that it took much doing to cut a path through.'⁴⁹ Three days later, his men located the second one. 'Our Brasilenses managed to kill two or three Negroes in the bush but most of the people had vanished.'⁵⁰ Their king—the few captives told Reijmbach—'knew of the expedition for some time because he had been forewarned from Alagoas'.⁵¹ This Palmares, reads the entry of 21 March,⁵²

is equally half a mile long, its street six feet wide and running along a large swamp, tall trees alongside. . . . There are 220 *casas*, amid them a church, four smithies and a huge *casa de conselho*; all kinds of artifacts are to be seen. . . . (The) king rules . . . with iron justice, without permitting any *feticeiros* among the inhabitants; when some Negroes attempt to flee, he sends *crioulos* after them and once retaken their death is swift and of the kind to instill fear, especially among the Angolan Negroes; the king also has another *casa*, some two miles away, with its own rich fields. . . . We asked the Negroes how many of them live (here) and were told some 500, and from what we saw around us as well we presumed that there were 1,500 inhabitants all told. . . . This is the Palmares *grandes* of which so much is heard in Brazil, with its well-kept lands, all kinds of cereals, beautifully irrigated with streamlets.

In military terms, Reijmbach fared no better than his two predecessors, Bartolomeu Bezzerra and Roelox Baro. An undestroyed Palmares, of which 'so much is heard in Brazil', remained free of further interference by Pernambucan authorities until 1672. The ensuing two decades can best be described as a period of sustained war which ended in the complete destruction of Palmares in 1694. As is often the case, warfare and more intimate knowledge of the enemy went together, and the growing information about Palmares in the 1670s threw light on its evolution during the twenty-seven years of relative peace.

'Our campaigns', complained a group of Pernambucan *moradores* in 1681, 'have not had the slightest effect on the Negroes of Palmares . . . who seem invincible.'⁵³ The claim was not altogether true. Of the eight expeditions between 1672 and 1680, two did hurt Palmares. They were led by *capitão-mor* Fernão Carrilho, who had distinguished 'himself in the destruction of *mocambos* in the Captaincy of Sergipe del Rey.'⁵⁴ The Carrilho *entradas* of 1676–7 produced the most extensive first-hand

^{49–52} *Diario*, Carneiro (1958), 255–8.

⁵³ Val de Reis et al. to Overseas Council (6 May 1681), Ennes (1938), 136.

⁵⁴ Val de Reis et al. to Overseas Council (6 May 1681), Ennes (1938), 135.

report ever found. The Palmares of 1677 encompassed over sixty leagues:⁵⁵

In the northeast, mocambo of *Zambi*, located 16 leagues from Porto Calvo; north of it, at 5 leagues' distance, mocambo of *Arotirene*; along it two others called *Tabocas*; northeast of these, at 14 leagues, the one of *Dombabanga*; 8 leagues north another, called *Subupaira*; another 6 leagues north, the royal enclave of *Macoco*; west of it, at 5 leagues, the mocambo of *Osenga*; at 9 leagues from our Serinhaem, northwest, the enclave of *Amaro*; at 25 leagues from Alagoas, northwest, the palamar of *Andalaquituche*, brother of *Zambi*; and between all these, which are the largest and most fortified, there are others of lesser importance and with less people in them.

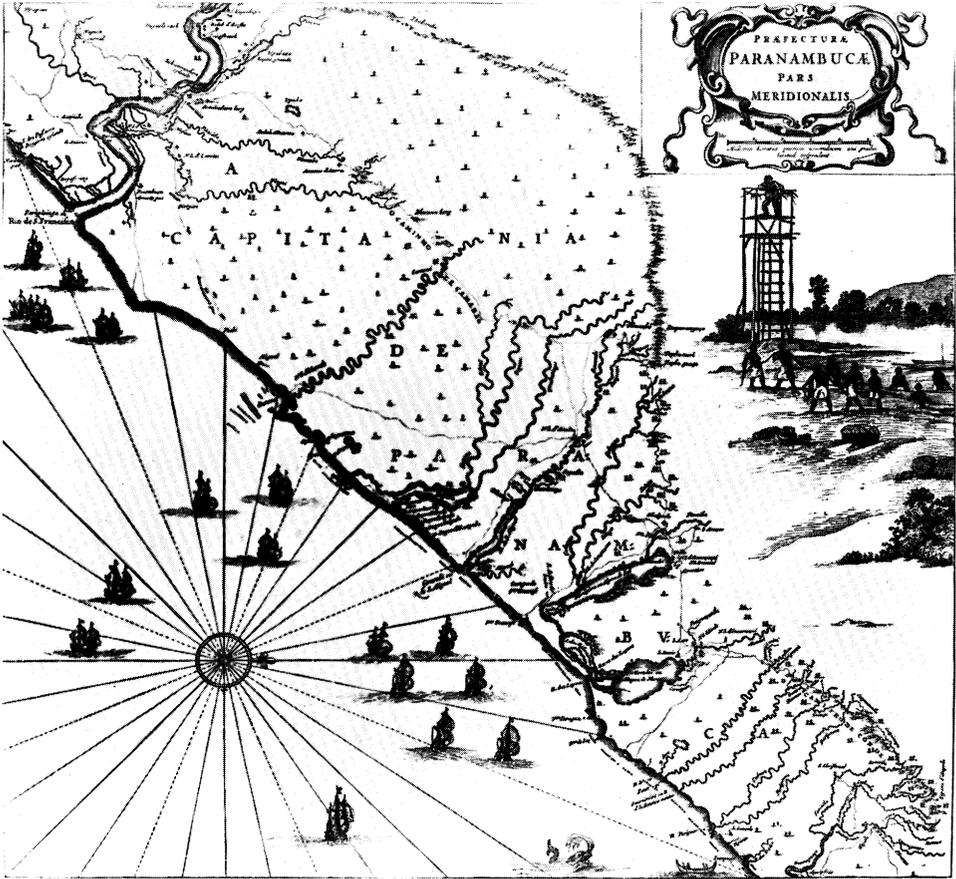
There was no doubt, went the report, that Palmares maintained its 'real strength' by providing 'food as well as security' for the inhabitants—largely tillers of land who planted 'every kind of vegetables' and knew how to store them against 'wartime and winter'. All the inhabitants of Palmares considered themselves:⁵⁶

subjects of a king who is called *Ganga-Zumba*, which means Great Lord, and he is recognized as such both by those born in Palmares and by those who join them from outside; he has a palatial residence, *casas* for members of his family, and is assisted by guards and officials who have, by custom, *casas* which approach those of royalty. He is treated with all respect due a Monarch and all the honours due a Lord. Those who are in his presence kneel on the ground and strike palm leaves with their hands as sign of appreciation of His excellence. They address him as Majesty and obey him with reverence. He lives in the royal enclave, called *Macoco*, a name which was begotten from the death of an animal on the site. This is the capital of Palmares; it is fortified with parapets full of caltrops, a big danger even when detected. The enclave itself consists of some 1,500 *casas*. There are keepers of law (and) their office is duplicated elsewhere. And although these barbarians have all but forgotten their subjugation, they have not completely lost allegiance to the Church. There is a *capela*, to which they flock whenever time allows, and *imagens* to which they direct their worship. . . . One of the most crafty, whom they venerate as *paroco*, baptizes and marries them. Baptismals are, however, not identical with the form determined by the Church and the marriage is singularly close to laws of nature. . . . The king has three (women), a *mulata* and two *crioulas*. The first has given him many sons, the other two none. All the foregoing applies to the *cidade principal* of Palmares and it is the king who rules it directly; other *idades* are in the charge of potentates and major chiefs who govern in his name. The second *idade* in importance is called *Subupaira* and is ruled by king's brother (Gana) *Zona*. . . . It has 800 *casas* and occupies a site one square league in size, right along the river *Cachingi*. It is here that Negroes are trained to fight our assaults (and weapons are forged there).

Nearly three decades of peace had a number of important results in the internal evolution of Palmares.

⁵⁵ *Relação das Guerras*, Carneiro (1958), 202.

⁵⁶ *Relação das Guerras*, Carneiro (1958), 203-4.



For the Southern Pernambuco, the inset shows an artist's conception of Palmares. Both maps are from Barleus (1647) and leave no doubt that the Portuguese *engenho* and the African state of Palmares dominated the seventeenth-century Pernambuco.

Instead of the two major *palmares* of 1645, there were now ten. There was a very substantial element in the Macoco of those native to Palmares, people unfamiliar with *engenho* slavery. Afro-Brazilians continued to enjoy preferential status, but the distinction between *crioulos* and Angolas does not appear to have been as sharp as it was in 1645. There was a greater degree of religious acculturation. The reference to a population composed mainly of those born in Palmares and those who joined from outside suggests that slaves had become less numerous than free commoners. According to Pitta, the only slaves in Palmares were those captured in *razzias*.⁵⁷ But they had the option of going out on raids to secure freedom by returning with a substitute. This is confirmed by Nieuhof, who wrote that the main 'business' of *palmaristas* 'is to rob the Portugueses of their slaves, who remain in slavery among them, until they have redeemed themselves by stealing another; but such slaves as run over to them, are as free as the rest.'⁵⁸

Although slim and often corrupted, the linguistic evidence leads to two unavoidable conclusions. The king and most of the hierarchy at the head of individual *mocambos* were not *crioulos*. Macoco/Makoko points to Loango;^{59a} Tabocas/Taboka to Ambundu;^b Andalaquituche/Ndala Kafuche to Kisama;^c Osenga/Osanga/Hosanga to Kwango;^d Subupaira/Subusupu hara vura and Zumba to Zande;^e Dombabanga/Ndombe+banga to a Benguella-Yombe composite.^f Arotirene appears to be Amerindian.^g Zambi/Nzambi and Ganga/Nganga, respectively 'divinity' and 'lord', are too widely used in Central Africa to be traced further. Given as 'brother', Zona may be an extreme corruption of Mona, an equally common term. Amaro/Amargo derives from a very bitter kind of wild-growing tea shrub, *chimarrão*,^h which is close enough to *cimarrones*, as marooned slaves were called in the West Indies.⁶⁰ The principle of *cujus regio ejus religio*, slightly bent to accommodate ethnic sub-groups, cannot be deduced from this evidence. What it does affirm, however, is that Palmares did not spring from a single social structure. It was, rather, an African political system which came to govern a plural society and thus give continuity to what could have been at best a group of scattered hideouts.

The almost equally long years of peace and war between 1645-94 point to Palmares as a fluctuating 'peril'. While not necessarily unfair to the merits of a particular event, the Portuguese took it for an article of faith

⁵⁷ *Historia* (1880), Book VIII, 236.

⁵⁸ *Collection of Voyages* (1704), II, 8.

⁵⁹ a.-f. A. de O. de Cadornega, *Historia Geral das Guerras Angolanas* (1942 ed.), III, 235, 249, 172, 186 and 240-1 and Furtado map of 1790/16°-17° Lat.; L. M. J. Visconde de Paiva Manso, *Historia do Congo—Documentos* (1877), 176-7 and 283-5; Jan Vansina, Personal Communication (30 January 1964); C. R. Lagae, *La Langue des Azande*, III (1925), 145-175 (*Zumba* = one of the group and consensus; elected ruler; *Subusupu hara vura* = forged weapon of war). ^g Probably Araticum of the Arapua mountains in Pernambuco.

^h James L. Taylor, *A Portuguese-English Dictionary* (1958), 40.

⁶⁰ J. H. Parry and P. M. Sherlock, *A Short History of the West Indies* (1963), 14 and 39.

that Palmares was an aggressor state. No written document originating within Palmares has come to light. It probably does not exist. The late Arthur Ramos made a search for oral traditions in the 1930s. It yielded only an annual stage play he was able to attend in the township of Pilar.⁶¹

The sensation of security (in Palmares) diminished after the first attacks of the colonists. The Palmares Negroes reacted by increasing their defences . . . to maintain their little republic, the Negroes were forced to make sorties to the neighbouring Indian villages and the towns of nearby valleys. This brought about (more) reprisals. . . . The play recalls this sequence of events as it persists in the memory of the people.

However blurred by the passage of time, the play at least allows for aggression on each side. There is no need to depend, in this case, on collective memory to look for evidence with which both the specific and broad nature of the 'peril' can be illustrated.

Pernambucan authorities did not view Palmares from the perspective of the *moradores* who were in contact with it. They were too far removed from the general area of Palmares. Reijmbach, for example, had to march at a fast clip for twenty days to reach it from the coast, which the Pernambucan governors—Dutch or Portuguese—seldom left. The governors did, however, respond to *morador* pressure. 'Moradores of this Captaincy, Your Majesty, are not capable of doing much by themselves in this war. . . . At all hours they complain to me of tyrannies they must suffer from [the Negroes of Palmares].'⁶² Among the complaints most frequently heard were loss of field hands and domestic servants, loss of settler lives, kidnapping and rape of white women. Two of the common grievances do not stand up too well. Women were a rarity in Palmares and were actively sought during *razzias*. But female relatives of the *morador* did not constitute the main target, and those occasionally taken were returned unmolested for ransom.⁶³ Checking the 'rape of Sabinés' tales, Edison Carneiro discovered one exception to the ransom rule, reported by a Pernambucan soldier in 1682.⁶⁴ Equally, close examination of documents in the Ennes and Camara de Alagoas collections—117 in all—failed to reveal a single substantiated case of a *morador* killed in *palmarista* raids. Settler lives appear to have been lost in the numerous and forever unrecorded 'little' *entradas* into Palmares. They were carried out by small private armies of plantation owners who sought to recapture lost hands or to acquire new ones without paying for them. Some of the *moradores* had secret commercial compacts with Palmares, usually exchanging firearms for gold and silver taken in the *razzias*.⁶⁵ Evidence of this is not lacking. A gubernatorial proclamation of 26 November 1670 bitterly denounced

⁶¹ Ramos (1939), 109–16. Pilar, in the district of Alagoas, was formerly Aloea or Cariri.

⁶² Sotto-Maior to Overseas Council (8 August 1685), in Ennes (1938), 142.

⁶³ Southey (1819), III, 24.

⁶⁴ *O Quilombo* (1958), 62.

⁶⁵ Pitta (1880), 237.

'those who possess firearms' and pass them on to *palmaristas* 'in disregard of God and local laws'.⁶⁶ In 1687, the state of Pernambuco empowered a Paulista Colonel-of-Foot to imprison *moradores* merely suspected of relations with Palmares, 'irrespective of their station'.⁶⁷ Town merchants are also known to have carried on an active trade with Palmares, bartering utensils for agricultural produce.⁶⁸ More than that, they 'were most useful to the Negroes . . . by supplying advance information on expeditions prepared against them (and) for which the Negroes paid dearly.'⁶⁹ And Reijmbach's entry of 21 March 1645, makes it clear that this relationship was an old one.

Loss of plantation slaves, through raids as well as escape, emerges as the one solid reason behind the *morador-palmarista* conflict. The price of slaves is known to have increased considerably by the late 1660s. The very growth of Palmares served to increase its fame among the plantation slaves. 'More and more Negroes from Angola', wrote a governor in 1671, 'have now for some years fled on their own from the *rigor de cativoiro* in mills and plantations of this Captainty.'⁷⁰ But this growth was not one-sided. Salients in the *morador* frontier, which had protruded from the littoral by the early 1640s, contracted between 1645-54, a decade of Portuguese-Dutch struggle for Pernambuco. Contacts with Palmares were thus minimized until new bulges began to form. In a painstaking study of territorial expansion in Brazil, Felisbello Freire has shown that this movement away from the coast began in the late 1650s from Bahia, Sergipe and Espirito Santo.⁷¹ It was retarded by no more than a few years for southern Pernambuco. The northern section merely took a little longer. 'The Negroes', writes Carneiro, 'had good relations with *moradores*, as long as the latter kept their slave huts and plantations away from the free lands of Palmares.'⁷² But what looked like free lands to the Portuguese were not regarded in the same light by rulers of Palmares, and neither party understood the problem. There were, to be sure, no 'great frontier' proportions in the inland movement of the concluding seventeenth-century decades. According to Basilio Magalhães, it was an 'expansão pequena', at fifty or so leagues inland.⁷³ Palmares was, however, well within it. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, its territorial domain was estimated at about 1,100 square leagues.⁷⁴ 'Those who live in a state of constant danger,' reads another proclamation, 'are people in the vicinity of the *mocambos* belonging to Palmares.'⁷⁵

⁶⁶ 'Bando do Governador Fernão de Souza Coutinho acerca de armas proibidas—Palmares', in Carneiro (1958), 227-8. ⁶⁷ *Condições e Capitulos*, Ennes (1938), 24.

⁶⁸ Ramos (1939), 64.

⁶⁹ Freitas (1954), 1, 291.

⁷⁰ 'Carta do Governador Fernão de Souza Coutinho' (1 June 1671), Ennes (1938), 133.

⁷¹ F. F. de Oliveira Freire, *Historia Territorial do Brazil* (1906), 6-106.

⁷² *O Quilombo* (1958), 76.

⁷³ *Expansão Geographica do Brasil Colonial* (1935), 17-171.

⁷⁴ Ennes (1949), 212.

⁷⁵ 'Bando do Governador Fernão de Souza Coutinho (4 September 1672)', Carneiro (1958), 231.

The hard-hitting Carrilho *entradas* of 1676–7 evoked at least one response familiar to Palmares besides warfare. As he had done earlier, whenever a new governor came to Pernambuco, Ganga-Zumba sued for peace. The terms, however, were new and rather surprising. On 18 June 1678:⁷⁶

the junior lieutenants whom don Pedro (de Almeida) had sent to Palmares returned with three of the king's sons and 12 more Negroes who prostrated themselves at the feet of don Pedro. . . . They brought the king's request for fealty, asking for peace which was desired, stating that only peace could end the difficulties of Palmares, peace which so many governors and leaders had proffered but never stuck to; that they have come to ask for his good offices; that they have never desired war; that they only fought to save their own lives; that they were being left without *idades*, without supplies, without wives. . . . The king had sent them to seek peace with no other desires but to trade with *moradores*, to have a treaty, to serve his Highness in whatever capacity; it is only the liberty of those born in Palmares that is now being sought while those who fled from our people will be returned; Palmares will be no more as long as a site is provided where they will be able to live, at his grace.

Three days after the embassy's arrival, the new governor, Aires de Souza—replacing Almeida—called a council of state. He proposed that a draft treaty be sent to Ganga-Zumba extending peace, the requested liberties, and the release of *palmarista* women who seem to have constituted by far the largest group of captives. The council agreed, and a *sargento-mor* who had served in the Black Regiment and knew how to read and write, was sent to the Macoco, 'para que lesse e declarasse ao rei e aos mais o tratado de paz'.⁷⁷ Ganga-Zumba was confirmed as supreme ruler over his people. The question of Palmares' territorial limits was not settled in any precise way. 'The solemnity which surrounded all these acts,' wrote Nina Rodrigues, 'gave a real importance to the Negro State which now the Colony treated as one nation would another, (for) this was no mere pact of a strong party concluded with disorganized bands of fugitive Negroes.'⁷⁸

On paper, the treaty seemed conclusive. But, there were peculiarities in the immediate situation. A strong detachment, which had been attacking Palmares since 1677 or early 1678, was not demobilized and a group of Alagoar *moradores*, led by a spokesman named João da Fonesca, made certain that it would remain there.⁷⁹ The ink was hardly dry when Aires de Souza Castro began to distribute some 192 leagues of land to sixteen individuals who had taken part in wars against Palmares, Carrilho alone obtaining a twenty-league *sesmaria*.⁸⁰ By 1679, a *palmarista* 'captain named Zambi (whose uncle is Gana-Zona) was in revolt (with João

⁷⁶ 'Relação das Guerras', Carneiro (1958), 219.

⁷⁷ 'Relação das Guerras', Carneiro (1958), 221.

⁷⁸ Rodrigues (1945), 146.

⁷⁹ 'João da Fonesca pede a Camara de Alagoas mantimentos para a tropa estacionada nos arredores dos Palmares (26 January 1680)', Carneiro (1958), 244–5.

⁸⁰ 'Relação das Legoa de Terra', Documento †8, Ennes (1938), 153.

mulato, Canhonga, Gaspar (and) Amaro, having done the person of Ganga-Zumba to death'.⁸¹ By March 1680, Zambi was being called upon to surrender, without success.⁸² The war was on once more.

Reactions to the treaty, on both sides, are revealing. Ganga-Zumba's peace proposal contained two clauses which could not be fulfilled. To allow a sovereign, if vassal, state to exist in Pernambuco would have meant to reverse a 150-year-old policy of exclusive Portuguese claim to Brazil. The Almeida-de Souza move was, therefore, a tactical one. It was, as Ennes stated after careful study, 'an easy way of postponing that question which already had, without any positive accomplishment, consumed infinite time'.⁸³ Conversely, to hand over to the Portuguese half or more of some 15,000–20,000 *palmaristas*⁸⁴—a difficult logistical problem in its own right—would have required the kind of obedience which only a modern totalitarian state can secure.

The native-newcomer ratio was not identical in every *mocambo* of Palmares. The Macoco, at forty-five leagues from Porto Calvo, must have had a far greater number of the native-born than did the *mocambos* of Zumbi, at sixteen leagues from Porto Calvo, and Amaro, at nine leagues from Serinhaem. Socio-cultural differences, moreover, between *crioulos* and recent arrivals from Africa were not sufficiently great to challenge the unity of Palmares, which stood against the Portuguese economic and political order. The diplomacy of Ganga-Zumba, an elected ruler, might have worked had the promise to return those who found refuge in Palmares been observed. It might have worked if Palmares had been contiguous to other similar states facing an intrusive minority. Again, it might have worked if Palmares had been a homogeneous society with hereditary rulers. None of these conditions were present. In its time and place, Palmares had only two choices. It could continue to hold its ground as an independent state or suffer complete extinction. Zambi's palace revolt finally brought the unyielding *palmarista* and *morador* elements to full agreement.

Six expeditions went into Palmares between 1680–6. Their total cost must have been large. In 1694, the Overseas Council in Lisbon was advised that Palmares caused a cumulative loss of not less than 1,000,000 cruzados to the 'people of Pernambuco'.⁸⁵ The estimate appears exaggerated unless the 400,000 cruzados contributed directly by the Crown was included. A single municipality did, however, spend 3,000 cruzados (109,800 reis) in the fiscal year 1679/80 to cover the running cost of Palmares wars,⁸⁶ and a tenfold figure for the local and state treasuries would seem modest for the six years. Casualties aside, the results did not justify

⁸¹ 'Bando do sargento-mor Manuel Lopes chamando a obediencia o capitão Zambi dos Palmares (26 March 1680)', Carneiro (1958), 247.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ennes (1949), 202.

⁸⁴ 'Relação das Guerras', Carneiro (1958), 206.

⁸⁵ Caetano de Melo e Castro to Overseas Council (18 February 1694), Ennes (1938), 195.

⁸⁶ 'Quantia despendida pela Camara de Alagoas com a guerra nos Palmares (20 July 1680)', Carneiro (1958), 248.

the cost. Palmares stood undefeated at the end of 1686. It was apparent that the state of Pernambuco could not deal with Palmares out of its own resources. In March 1687, the new governor, Sotto-Maior, informed Lisbon that he had accepted the services of *bandeirantes* from São Paulo, 'at small expense to the treasury of Your Majesty'.⁸⁷ The Paulistas of the time were Portuguese-Amerindian *metis* and transfrontiersmen, renowned in Brazil for special skills in jungle warfare. Their leader, Domingos Jorge Velho, had written to Sotto-Maior in 1685 asking 'for commissions as commander-in-chief and captains in order to subdue . . . (Palmares)'.⁸⁸ Largely because Lisbon could not be convinced that their services would come cheap, the Paulistas did not reach Pernambuco until 1692. In crossing so great a distance, 192 lives were lost in the backlands of Brazil, and 200 men deserted the Paulista ranks, unable to face 'hunger, thirst and agony'.

The story of Palmares' final destruction has been told in great detail. Two-thirds of the secondary works discuss the Paulistas and the 1690s, some sixty of the ninety-five documents in the Ennes collection refer to little else, and Ennes has published a useful summary in English.⁸⁹ The Paulistas had to fight for two years to reduce Palmares to a single fortified site. After twenty days of siege by the Paulistas, the state of Pernambuco had to provide an additional 3,000 men to keep it going for another twenty-two days. The breakthrough occurred during the night of 5-6 February 1694. Some 200 *palmaristas* fell or hurled themselves—the point has been long debated—'from a rock so high that they were broken to pieces'. Hand-to-hand combat took another 200 *palmarista* lives and over 500 'of both sexes and all ages' were captured and sold outside Pernambuco. Zambi, taken alive and wounded, was decapitated on 20 November 1695. The head was exhibited in public 'to kill the legend of his immortality'.

III

The service rendered by the destruction of Palmares, wrote one of Brazil's early Africanists, is beyond discussion. It removed the 'greatest threat to future evolution of the Brazilian people and civilization—a threat which this new Haiti, if victorious, would have planted (forever) in the heart of Brazil'.⁹⁰ Indeed, Palmares came quite close to altering the subsequent history of Brazil. Had they not experienced the threat of Palmares in the seventeenth century, the Portuguese might well have found themselves hugging the littoral and facing not one, but a number of independent African states dominating the backlands of eighteenth-century Brazil. In spite of hundreds of *mocambos* which tried to come together, Palmares was

⁸⁷ Quoted by Ennes (1949), 205.

⁸⁸ 7 November 1685, Ennes (1949), 204; translation here is Ennes' own.

⁸⁹ *The Palmares 'Republic'* (1949), 200-16.

⁹⁰ Rodrigues (1945), 137.

never duplicated on Brazilian soil. This is ample testimony of its impact on the Portuguese settler and official. They organized special units, under *capitães-do-mato* or bush-captains, to hunt for *mocambos* and nip them in the bud. And they sought to prevent, at ports of entry, an over-concentration of African slaves from the same ethnic group or ship. This policy was abandoned in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, and the immediate repercussion came by way of the nine Bahian revolts after 1807. The well-established thesis that uninhibited miscegenation and the corporate nature of the Portuguese society in Brazil produced a successful example of social engineering must also take into account the historical role of Palmares.

Palmares was a centralized kingdom with an elected ruler. Ganga-Zumba delegated territorial power and appointed to office. The most important ones went to his relatives. His nephew, Zambi, was the war chief. Ganga-Zona, the king's brother, was in charge of the arsenal. Interregnum problems do not seem to have troubled Palmares, the history of which spans about five generations of rulers. Zambi's palace revolt did not displace the ruling family. Assuming that Loanda was the main embarkation point for Pernambucan slaves, which is confirmed by the linguistic evidence, the model for Palmares could have come from nowhere else but central Africa. Can it be pinpointed? Internal attitude toward slavery, prostrations before the king, site initiation with animal blood, the placing of the *casa de conselho* in the 'main square', or the use of a high rock as part of man-made fortress lead in no particular direction. The names of *mocambo* chiefs suggest a number of possible candidates. The most likely answer is that the political system did not derive from a particular central African model, but from several. Only a far more detailed study of Palmares through additional sources in the archives of Angola and Torre do Tombo could refine the answer. None the less, the most apparent significance of Palmares to African history is that an African political system could be transferred to a different continent; that it could come to govern not only individuals from a variety of ethnic groups in Africa but also those born in Brazil, pitch black or almost white, latinized or close to Amerindian roots; and that it could endure for almost a full century against two European powers, Holland and Portugal. And this is no small tribute to the vitality of traditional African art in governing men.