Other Books by Glenn Alan Cheney

Ex Cathedra: Stories by Machado de Assis

Promised Land: A Nun's Struggle to Resist Landlessness, Lawlessness, Slavery, Poverty, Corruption, Injustice, and Environmental Catastrophe in Amazonia

How a Nation Grieves: Press Accounts of the Death of Lincoln, the Hunt for Booth, and America in Mourning

Thanksgiving: The Pilgrims' First Year in America

Potshots from the Left

Journey on the Estrada Real: Encounters in the Mountains of Brazil

Journey to Chernobyl: Encounters in a Radioactive Zone

Frankenstein on the Cusp of Something

Passion in an Improper Place

They Never Knew: The Victims of Atomic Testing

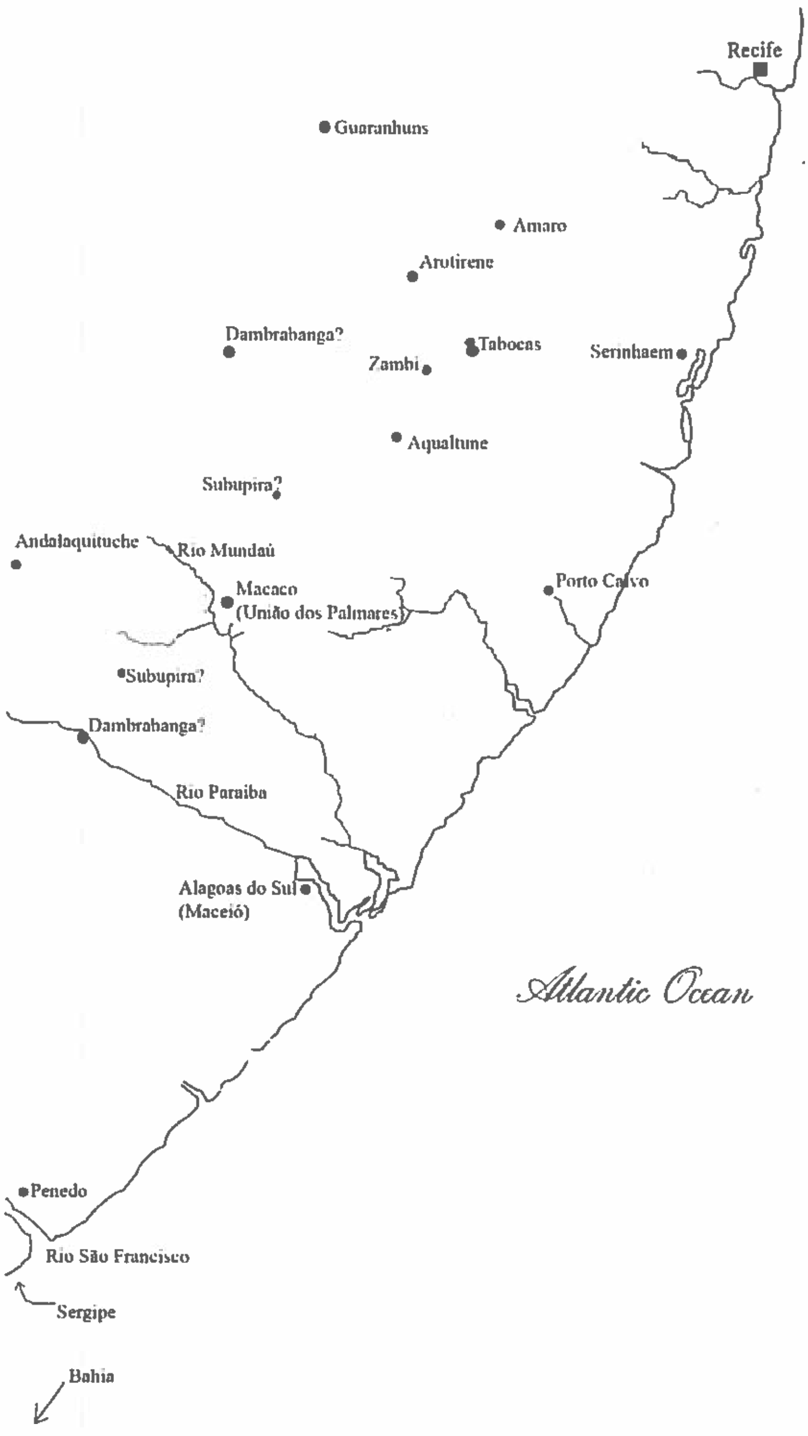
Acts of Ineffable Love: Stories by Glenn Cheney

Quilombo dos Palmares

Brazil's Lost Nation of Fugitive Slaves

Glenn Alan Cheney

New London Librarium



Introduction

Sometime in the late 16th century, forty "rebellious negroes" are said to have somehow escaped captivity at a sugar mill near Porto Calvo in the captaincy of Pernambuco in northeast Brazil.[1] Sebastião da Rocha Pita, the Brazilian historian who reported this incident more than a hundred years later, gave no details of the escape, whether it was a violent uprising of slaves armed with no more than the tools of their trade — machetes, axes, hoes, scythes — or a silent slipping away into the dark of night. He did not report whether women and children joined the exodus, whether anyone took food or tools, whether they ran with shackles on their ankles. About all we can can surmise is that they ran in bare feet and instinctively headed west, away from the coast — away from the civilization that had enslaved them — and into the dense *mata atlântica* forest.

The forest and terrain worked to the advantage of people who carried little and had no destination other than *away*. At the same time, nature hindered anyone carrying weapons, ammunition, armor, supplies, and chains. The people fleeing could go in any direction; the people chasing them had any number of directions to choose from, only one of which was

1 Pita, *História da América Portuguesa*. 235.

correct. Even barefoot people in the remnants of shackles could outrun soldiers lugging the baggage of war and enslavement.

The fugitives, who could have been Africans or Indians, ran until they reached the hills of the interior — steep, long ridges that punched up out of generally level terrain. Like fugitives everywhere, they found security in the higher elevations. They settled in a place of palm trees, fertile soil, plentiful water, and an abundance of game. Over the years, more fugitives arrived, some quite likely from Bahia, the captaincy to the south. The population grew to hundreds and, by the turn of the century, thousands. Palmares became known to the Africans as a *quilombo,* from a word in the Mbundu language of Africa that meant *war camp*. Settlements grew into villages, and more villages took hold on more mountains. Sharing a common purpose, common problems, and a common enemy, the villages — called *mocambos*, a Mbundu word for *hideout* — formed relationships that would evolve toward a common government.[2] The polity became known as Palmares for the region's many palms. Palmares became a refuge for more fugitives, and its men became bold enough to attack farms and sugar mills to steal what they needed and to liberate more slaves. By 1603, Palmares was a problem that the Portuguese colonizers knew they had to resolve. A society dependent on slavery could not survive alongside a society of former slaves.

Palmares thrived while the colony on the coast struggled against disease, corruption, and the inefficiencies of an autocratic, hierarchical government led by a distant king. While Pernambuco depended on slavery, the nation of fugitives proved that free people, even free black people, could sustain themselves without agricultural commodity production based on forced labor. Having formed a government and a religion that served its purposes, Palmares proved that the New World did not need the king of Portugal or the pope of Rome. Palmares also became a community of several races, not just blacks and Indians but whites who were fleeing society or the law. Palmares was a viable alternative to plantation slavery and Portuguese society. It was an attractive nuisance that lured slaves

2 Schwartz. *Slaves Peasants and Rebels*, 126.

away from slavery and gave European plebeians reason to question the status quo. It was also an aggressive enemy that threatened public safety and the colonial economy. It had to be eliminated.

Over the next ninety years the Portuguese and, briefly, the Dutch, sent two dozen military excursions to Palmares with the objective of exterminating it. To say that these militias were "white" or European would not be accurate, though they were defending white European interests. Their ranks included black slaves and regiments of free blacks and free Indians. Judging by race alone, it would be hard to distinguish the defenders of the "black" nation from the defenders of the "white" outpost of Europe. The real battle was not only between an empire and rebels but between the wealthy and the poor, the enslavers and the free, the feudal past and an enlightened future that no one had even dreamed of yet. Almost all the Dutch and Portuguese excursions failed miserably until 1694, when a massive army, much of it mercenaries of mixed race, surrounded the Palmarian citadel of Macaco. After a month-long siege, they killed, captured, or dispersed its defenders, effectively eliminating Palmares as a nation, effectively erasing it from the face of the earth.

Today, not one bit of physical evidence remains from Palmares. The precise locations of all but one of its villages and cities are unknown. Historical information about Palmares depends entirely on documents produced by the invaders, and their version of reality is suspect. They recorded little about the society they were attempting to render extinct, and their reports were corrupted with ulterior motives. They had no concept of history, culture, or sociology, no interest in Palmares except its elimination. They wanted it not just dead but forgotten.

But Brazil did not forget. The memories of the *Quilombo* dos Palmares evolved into myths, and the myths fed into the political dialectic. Just as Palmares had offered an alternative to colonial society of the seventeenth century, it offered an alternative to socioeconomic problems of the 20th century. As a people on the losing end of civilization's perpetual struggles, the rebel nation was a useful symbol for later generations who opposed military rule, capitalism, class division, racism, and injustice.

Thus myth became confused with fact, and, true or not, became an active and ongoing argument in the modern Brazilian culture.

Palmares was the largest and one of the most long-lived *quilombos* in Brazil but by no means the only one. There were thousands, and thousands remain in Brazil today, far-flung communities of people with complexions darker than average who still share communal land as their ancestors did. Many of these communities are under siege just as Palmares was. The invaders aren't militias but farmers, mining companies, developers, and others claiming land of undocumented ownership. The war that Palmares fought for nearly a century continues in myriad manifestations three centuries later.

This book recounts the struggle between Palmares and the European colonizers on the coast. It depends extensively on the dubious documentation those colonizers left us. Those colonizers had little regard for the Palmarians as people or Palmares as a new and practical culture. The reports of militia commanders and government agents tend to focus on issues of battles, funding, and the threats Palmares represented. They report precious little about the Palmares way of life, its language and religion, its people and their point of view. The reports are also tainted with political efforts to wrest money and privilege from higher powers. This book reports what they *said* happened.

The book goes on to explore the struggle in modern times. That struggle has evolved with the times, yet it is remarkably similar. And, similarly, the truth is still hard to discern. Archaeologists, historians, and sociologists find it hard to detach fact from myth. Political activists struggle to use the symbol of Palmares to justify their positions. People who live in today's *quilombos* struggle for recognition and respect even as they struggle to hold on to land that has been passed down to them. A similar struggle, in fact, pervades Brazilian society, with its attempts to more equitably share revenues and land, provide justice for all, and, yes, still, end the modern equivalent to slavery. Palmares was real, and its myths have become their own reality. The story and the history of Palmares are over 400 years old, and they have yet to reach their end.

Chapter 1

A New World

Modern Brazilians are fond of noting, in a cynical sort of way, that Europeans discovered their country by either error or subterfuge. When a flotilla of thirteen ships left Lisbon on March 9, 1500, everyone expected them to head south along the coast of Africa, around the *Cabo da Boa Esperança* — the Cape of Good Hope — and then northeast to India. But for reasons unrecorded, the fleet swung wide to the west. Maybe a storm pushed them off course for a month. Maybe they already knew the currents of the Atlantic well enough to go west to grab currents circling to the south and east. Maybe they just swung too far west and stumbled onto a continent.

But Pedro Álvares Cabral, commander of the armada, was an accomplished navigator, and with him was Bartolomeu Dias, the first European to round the *Cabo da Boa Esperança*, though in all honesty he named it the *Cabo das Tormentas*, the Cape of Storms. (Dom João II, the king of Portugal, changed it to *Boa Esperança* in hopes of encouraging more trips

ready hard at work producing cane and sugar in the Portuguese colonies at Cape Verde and the Azores, were proving cost-effective. They resisted disease, understood the concept of slavery, held up under grueling labor, and survived captivity for five years or more, recouping their owners the cost of their capture and transport in as little as 14 to 24 months.[6] Since they barely qualified as human, no one questioned the cruelty inherent in forced labor. Since they hadn't seen the light of Jesus, exposure to the goodness of Christian life would be to their moral betterment. A supply system in Africa was producing them in great numbers. And what new nation had ever been founded without the labor of slaves? Not one.

6 Ibid., *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels*, 4.

Chapter 3

Pieces

In 1535, Duarte Coelho Pereira, the donatary and first governor of Pernambuco, arrived in Recife with his eighteen-year-old wife, Brites de Albuquerque, and her brother, Jerônimo. Recife's pathetic shacks, reeking hovels, and muddy streets seemed beyond improvement. At the urging of his wife, he decided to simply build a new town nearby. In 1537 he founded Olinda just just north of Recife, up on high ground where sea breezes brushed away the tropic lethargy, and the waters of the rainy season would drained away rather than sit in puddles. He left much of the design and construction plans to Brites, who proved herself a confident and capable executive. Building a city on a hill was a big job — too big for Indians, too strenuous for Portuguese — so in 1539 Pereira asked Dom João III for permission to "have a few slaves from Guinea." In 1559, a royal edict permitted the importation of a hundred and twenty slaves for every mill owner established in Brazil.[1] In 1570, there were twenty-three mills

1 Taunay, *Subsídios para a História*, 532-535.

in Pernambuco. In 1583, there were 66.[2] By one contemporary estimate, in 1585 there were four to five thousand slaves in Pernambuco.[3]

Apparently those first African slaves were resolving the inadequacy of Indians. Sugar planters quickly figured out what the Jesuit priest Antonio Vieira would note in the next century: "Without blacks, there is no Pernambuco, and without Angola [i.e. the southern half of west Africa], there are no blacks." But the Portuguese didn't need a priest telling them how to make money off the sweat of slaves. They'd been doing it on the islands of Cabo Verde, São Tomé, Principe, and the Azores; they'd had forts on the west coast of Africa since 1482; their supply system could be easily expanded to satisfy the new market. And thus began the involuntary diaspora to the Americas.

Slavery was already an old tradition in Africa, but it was crucially different from the productive asset slavery practiced by Europeans. In general, slaves in Africa enjoyed about as much freedom as feudal serfs did in Europe. Their labor was the labor of ordinary African workers — farming, transporting, mining, building, serving. They were typically captives of a war within the region, so they tended to end up with others of their own tribe and culture, even their own families. Their culture wasn't all that different from that of their masters. They were a status symbol of their owners, the most expensive thing a rich man could own. Since land in Africa was never owned by individuals, slaves were the underlying personal wealth. Much as land was in Europe and its colonies in the Americas, slaves were both wealth and a fundamental source of more wealth. For that reason, slavery and commerce in slaves was well established in Africa. Europeans were able to tap into it in much the same way that they tapped into the commerce of minerals, textiles, and other products. Europeans increased the demand for slaves, and the African market made every effort to increase the supply. Slaves were no longer collateral plunder of war; they were the purpose of war.[4]

2 Gandavo, Tratado da Terra do Brasil, 43.
3 Alves Filho, *Memorial dos Palmares*, 110.
4 Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 105-106.

But Europeans would corrupt the nature of slavery in Africa. Their slave trade began as an extension of commerce in other commodities. The Portuguese simply bought available slaves for use in Europe, then on the sugar plantations of São Tomé, then on the plantations of Brazil. As the demand exceeded the supply, slave traders and hunters, working from forts on the central and southwest coast of Africa, went inland to capture slaves by force. They trapped them, ambushed them, captured them in raids, hunted them down as they fled. But conquering Africans on African territory proved difficult. The fortifications of Africans were strong, and though African soldiers lacked firearms and crossbows, the Portuguese rarely won a battle unless they had Africans supporting them.[5]

Each "piece" (*peça*) the Portuguese captured was immediately branded to indicate who had captured it. Then they were bound at the neck with a *libambo*, a long, heavy chain with rings that locked around arms and necks. Women and men were chained in separate *libambos*, and children were allowed to scamper along without chains. With many a pause to release the dead, trains of as many as a hundred captives dragged themselves to the coast. The deadly trek could take as long as eight months.[6]

As the demand increased, African tribes and nations began waging war with each other to capture more slaves. But this was the new slavery. The captives did not remain with their families or within their regions. They did not become parts of extended families, and they had no value other than their market value. They were captured expressly for export. Luiz Mendes de Vasconcelos, Portuguese governor of Angola in 1617, said that the Jagas were especially good at this, though "like hunting dogs, they ate more than they delivered live, that being their most ordinary food."[7] The Portuguese (and other Europeans) bought the captives with trinkets, rum, gunpowder, tobacco, and textiles. Guns and horses were the most effective payments because they increased the military power of the African slave traders, making them more effective slave hunters. To defend themselves, hunted groups had to acquire guns and horses. To pay for them, they had

5 Ibid., 112.
6 Robert Edgard (sic) Conrad, *Tumbeiros*, 50. 15.
7 Ennes, *Guerras Nos Palmares*, 18.

to join the slave trade, too.[8] The horrifically vicious cycle — the means of destruction and the means of production feeding each other — resulted in widespread warfare and grave depopulation, especially of males. The loss of skilled artisans, from ironworkers to textile weavers, decimated the regional economy, making people even more dependent on European products gained in the slave trade.[9] The political, social, and economic instability resulted in even more fighting and more slaves. With little direct effort on their own part, the Portuguese benefited from the economic, political and social deterioration of African civilization from the Congo River south to Angola and around the Cape of Good Hope to Mozambique.

The efficiency of the procurement system minimized the cost of slaves. The supply met the demand so well enough that slave owners and traders had little incentive to take care of the people they already owned. It was cheaper to buy and transport new slaves than to maintain the ones they had. To write off a given slave to punishment or other crippling abuse had little impact on profitability. Feeding them beyond a nutritional minimum was a waste of money. For the same reason, it wasn't cost-effective to raise a black child to productive adulthood. With no interest in offspring, the market had little need of black women for breeding purposes. Half their offspring would be females, who were less useful for heavy labor, and half of the males would not survive childhood. Consequently, the black population of Brazil did not rise as fast as blacks were brought in. Each shipment from Africa increased the population only temporarily. Given the five-year average useful life of a slave, twenty percent of the existing supply had to be replenished every year, with an almost total turnover every five years.[10]

Once at an African port, the captives were branded to mark them as vassals of the king of Portugal. If they were fortunate enough to have their sins washed away in a rite of baptism, they received another brand. The baptism might well be done in batches, a huddled crowd of blacks in

8 Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 98-99.
9 Ibid., 72-73.
10 Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos*, 30.

chains cleansed with a sprinkle of holy water, saved from an eternity in Hell.

The slave markets at the ports brought together people from many different African cultures. The traders made some effort to identify them with their supposed sources, but the identifications meant little or nothing. A slave from the land of "Mina" referred only to the general region around today's Ghana. The name did not refer to a tribe, nation, or culture but to mythical gold mines in the area. Two Mina blacks might well speak different languages and even be historical enemies. A slave from "Angola" did not come from any such nation. Rather, Angola referred to all the Portuguese-controlled land south of and along the Congo River. Slaves arriving at an Angolan port from the east coast of Africa may have come from deep inland, but upon being exported to Brazil, they were identified as Angolan.

It is not known what percent of the cargo were women or children in the 15th and 16th centuries, but in later years, a ship would typically have twice as many men as women. Men and women were kept in separate spaces. The men were piled in the hold and chained to prevent an uprising. Pregnant women were isolated. Children were penned together, possibly on the open deck.

The shippers packed these humans with inhuman density. A decree issued in Lisbon in 1664 noted that some captains were carrying twice the allowed number of captives per ton of cargo space.[11] A law issued in 1684, promulgated to improve conditions, specified that a ship could carry only five "head" per ton of cargo capacity if the ship had no portholes for ventilation, or seven if it did. Five more "small head" (children) per ton were allowed on the upper deck. (For reference, the *Mayflower* was a 180-ton ship. It could have carried nine hundred slaves. The 102 Pilgrims it carried had barely enough room for everyone to lie down simultaneously, though of course the space in the hold below their deck was filled with supplies rather than more people.) The law also required that the captives receive three meals and 2.6 liters of water each day.[12] But shippers often

11 Conrad, *Tumbeiros*, 52.
12 Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 35.

ignored the law for the sake of profitability. They stretched the profit margin by taking a few more people instead of an equivalent weight in food and water. We have to presume that the revenues of extra people packed into the ship exceeded the loss of additional deaths by thirst or malnutrition.

On a slaver with 500 captives that sailed in 1569, 120 people died in a single night. We have records from five slave ships that left Angola in 1625. Of the total cargo of 1,211 captives, only 628 survived, and 68 of the survivors died shortly after reaching Brazil. We do not know whether this mortality rate was typical in those early years of the slave trade. The deaths may have been documented because they were exceptionally high; perhaps all five ships were delayed in calms, or perhaps they were hit by an epidemic. The average mortality in the first two centuries of trade is thought to have been around twenty percent.[13]

The crossing from Angola to Recife could be made in 35 days, with the average about twice that. A voyage from Mozambique, on the far side of the Africa, could take fifty to seventy days. Some voyages took five months. Dead winds could leave a ship drifting for days or weeks as the food and water ran short and the cargo suffocated in the hold.[14]

We have few honest accounts of the conditions in the 16th and seventeenth centuries, but in 1829, the English reverend Robert Walsh described a Portuguese slave ship, bound for Brazil, captured off the coast of Africa:

"...But the circumstance which struck us most forcibly was how it was possible for such a number of human beings to exist, packed up and wedged together as tight as they could cram, in low cells three feet high, the greater part of which, except that immediately under the grated hatchways, was shut out from light or air, and this when the thermometer, exposed to the open sky, was standing in the shade, on our deck, at 89 degrees. The space between decks was divided into two compartments three feet three inches high; the size of one was 16 feet by 18 and of the other

13 Ibid., 35-38.
14 Ibid., 34.

40 by 21. Into the first were crammed women and girls, into the second the men and boys: 226 creatures were thus thrust into one space 288 feet square and 336 into another space 800 feet square, giving to the whole an average of 23 [square] inches and to each of the women not more than 13 [square] inches. We also found manacles and fetters of different kinds, but it appears that they had been taken off before we boarded...."[15]

On that particular voyage, seventeen days into the crossing, fifty-five blacks had already died, their bodies thrown overboard. The crew, too, was taking sick. Nine had already died from the fetid and incredibly unsanitary conditions of 562 people tightly packed a few feet away suffering from dysentery and seasickness in unventilated tropical heat. Walsh went on to note that members of the English crew reported having seen even worse conditions.

Nineteenth century Históarian Oliveira Martins wrote a lurid description of slave ships in general in *Brasil e as Colonias Portuguezas:* [16]

> When a ship tossed in a storm, the mass of black bodies, piled in the hold, moved like an anthill of men to drink of the little of the dreadful air that flowed over the iron-grated hatch. In the hold of the ship that was rocked by the sea there were ferocious struggles, shouts, and howls of cholera and despair. Those whom fate favored in this undulating live, black flesh, groped at the light and looked toward this narrow nook of the sky. In the darkness of the hold, the sad souls, promiscuously arranged in a pile, either fell inanimate in a lethal stupor or, hopeless and full of fury, chewed themselves. They strangled themselves, crushed themselves, and some gutted themselves, others broke limbs in the shocks of these dark battles. And the human mass, whose savage howls rose from the open hatch, turned back into their cavern, drowned in tears and slop.

15 Walsh, "Notices of Brazil in 1828 and 1829," unpaginated.
16 Martins, *Brasil e as Colonias Portuguezas.* 59-60, cited in Ennes, *Guerras nos Palmares,* 19.

Some captives, given a chance, threw themselves overboard, preferring death over the misery of the hold. Some ripped holes in the hull to sink the ship and make themselves equal to their oppressors in death.[17]

Oliveira Martins described the passengers who survived the voyage:

"When the ship arrived at a port — a remote and deserted beach — the cargo disembarked and in the bright light of the tropical sun appeared a column of skeletons covered with pustules, their bellies bulging, their kneecaps ulcerated, eaten by bugs, with the gawking, glazed look of idiots. Many could not stand. They staggered, fell, and were carried on shoulders like sacks."[18]

The ships brought more than slaves. On some voyages, 15 to 20 percent of the crew would die from diseases oozing up from the lower decks.[19] The ships arrived in port with a cargo of smallpox, measles, fevers, dysentery, hepatitis, and ophtalmia. Each ship would first infect people in port, then people at the mills. Blacks who survived were biologically selected for resistance to disease. The selection did little to strengthen the race, however, because most would die of other causes before they could reproduce.

Estimates of total importation of slaves to Brazil over the course of 350 years, based on tax records and guesses about the extent of illegal trade, range from 3.6 million to eight million, with five million the most widely accepted estimate.[20] How many others died before embarkation is not known. Many died during the hunt. Many died during the forced march to the coast, expiring under pain of the whip and the chains, the weight of baggage, the hunger, and the excruciating mental trauma of captivity. More died waiting for ships at the port. The captives might have to wait weeks due to bad weather, the demands of the market, the size of the supply waiting for shipment, and the availability of ships. They remained in chains, quite likely exposed to the elements the entire time. Their nourish-

17 Ennes, *Guerras nos Palmares*, 19.
18 Martins, *Brasil e as Colonias* Portuguezas, 60, cited by Ennes, 20.
19 Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 35.
20 Conrad, *Tumbeiros*, 35, and Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, slavevoyages.org.

ment barely sustained human life. An English historian estimated that 40 percent of people captured in the interior of Africa died before reaching a port, and another ten to twelve percent died while awaiting a ship.[21]

Once ashore in Brazil, the captives were transferred to warehouses to recover from their voyage. Their owners washed them down, fattened them up a bit, treated any injuries, painted their gums with an astringent to make them look healthier.[22] The importer would pay a tax on each head, the amount varying in accordance with gender and the origin in Africa. Angolans would be worth one amount for being docile, honorable, loyal, and appropriate for domestic use. Those from the Congo were worth something else for being active and more adaptable to field work. Gambians and Mozambicans were held to be lazy and less intelligent — "*pesado*," which could mean anything from jinxed to lethargic to depressed.[23]

The traders branded each "piece" to indicate payment of the tax. This would be the third or fourth branding. If the individual bore no brand of baptism, he or she would be baptized and then branded on the chest with the mark of the cross. Even those already marked as baptized might be baptized again, just to make sure. The baptismal branding, however, would not need to be repeated.

From the warehouse they were taken to retail outlets, which could be indoors or outdoors. During the marketing process, they would remain naked so as to better display their features. As shoes and sandals were a status symbol, slaves were prohibited from wearing anything on their feet at any time during their captivity.[24] At the warehouse, customers came to evaluate them, prod their muscles, pull their lips back to check their teeth, examine their tongues, yank their arms and legs, trot them up and down the store, have them scream to show the power of their lungs. Housewives might well take part in the shopping, as unperturbed by the nakedness of a black man as they would be by the nakedness of a mule. And just like

21 Miller, "Mortality in Atlantic Slave Trade," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 413-414.
22 Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 532.
23 Brandão, 1988, Comissão Estadual do Centinário da Abolição, 19, quoting an Englishman, "Koster," of the early 19th century.
24 Conrad, *Tumbeiros*, 27.

mules, the people, once purchased, would be branded with their owner's icon.

Astute purchasers tried to buy people from various cultures. By buying a mix of people who spoke different languages and worshipped different gods, they hoped to minimize the possibility of organized rebellion. Though baptized, the captives were allowed to worship their old gods and practice their old rituals. Once, when certain property owners in the captaincy of Bahia complained to the king that their governor was allowing pagan rituals, the governor responded that "to prohibit this singular act of disunity among the blacks would be to indirectly promote unity among them, from which only terrible consequences could result." He warned that "the disgrace [of slavery] joins them as brothers, but religion and language keep them apart."[25]

Privilege and fear also separated them. On the spectrum of fates that could befall a slave, the worst was work in the fields, working under whip and sun from before dawn until it was too dark to see.[26] Death by exhaustion and exposure to tropical heat and humidity was the likely result, usually within five to seven years. Bronchitis, diphtheria, pneumonia, tuberculosis, syphilis, scurvy, malaria, typhus and deadly dysentery found little resistance in the exhausted, undernourished bodies

Historian Andre João Antonil wrote, though not specifically describing slavery in the seventeenth century or in Pernambuco, that slaves could enjoy certain privileges and status in accordance with their training and racial mixture:

> Some arrive in Brazil very uncouth and ignorant and continue the same all their life. Others within a few years become *ladinos* and *espertos*, both for learning Christian doctrine and for finding a way of earning a livelihood, and they can be entrusted with a boat, to carry messages, and to do any ordinary task. . . .

25 Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos*, 51.
26 Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 103.

> Among the *ladinos* some are chosen for tinkers, carpenters, shipwrights, *taxeiros* [one who looks after the crystalization of sugar], sailors, since such occupations require greater ability. . . .
>
> Those who were born in Brazil or who were brought up since quite small in the homes of the whites, attached to their masters, give a good account of themselves; and under good mastership any of these is worth four *boçais* [unskilled field workers].[27]

Whips did little to inspire people who had to think to do their jobs. Chains would only slow them down or make their jobs impossible. They needed a certain amount of freedom of movement, and their willingness had to be inspired by something more positive than pain. The relative ease of their lives was enough. The threat of being sent to the fields was all the motivation they needed. Their workday, however, could be excruciatingly long. *Ladinos* might work inside mills fifteen to seventeen hours a day during harvest time.

The domestic slaves who worked in the comfort of owners' homes enjoyed privilege of relatively aristocratic proportions. As long as they behaved, which they most certainly did, they suffered neither flagellation nor chains, neither malnutrition nor the punishment of the tropical elements. They might even become virtual pets of the family, their injuries and illnesses attended to, their children endowed with similar privilege, their old age indulged. Unlike field slaves, their value increased over time as they learned their jobs better. These jobs included not only standard household chores but serving as midwife, wet nurse, and nanny. Many a white child emerged from the womb into black hands, took sustenance at black breasts, grew to love black women with the instinct normally re-

27 Andre João Antonil, *Cultura e opulencia do Brasil por suas drogas e minas* (São Paulo, 1923) 91, cited in René Ribeiro, "Relations of the Negro with Christianity in Portuguese America," *The Americas* (April, 1958) 14, No. 4, 457.

served for mothers. From there they often grew to use black women for sexual initiation.[28]

Slave women were given their household roles not only because cooking, cleaning, and childcare were beneath the dignity of wealthy white women but because there were few other white women available for household labor. White women were scarce in Pernambuco and other captaincies. Few women left Portugal to live in the rough and dismal frontier of Brazil. To augment the female population, the government sent orphan girls to make whatever they could of their lives in the New World.[29] Those few women who found themselves in Brazil were either closely guarded by husbands and fathers or working in ill-paid, if not illicit, trades. A woman's work, then, was a *black* woman's work. Black women were also there to help white women who had been pushed into marriage not long after puberty and started bearing children by the age of fifteen.[30] Slave women also worked in the cane fields, carrying the cane cut by men.

White men raped slave women at will and without repercussion. Fathers encouraged sons to use slaves to learn the pleasures of sex and be properly oriented without corrupting white women. These sexual relations by no means ended with adolescence or marriage. Consequently, slave women were often pregnant with the child of a white. The offspring were added not to the owner's embarrassments but to his assets. They were more valuable than slaves of pure African race for their content of white blood. Though perhaps the offspring of a master, they certainly were not valuable enough to be part of the white family. Whether of white father or unidentifiable black father, the offspring of slave women belonged to their mothers and were raised by the slave community.[31] Until the 1871 law of the "free womb," babies of slave women were by default born into bondage.

Black children in the master's house might play with white children, but the slave child was a plaything, not a playmate. At this early age the white children learned to give orders and to disrespect and mistreat

28 Freyre, *Masters and the Slaves*, 395.
29 Ribeiro, "Relations of the Negro with Christianity," 464.
30 Freyre, *Masters and the Slaves*, 379.
31 Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 111.

blacks. In games of pretend, the black child was the horsey, the servant, the victim of pranks, the slave. They were professional scapegoats — whipping boys — punished for any problems that occurred in the course of play. In this way the children — black and white — learned the proper relationship between the races.[32] White children learned not to care, and black children learned the same.

All slaves feared the loss of privilege, but their greatest fear was of punishment — torture as painful as the European imagination could devise. Europeans would never abuse an animal, not even the most venomous snake, so cruelly, thoroughly, or methodically. A passive or psychological punishment would be preferred because it was less likely to result in bad attitudes and aggravated enemies. It was also less likely to damage the asset. But when physical punishment was prescribed, it was horrific, and it was used as an example. To serve as such, it was executed in public, before an audience of blacks called in from the fields and mill to see what happened to anyone who dared steal, destroy, rebel, resist, or run off. The slightest indication of recalcitrance justified a public torturing. If the punishment took place in town, it was probably at the *pelourinho*, a stone pillar with an iron ring that stood in the *praça* in front of the ornate magnificence of a Baroque church. Since the punishment might well cripple if not destroy an asset, the objective was neither sadism nor the education of the individual. It was classic terrorism — punishment of one to inspire fear in others. The punished individual served only as a medium, a means of delivering a message. Public torture was a chore, something the whites had to do on a regular basis to sustain the fear and maintain their dominance. The sacrifice of one piece was an investment in the education of the rest.

The whites brought together a black audience for obvious reasons, but for reasons unknown their owner might attend as well, often with wife and children. Maybe these white witnesses felt satisfaction in their total domination. Maybe the practical purpose of the show was sweetened with sadism. Maybe the owner wanted to inure his family to cruelty. Maybe they had nothing more interesting to do on a farm or a mill an ocean away from

32 Freyre, *Masters and the Slaves*, 349-350.

any kind of art, theater, music, or other pleasantry of civilized society. It was a chance to get out of the house for something besides church.

Women, no freer than slaves in the Portuguese culture, are reputed to have been more cruel than men. Often jealous of slave women who attracted their husbands, Portuguese matrons were known to kick out teeth, cut off breasts, gouge out eyeballs, and sell off pretty teens to other masters.[33]

The *bacalhau* (in English, the *salted cod*), a variation of the cat-o'-nine-tails, served as the workaday motivator as well as the basic tool of measured punishment. A punishment session might consist of two hundred to three hundred strokes, though a Criminal Code passed in the 19th century would restrict whipping to fifty lashes per day, albeit without limit to the number of consecutive days of punishment.[34] For reasons relating more to psychology than laziness, another slave performed the whipping. The lashes might be applied to back, chest, head, face, legs, and feet. Salt, vinegar, pepper or lime rubbed into the wounds augmented and prolonged the agony while minimizing infections that might prevent the individual from working or even living. On the other hand, if infection was desired, the slave might be doused with urine. A few gouges with a knife or slits with a razor enhanced the pain. The individual might remain chained to the *pelourinho* through the rest of the hot day and then through the chill of night, awaiting more lashes to break open the wounds the next day. Ruined for any useful purpose besides reiteration of the message, the individual would probably continue being flogged until he died.

Devout Christians, the Portuguese borrowed a term from the Catholic Church: *novena*. In church the word referred to devotional prayers continued over the course of nine days. At the *pelourinho*, it referred to a nine-night flogging, each session lasting until the whip drew blood.

Slave owners locked their misbehaving workers in various forms of stock, imprisoning their heads and limbs in painful positions for days, weeks, or months. They leashed them at the ankle or the neck. They sus-

33 Ibid., *Masters and the Slaves*, 351-352.
34 Conrad, *Tumbeiros*, 30.

pended them with chains around the waist, hanging at the hip so that they bent sideways, their own weight slowly tearing the spine apart. They chained slaves to bubbling caldrons in the sugar mills — *inferno doce*, they called it, *sweet hell* — for months on end exposed to flames, sparks, and spatters of boiling cane syrup.

Mutilation of slaves was legal in Brazil until 1824. Slave owners knocked out teeth with hammers. In fits of jealousy, they mutilated genitals. To discourage escapes, they cut Achilles tendons. They punctured eyeballs, branded faces, lopped off scrotums, sliced off ears, amputated fingers, hacked off breasts, beat women for being or not being pregnant. They tied people to the ground for ants to eat or hung them from trees for flies and mosquitoes. They buried them alive, drowned them, strangled them, boiled them in caldrons of syrup, threw them into cane grinders. They drove men to kill themselves, women to kill their newborn.[35]

They invented equipment: the *cêpo*, a log carried on the head and chained to the ankle; the *gargalheira*, resembling a dog collar; a *golilha*, a system of chains that restricted movement, optionally securing an iron plate to the back, bearing the word for "thief" or "escapee"; the iron "Flanders leaf" that covered the face, locked at the back, with a hole big enough for breath but not for food; the *anjinho*, a "little angel" of two rings and a screw tightened slowly around the thumb to extract confession; the *vira-mundo* — the "world-turner" — that held the hands and feet, twisting the body into torturous positions.

These forms of torture were more than punishment. They were tactics that successfully dehumanized slaves and made them afraid to help each other. The slaves of farms and mills rarely rose up against the minority that oppressed them. We can only imagine the demoralized state of mind, the incapacitating despair of people who had been ripped from their societies, thrust among strangers, packed against them like sacks of commodity, beaten, tortured, worked to exhaustion, starved, denied any comfort whatsoever, denied any sense of humanness, any sense of hope. Many of the slaves of Brazil were people without family, without children,

35 Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 136.

without possessions, without pride, without the fruit of their labors or even knowing what their labors were for or where the product went, without the language of their masters, without the ceremonious worshipping of their gods, without identity besides the brands of their owners and the religion that was forced on them. To some extent they retained bits of the cultures of their homelands, but in the haphazard populations that formed on farms, they had to adapt to each other's languages, religions, and ways of life.

White society did not identify individuals by their ethnic or culture origins except that they were from somewhere in Africa, not Europe. They categorized non-whites by the circumstances of their birth. Blacks born in Brazil were *crioulos*. A *mameluco* was the child of a white man and an Indian woman. A *brasileiro* (i.e., one who works with the *brasil* tree) was an Indian or *mameluco*. A *banda-forra* was the offspring of a white male and a black slave. A *mulato* was the product of any black and white. A *pardo* was a *mulato* or even just someone with brown skin. A *salta-atrás* was the offspring of a mameluco and a black. A *terceirão* was the offspring of a white and a *mulata*.[36] A *cariboca* was the offspring of a Tupi and a white. A *cafuso* was the offspring of a black and a Tupi or other Indian.[37]

In the earliest decades of the sugar economy, Africans were a minority in the chains, outnumbered by Indian slaves. But as the Indians died or ran off and as the business of capturing and transporting Africans grew more organized and economical, the proportion of black slaves increased. In 1574, Africans comprised only seven percent of slaves. By 1591, they made up thirty-seven percent. In the next few decades this figure would reach nearly one hundred percent.

The number of slaves also increased as cane fields spread up and down the coast of Pernambuco and Bahia, the captaincy to the south. Fields extended inland, but the *mata atlântica* forest resisted them. A hundred years into the sugar business the growers had yet to push fifty miles inland. Cane needed to be processed the same day it was cut, so fields had to be near the mills they fed. The mills were factories of complex and expensive

36 Ribeiro, *O Povo Brasileiro*, 151.
37 Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 61.

machinery, much of it carved from local wood — giant mahogany cogs, axles of wood as strong as steel. The Portuguese word for sugar mill — *engenho*— is also the word for "ingenious." Though sugar was gold a man could grow, the start-up involved more than a shovel and pan. It needed capital. A mill needed a rich man to finance it. It also needed productive fields. Sugar depletes soil quickly. If a field couldn't be fertilized, it had to be abandoned. Fields ever farther from *engenhos* necessitated the building and maintenance of roads. Fields and roads tended to follow the coast rather than struggle into the *mata atlântica* forest of the interior.

While the forest served as geographic limit, the structure of the sugar industry served as economic limit. Capital cycled through a transatlantic triangle: cheap manufactured goods went from Europe to Africa. Those goods bought slaves, and the slaves went to Brazil. Sugar went from Brazil to Europe. Most of the capital stayed in Europe, but some went back into the cycle as cheap goods destined for Africa. Ships didn't necessarily sail in that triangular route, but the traffic of ships and money flowed among those three points. Mills were shackled to this cycle. Mill owners had to buy slaves or the shippers wouldn't carry their sugar to Europe. Those who monopolized the shipping kept a disproportionate part of the capital that circulated through the economy. Brazil, almost totally dependent on that single product, had few other economic elements to sustain it. Only with capital borrowed from Europe could the sugar economy sustain itself. The interest on the credit and the increasingly low price of sugar prevented much accumulation of wealth in Brazil. Though a few wrestled their way to the top and thrived, most mill owners and cane planters struggled to survive. Due to the division of wealth, with huge sums at the top but little for the vast majority, per capita income measured high on average but precariously low in most instances. Wealthy Brazil was populated by miserable, destitute, scabrous, malnourished people.[38]

The forest remained as a barrier to settlement and consequently became an opportunity to escape that settlement. To go into the forest with the accoutrements of civilization, one had to hack through it. But to disap-

38 Moura, *Quilombos*, 48.

pear into it — without armor, weapon, baggage, or food — a man in fear of his life could slip into the vegetation and make his way. The absolute poverty of escaping slaves gave them an advantage over Europeans burdened by heavy clothes, weapons, and baggage. Nature sheltered the meek. The urbanism and materialism of the powerful — arguably their very greed — restrained them like a leash.

Ventures into the interior, then, did not go far, and the risk of disaster increased with distance from the coast. European society ended at the edge of the dark forest. So when, toward the end of the 16th century, an unknown number of slaves at an undetermined sugar mill somewhere near the coast of the southern part of Pernambuco somehow managed to rise up against their owners and overseers, they were able to slip into the forest and get away.

Chapter 4

Early Palmares

Those early fugitives of the last years of the 16th century necessarily survived at first as hunter-gatherers, living off the land, literally hand-to-mouth. In that they eventually settled in an area called Palmares — Palm Groves — we can presume that Palmarians ate a lot of coconuts and other palm fruits. Pernambuco offered a variety of species that produced coconuts, wax, açai, and the small, pulpy *coquinho* fruit. The pindoba coconut palm (*Attalea pindoba*) became a primary natural resource.[1] Other palms in the area included the *ouricuri* (Syagrus coronata), *catrolé* (*Syagrus cearensis*), and the thorny, vine-like *titara* (*Desmoncus polyacanthos*). Palmarians drank coconut milk, ate coconut meat, and used scraped-out coconut shells as bowls and cups. They pounded the coconut milk into butter and fermented it into wine. They roofed their houses with palm leaves and weaved palm leaves into mats and baskets. They spun palm bark fibers into textiles and string. They ate the finger-sized bugs that

1 Carneiro, *O Quilombo dos Palmares*, 45.

lived under palm bark. They ate heart of palm, the tender white core of young trees. They cooked with palm oil and burned palm oil in lamps. They attached a small clay bowl to a bamboo straw to a coconut shell full of water to form a hookah through which they could smoke a certain hemp, *fumo Angola*, that gave them wonderful dreams and soothed their sadness when they missed Africa.[2] No doubt they looked at the palms of Brazil and remembered the palms of the place they'd come from. After working in the merciless, unshaded expanses of cane fields, groves of palm, so much like those of Africa, must have felt like paradise.

Over the next few decades, more escapees arrived. Women had babies. Small settlements, called *mocambos*, sprouted here and there, often atop mountains with difficult access. Sometimes they joined with Indian villages, and sometimes Indians joined them. At first the *quilombolas* — the residents of *quilombos* — didn't identify with each other as a single political entity. But over the course of the first years of the seventeenth century, they recognized that they shared a common enemy, a common fear, and common needs. The use of the word *quilombo* in Brazil, adopted from the similar word in Mbundu, indicates that the war camps of Palmares probably adopted the Jaga tradition of integrating men from various cultures — various conquered territories — into a unified military brotherhood.[3]

The word *quilombo* was apparently not generally used (at least by the Portuguese) during the time of Palmares, the full span of the seventeenth century. Existing documents refer to the villages of Palmares as *mucambos*. The first written reference to Palmares as a *quilombo* appears in a document of 1692, referring to mercenaries who were "making cruel war on the negroes, against whom there has already been some success from which it may be hoped that with the help of God the negroes will be dislodged from Barriga Mountain and their fields incapacitated, without which they cannot sustain themselves or preserve that site and as a consequence all the other *mocambos* and *quilombos* in the Sertão."[4] (In this book

2 Ibid., 48.
3 Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels*, 125.
4 Ennes, Doc. 35, "Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino sobre a retificação dos

quilombo refers to all of Palmares since "*Quilombo* dos Palmares" is today a widely used expression and the aforementioned first use is in specific reference to Palmares. While *mocambo* can be synonymous with *quilombo*, here it refers to villages and towns of refugees from slavery.)

The *mocambos* that made up Palmares stretched across a band about 350 kilometers (200 miles) long and of varying width. This swath was some eighty kilometers (50 miles) or so inland from the coast of what is today Brazil's state of Alagoas. Later in the seventeenth century the area of Palmares was thought to be "larger than the whole kingdom of Portugal."[5] (This could be true only if one includes as part of Palmares the vast and unsettled area inland from there, the *sertão*, which the settlers on the coast could not reach because of the wilderness and *mocambos* that stood between them and it.) The land rose gradually from the coast, forming a plain interrupted here and there by high, steep, ridges isolated from each other by forest, streams, and small rivers. Deeper inland, just beyond Palmares, the geography and ecosystem became the harsh, semi-arid *sertão* of thorn bushes, sparse vegetation, and gravelly soil. The southern end of Palmares and the captaincy of Pernambuco reached to the Rio São Francisco, a river reminiscent of the Mississippi in its length, width, tendency to flood, and, in the 19th century paddle-wheel steamboat traffic. Some 2,830 km (1,760 miles) long, the river, later known as "Velho Chico" (Old Frank, "Chico" being a nickname for Francisco), begins southwest of Pernambuco in the gold-filled hills of Minas Gerais. It flows northeast through Bahia before turning east and southeast to form part of the southern border of today's Pernambuco and then the border between Alagoas and Sergipe. A few miles upstream from the Atlantic was (and still is) the city of Penedo.

In any given *mocambo*, people from various African cultures lived cooperatively. They worked out a language that may have started as ges-

Capítulos que o Governador João da Cunha Sotto-Maior concedeu ao Coronel Domingos Jorge Velho, que pede o Governador de Pernambuco Marquez de Montevello. Recife, 5 de Setembro de 1692," in *Guerras Nos Palmares*, 243. Note that Schwartz, in *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels*, refers to a reference to a Palmares as a *quilombo* in a document from 1691.
5 Ennes, Doc. 30, "Parceres acêra da campanha dos Palmares," in *Guerras Nos Palmares*, 210.

tures and pantomime and gradually built into a functional combination of African and Portuguese words, some Tupi-Guarani terms for local plants, animals, and places, and some words they made up as needed. Many of them shared the Bantu or Jaga language. *Mocambos* distant from each other and in only occasional communication may have developed local dialects or accents. We have no evidence at all, however, of how these people communicated or whether they shared a form of writing. If they did use a written language, few knew how to do so.

Much of what little we know about life in Palmares comes from the report of a spy, a slave sent to Palmares by Manuel de Inojosa. An owner of land and slaves and a veteran of incursions against *quilombos* in Bahia and Pernambuco, Inojosa was ardent about eliminating the rebellious black republic. In or slightly before 1677 he offered freedom to one of his slaves if he went into Palmares, reconnoitered the way people lived there, and reported back. The slave did so, spending six months in Palmares before returning. Neither the reason for his return nor his subsequent fate are known. Inojosa sent a report to Lisbon. The report has been lost, but the document that accompanied it summarizes what the spy reported:

> In this [attached] report, Manuel de Inojosa, for the sake of the conquest [of Palmares], sent a negro slave of his, with the promise of emancipation, to live among the negroes, pretending to flee captivity and thus enter into their trust and observe the way in which they live, work, marry, and govern because knowing the ways of the enemy facilitates success in war. For six months said slave was among the negroes as one of them, in every way gaining the confidence of not just residents but the highest leaders. Every negro who arrives at the *mocambo* fleeing his masters is soon heard by a counsel of justice that seeks to know his intentions because they are greatly suspicious and are not won over just because it is a negro who has presented himself. But as soon as they certify his good intentions, they give him a woman whom he possesses along with two three, four, or five other negroes.

> Since there are few women, they have adopted this practice to avoid contention. All the husbands of the same woman live in the same *mocambo* with her, all in peace and harmony, an imitation of a family but appropriate for barbarians without the light of understanding and shame that religion imposes. All of these husbands recognize themselves as obedient to the woman, who keeps order over everything in life as well as in labor. To each one of these so-called families the counsel of leaders gives a piece of land for cultivation, and this the woman and husbands do. They have these lands, but not as their own because they can't sell them, and they lose them under imprisonment if they fail to plant them as directed by the counsel of leaders. Among them, everything belongs to all, and nothing belongs to anyone, as the fruits of what they plant and harvest or what they make in their workshops they are obliged to deposit in the hands of the counsel, which divides to each according to what they need for their sustenance. They all arise to war when most needed, without the exception of women, who on these occasions seem more like wild animals than people of their gender. Complaints, be they of the pretend family or of the republic, are heard by the counsel of justice, without recourse. The leaders, all of them, are chosen by a meeting of the negroes who live in the *mucambo*, but the main leader is chosen by the leaders. The main leader resolves issues of war without consultation or contrary opinion of anyone whatsoever, and anyone who does not go into battle in conformance with his will he has put to death. In war, they use knives, spears, firearms, and gunpowder, of which they have copious amounts stolen in their attacks or bought from whites with whom they have an understanding. They are willing to die before they will abandon Palmares.[6]

6 Freitas, "Sobre a conquista dos negros dos Palmares," *República de Palmares*,

From the modern perspective, Palmarian society was in crucial ways similar to or centuries ahead of European society. Women were socially, economically and militarily empowered. Marriage and sexual morality were apparently established by necessity and efficiency rather than by religious edict. A parliamentary council was elected by popular vote, and the highest leader was elected by leaders in an electoral process. Property was communal, and, in an ante-echo of Karl Marx, each citizen was expected to contribute in accordance with ability and to receive in accordance with need.

The communal aspect of land ownership was a tradition in Africa as well of the Native Americans who populated Palmares. In any event, ownership of land in Palmares would have been impossibly impractical. During an attack, people needed to abandon a village, which meant, of course, abandoning their land, not to mention most of their possessions, including stored foods. At the same time, new fugitives were always arriving and had no practical or equitable way to take ownership of land. Survival and the common good held absolute priority over personal wealth.

In Africa, these people had been farmers, herdsmen, hunters, artisans, potters, miners, artists, fishermen, blacksmiths, woodworkers, weavers, traders, housewives, soldiers, slaves, artists, and businessmen. They brought these skills to Palmares. They farmed, fished, and hunted. They made ceramics and textiles. They mined hematite, smelted it into iron, forged it into steel, and hammered it into hoes, machetes, hatchets, and arrowheads. They traded with nearby farmers. They raised chickens and pigs but not cattle.[7] In that they were human beings, it's quite likely they succumbed to the urge for artistic expression.

We don't know exactly what those early Palmarian settlers were doing to bother the Portuguese on the coast, but later records give us an indication. As soon as their ranks were strong enough, they started raiding mills and plantations to grab weapons, gunpowder, supplies, and tools. They also took gold and silver that they could use to buy arms, ammunition, and other manufactured goods from cooperative settlers.[8] While there, they set fire to buildings and fields. Whether the destruction was revenge, an aggressive attempt to defeat or push back the Portuguese, or just a cover of chaos to hinder pursuit, we do not know. The logical guess: all three.

141-142.

7 Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos.*, 44-46.

They also captured people – black men to join their ranks, and women of any color, presumably for reproduction and comfort as well as for household labor. Rape as revenge or act of cruelty was apparently rare. The many documented complaints about Palmares from landowners and local leaders never mention sexual violence.[9] White women were often ransomed back to their families and returned unharmed.[10]

Palmares needed to increase its population. Too few men had the courage to flee into the unknown dangers of the forest. Many were afraid of horrific punishment if caught. And of course many were simply unable to escape unless liberated. The Palmarian invaders had to effectively capture them from their captors and force them to flee — at least that's what the Portuguese reported was happening. In Palmares, these forced fugitives became slaves of their new captors. But it was slavery in the African tradition. They were not exploited for financial gain or abused to the point of death. They were more like helpers, doing the same work as everyone else. And they could win their freedom by raiding the coast and capturing someone else.

Even before Palmares became a unified political entity under a single ruler, it was a threat to the Portuguese colonial society. The Jesuit Pero Rodriguez wrote a letter about the problem in 1597: "The primary enemies are the rebel negroes from Guinea [i.e. Africa], who are in some of the mountains from which they attack and give us trouble, and there could come a time when they become bold enough to destroy farms, as their relatives have done on São Tomé Island."[11]

8 Kent, "Palmares: An African State in Brazil," *Journal of African History*, 170.

9 Carneiro, 62. It should be noted that Kent cites Carneiro stating that a soldier reported a "rape" in 1682, but apparently this was Kent's mistranslation of *rapto*, which translates as "kidnapped."

10 Kent, 170.

11 Ribeiro, *O Povo Brasileiro*, 458, citing "Carta do Padre Pero Rodrigues etc." in

São Tomé, an island near the equator off the western coast of central Africa, had been successfully using black slaves to plant cane and produce sugar. Angolan survivors of a wrecked slave ship established a *mocambo* on a mountain, and soon fugitive slaves from the island were joining them. In 1574 they launched an attack against mills and plantations. Counter-attacks failed to eliminate the threat. Another attack in 1595 did even more damage. It failed to oust the white colonists, but the *mocambo* continued to be a problem for the next century.[12]

In Brazil, the problem for mill and farm owners wasn't just the raids and abductions. It was the example. As a society and economy, Palmares was functioning effectively. Its people were working together and sustaining themselves. They still wanted and perhaps needed the European products they stole from the mills and farms they raided, but they did not need Portugal, its king, or its aristocracy. This was the beginning of a long-term trend in the Americas — a political and economic movement toward independence from a hierarchical and immobile tyranny. Like the revolution that would happen in North America 150 years later, it was founded on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Like the revolution that would happen shortly thereafter in France, it upheld (in practice if not in articulated statement) the principles of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. Though it did not offer the social strata that would allow upward mobility through economic classes — it was a single class of workers and soldiers under a small elite of governors — it absorbed the tired, the poor, the tempest-tossed, the enslaved and huddled masses yearning to breathe free. The immigrants included not only fugitive blacks but poor people who were either fed up with oppression by the governor or a mill owner, or had been accused of a "crime." In the context of total tyranny and religious intolerance, a crime would include speaking out against the existing power structure, any conflict with the aristocracy, desertion, treason, destitution, witchcraft, prostitution, sodomy, loitering, and being Jewish.[13] But the number of whites at Palmares was probably very small. The many

ABN [Arquivo da Biblioteca Nacional], vol. XX (Rio de Janeiro, 1898), 255.

12 Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*, 15.

13 Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels*, 125.

incursions failed to capture or kill any whites, and documents offer very few references to whites in Palmares. It may well be that white settlers in Palmarian territory, with Palmarian permission, were considered part of Palmarian society even if not actively defending it. And of course in the panmixia of intermarriage, concubinage, and rape, the definition of white could become nebulous.

Palmares was demonstrating several fundamental alternatives to the Portuguese way of life. Blacks could survive in freedom, and they could live as equals with other races. A colony could survive without its homeland. An economy could sustain itself without gold, sugar, or ships. A society could function without aristocracy, Christianity, peons, racism, or the whip. And though a man couldn't own his own land, at least the land he harrowed and hoed didn't belong to anyone other than everyone.

In other words, Palmares counterposed Portuguese society in just about every way.[14] To the Portuguese, the conflict went well beyond the issue of fugitive slaves. The struggle with Palmares was a class conflict: the poor against the wealthy. It was racial: black against white. It was cultural: two sets of irreconcilable values. It was social: two ways of organizing a community. It was economic: a collective economy versus a monocultural cash-crop under oligarchic domination. It was political: Portuguese subjects obedient to a king versus former Portuguese subjects doing perfectly well without the king.

Palmares proved liberty possible, slavery unnecessary. It represented hope. It had to be proven unviable. The best way to do that — the only way — would be to eradicate it.

14 Ribeiro, *O Povo Brasileiro*, 173.

Chapter 5

Thus They Go Without Punishment

The Palmares problem stung so much back in Lisbon that in 1602 a new governor-general of Brazil, Dom Diogo Botelho, sailed into the harbor at Recife rather than straight to the Bahia de Todos os Santos at Salvador, the capital of Brazil. It was the first time a governor-general had dared set dainty foot in the muck of that fetid and infected city or, for that matter, anywhere in Pernambuco. He hadn't meant to stay long before heading south to his palace in Salvador. He just wanted to assess the situation in what he considered to be the most important captaincy in the king's American territory.

Botelho found Pernambuco in a bigger mess than he'd expected. The primary settlement in the most important captaincy needed governance, public works, military installations, a system of justice, a semblance of order. He spent a year in the neighboring heights of Olinda, recording testimony from leading citizens. Everyone agreed on one thing: Palmares had to be exterminated.

Before the year was out, Botelho rustled up an ad hoc army of a few professional officers, some adventurous mill owners, and, in the words of the Governor-General Botelho, "people of little importance." Among those of little importance were plebeian whites, freed blacks, and *mameluco* white-Indian half-breeds — basically anyone who needed work.[1] The officers went for the glory and the hope of favors from the king. The Indians probably worked for trinkets, tools, and, in a few cases, the meat of captured blacks. The peons did what they were told, perhaps inspired by promises of human loot. Everyone hoped to make a little money off the slaves they'd capture, either selling them or collecting a reward for their return. Under the leadership of Bartolomeu Bezerra, the little army packed up their machetes, muskets, swords, lead shot and powder, their manioc flour, beef jerky, and dried fish, their cloaks and hammocks, and proceeded to slog, sweat, hack, and stumble their way inland.

A few months later they returned. History has recorded no details of the excursion, but correspondence to the king reported that the rebels had been captured or killed, and Palmares had been wiped off the face of the captaincy. The black rebels were extinct. Problem solved. Everybody could get back to work, and Governor-General Botelho could sail on to his headquarters in Bahia. He later received a letter from the king, commending him for this contribution to the empire.[2]

Bartolomeu Bezerra's declaration of victory wasn't necessarily just an error in judgment. What expedition leaders said and actually did often had little in common. A petition sent to the king in 1689 by the council of Pernambuco warned that officers were often lying in order to gain promotions, payments, and royal favors.[3] Though not mentioning Palmares specifically, the document attests to the dishonesty and exaggeration that would explain the repeated reports of the Palmarian king's demise, the slaughter of great numbers of people, the overblown victories over villages, and the various exterminations of Palmares. The inaccuracies were compounded by the unilateral perspective of the Portuguese reporting on an

1 "Correspondência de Diogo Botelho," Revista IHGB, vol. LXXIII, part 1, 121.
2 Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos*, 40.
3 Freitas, *República de Palmares*, 13-15.

enemy they never knew well and never cared to describe with any insight. The scribes who kept journals during excursions wrote at length about the arduous journeys and glorious battles, but they spent few words observing the enemy.

Indeed the reported extinction that earned Botelho and Bezerra the kudos of the king turned out to be more optimistic than realistic. Slaves were still running away to somewhere, and someone was continuing to attack white settlements. Botelho sent excursions into Sergipe, the captaincy on the south side of the Rio São Francisco, where he ordered the destruction of "four or five very large villages."[4]

By this time, there was already talk of no longer importing slaves from Africa because, after all the expense of buying and shipping them, Botelho said, half of them soon ran off into the woods. While he was probably exaggerating, the population of Palmares was increasing by the hundreds each year. A new governor-general, Diogo de Meneses e Sequeira, suggested to the king that it would be better to invest in the local Indians than in more blacks. Africans were not needed, he wrote, because the mills have been working with "less than half [their workers] because they flee and ensconce themselves in the wilderness, and there are so many on the loose that they form villages and rebel, and no one can do anything about it."[5]

But indigenous Brazilians weren't going to solve the problem. They did not take well to the life of the slave. By 1612, the Jesuits were complaining of Indians abandoning their settlements and joining the blacks in Palmares.[6] Forced labor, native or African, was increasingly unreliable and thus close to unviable, which meant sugar was unviable, which meant Brazil was unviable, which brought the viability of Portugal itself into question, and Portugal, which from 1580 to 1640 was politically joined with Spain, was a mainstay of the Catholic Church.

Meanwhile, the price of sugar was dropping as other sources increased the supply to Europe. Profitability declined. The last thing mill

4 "Correspondênca," 192.
5 Ibid., 39.
6 Freitas, *República de* Palmares, 41.

owners needed was vandalism and sabotage by ex-slaves. Attacks by Palmarians spread the fame of the place, encouraging more slaves to run off. The fugitives took with them skills that could be used to build an economy and a society. Between escapes and the horrendous mortality rate of slaves, mill owners had no choice but to import more Africans, each boat bringing not only a new load of misery but fresh recruits for Pernambuco's biggest enemy.

A report to the king in 1613 advised of a worsening situation:

> "In this Captaincy [Pernambuco], 30 leagues (180 km, 110 miles) into the *sertão* backlands, there is a place between two mountain chains called Palmares, to which slaves, fleeing from work, are welcomed…and later, making attacks and raids, oblige the whites to hunt them down with weapons, and they often succeed in bringing them back, though as soon as they are released to work, they return to the same place, as it is not possible to destroy their base, causing no end to the disturbances and complaints as the abuses that these vagrants commit spread the fame of Palmares, and thus they go without punishment…"[7]

Following the excursion that Governor-General Botelho had sent in, Palmares continued to grow in population, economic strength, social structure, and political cohesion. Human traffic continued to flow from Africa to white settlements in Pernambuco, and from there it flowed to Palmares. Ironically, and unknowingly, Palmares and Portugal were both working against their own interest. To sustain its slave-based economy, Portugal had to keep importing potential enemies from Africa. At the same time, Portugal's dependence on slavery was sustaining an economic system that was becoming obsolete. Rival powers in Europe — England and Holland — though still dependent on slavery for agricultural production

7 "Livro que Dá Razão do Estado do Brasil," cited in Edison Carneiro, *O Quilombo dos Palmares*, 50.

the New World, were already moving into an industrial system of skilled labor and sophisticated finance. As long as slaves were the mainstay of the Iberian economy, the inefficiencies of Portugal's aristocratic system would continue, the Church would wield its excessive power, and a king with inherited powers would rule in accordance with his whims.

Still, the sugar industry was a transition from feudalism to capitalistic industrialism. Unlike agriculture and cottage industry, it required substantial capital, extensive planning, and complex administrative organization. An intricate process had to be rationalized. A given operation had to be efficient if it expected to be profitable. It required a production system not unlike an assembly line with a continuous flow of work and the input of specialists at each step.[8]

Slaves, of course, had no interest in helping this new industry to thrive. Palmares was doing what it could to tear it down farm by farm, mill by mill, even as they robbed the industry of products they couldn't produce themselves. Slaves sabotaged mills, set fire to fields, and ran off whenever they had the chance.

The rate of escape and the threat posed by the escapees gave rise to a new profession, the *capitão do mato*, the bush captain. He was typically a mulatto blessed with enough European blood to be trusted to hunt down fugitive blacks for a bounty. In a land with little law outside of cities, *capitães do mato* earned a reputation for brutality that was not always limited to fugitives. As de facto agents of the empire, they were often given authority over a district and reporting to a mill owner rather than to the government. They were known to intimidate rural settlers and extort protection money from them.[9] Being in the brutal business of hunting humans in a colony ruled by brutality, the *capitão do mato* recognized no limit to his power.

In the early decades of the seventeenth century, the colonists continued to exploit one of Brazil's natural resources — the Indian population. *Bandeirante* slave hunters out of São Paulo probed the backlands in

8 See Schwartz's thoughts in *Sugar Plantations*, 254-258.
9 Ibid., 471.

search of villages they could capture. Their favorite finds were the Jesuit-run villages of "civilized" (i.e. dressed and baptized) Indians. The Jesuits abhorred this abuse of their evangelism. They maintained that Indians were too noble and too human to be subjected to slavery. Slavery more appropriately befitted Africans, they believed, as long as it was accompanied by baptism and bowing down to Christ.

Dom Filipe II was inclined to agree that the emphasis should be put on African imports. His preference had nothing to do with the perceived relative humanity of Indians. His concerns were more financial. It was easier to tax African slaves arriving by ship than Indian slaves being dragged in from the countryside.[10]

One of the most prominent and eloquent of the Jesuits, Antônio Vieira, had come to Bahia as a boy with his family in 1618. His mother was the daughter of a woman who was half African. He studied at a Jesuit school and entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1623. During the Dutch invasion of Salvador in 1624, he fled inland, where he began to work as a missionary and to appreciate the dignity of Indians. He took his vows in 1625 and, after becoming a priest in 1634, took to the pulpit to defend the humanity of Indians. The intelligence and eloquence of his sermons were widely respected, but his stance on issues earned him many enemies. He irked the Inquisition for defending Jews and "new Christians," (i.e. Jews who had converted during the Inquisition) who came to Brazil. Though justifying slavery to slaves, he also railed against slave owners who abused their slaves. He preached against preachers who abused the power of their sermons. He was accused of treason for suggesting that the Dutch be given Pernambuco in the name of peace, but it was Dom João IV who saved him from being thrown out of the Society of Jesus. At various times for various reasons, he was thrown out of Marahão, exiled (along with all Jesuits) from Brazil, and expelled from Lisbon.

In 1633, in a sermon to the *Irmandade dos Pretos* (the Brotherhood of Blacks) at a sugar mill in Bahia, he tried to comfort his black flock by comparing them with Christ:

10 Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 137.

> There is no labor or way of life more similar to the cross and passion of Christ than yours at these mills. . . . Most fortunate are you if you recognize the fortune of your state and your conformity to and imitation of such a high and divine similarity by using and sanctifying labor! At a sugar mill you are the imitators of Christ crucified because you suffer in much the same way that our Lord suffered and in his Passion. . . . Here, too, you have no shortage of cane, and cane is mentioned twice in the Passion. . . The Passion of Christ went through a night of no sleep and through a day of no rest, and such are your nights and your days. Christ was naked, and you, too are naked. Christ went without food, and you are famished. Christ was mistreated in every way, and so are you. In irons, prisons, whippings, wounds, and despicable names your imitation is made and which, if accompanied with patience, will bless you with martyrdom. All you lack is a cross for your mill to be completely and perfectly similar.[11]

Vieira's stance on slavery could not have won him many friends among Africans, though he did try to comfort them with a twisted logic that applied to them but not to Indians. One sermon, later titled "Children of God's Fire," justified slavery on logical and Biblical grounds. He was addressing a congregation of "black brothers of the Rosary" and, apparently, their masters. The masters, dressed in Sunday finery, would have been sitting in the pews while their slaves, nearly naked and reeking, kneeled in the back. Vieira delivered the same message to them all: It was logical that God would never destine anyone to *two* terms in Hell. Living slaves were certainly living in a Hell on earth. It was only logical, then, that if

11 Vieira, *Obras Completas do Padre Antônio Vieira*,, Sermon XIV, quoted in English in Conrad, *Children of God's Fire*, 165.

they went into the afterlife without the burden of sin, they would be freed from Hell.

> You are the brothers of God's preparation and the children of God's fire," he thundered from the pulpit, "the children of God's fire of the present transmigration of slavery, because in this condition God's fire impressed the mark of slavery upon you; and, granted that this is the mark of oppression, it has also, like fire, illuminated you, because it has brought you the light of the Faith and the knowledge of Christ's mysteries, which are those which you solemnly profess on the rosary. But in this same condition of the first transmigration, which is that of temporal slavery, God and his Most Holy Mother are preparing you for the second transmigration, that of eternal freedom . . . [Y]our brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary [the saint of blacks and slaves] promises all of you a Certificate of Freedom, with which you will not only enjoy eternal liberations in the second transmigration of the other life, but with which you will also free yourselves in this life from the most terrible captivity of the first transmigration.

Padre Vieira's messages must have comforted the owners of the children of God's fire by relieving them of any suspicions of sin on their part. Having brought unenlightened Africans the light of the Faith and the knowledge of Christ's mysteries, they could rest assured that they would never suffer the fires of Hell. They must have comfort, too, in hearing about the sin of disobedience to one's master:

> Let it be known, all of you who are slaves, that not all of what you are is a slave. Every man is composed of a body and a soul, but that which is a slave...is not the whole person, but only half of him. . . . Speaking of slaves, and

> with slaves, St. Paul said: 'Be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh.'[12] And who are these 'lords according to the flesh'? All interpreters declare that they are the temporal masters, such as yours whom you serve during your entire life; and the Apostle calls them 'lords according to the flesh' because the slave, like any other person, is made up of flesh and spirit, and the master's control over the slave is only over the flesh, that is, the body, and does not include the spirit, which is the soul.
>
> This is why among the Greeks the slaves were called *bodies*. But we do not have to go as far back as Rome and Greece. I ask you this: in your own Brazil, when you want to say that so-and-so has many or few slaves, why do you say that he has this many or that many *pieces* [*peças*]? Because the first persons who named them this way intended to signify, wisely and in a Christian manner, that the slave's subjection to the master, and the master's control over the slave, consist only in the body...you [slave owners] call your slaves *pieces* just as we cay *a piece of gold, a piece of silver, a piece of silk*, or any other thing among those which do not possess a soul. And in this way it is even more proven that the name *piece* does not include the slave's soul, and is only meant to mean his body.[13]

We have no record of how the "pieces" in his congregation felt about these comforting words or whether they succeeded in associating

12 Ephesians 6:5-9 (International Version): "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him."

13 Vieira, *Obras Completas do Padre Antônio Vieira, Sermon XII*, quoted in English in Conrad, *Children of God's Fire*, 164-166.

their situation with that of Jesus on the cross. Judging by how many of them opted to assume the burden of disobedience, we can guess that they were less than entirely convinced of their good fortune of being blessed with enslavement. In increasing numbers, they found ways to get a head start on their eternal freedom by slipping away from their owners and running inland toward a palm-shaded place that must have seemed like heaven on Earth.

which included basins, baskets, and pots made right there.
Later we pulled out, seeing that there was no reason to stay.[24]

After almost a month of arduous marching they had accomplished nothing more than being an annoyance to the enemy. They set up an ambush a mile away, but no one came along. Later they captured a man, a woman and a child, and on the next day, they captured a black man and a Brazilian woman covered with sores. She said she was the slave of the king's daughter and that other blacks were still in the area. The Dutch probed the underbrush but found no one. They found the king's daughter's house but not the king's daughter. They burned it, spent the night nearby, looked around the next day, but still found no one. Fifteen hundred people had evaporated.

The invaders continued to explore the area and look for blacks. The rain oppressed them day and night. They followed the Paraíba downstream but went into forests when they could, climbed mountains to see what they could see, hunted and fished for food. On April 1, they came across an old cart path and followed it to Gabriel Soares's old mill. On April 2, 1645, they staggered back into Alagoas with one dead and several sick or injured.[25] They had little to report to Nassau. They hadn't really even seen the enemy.

24 Carneiro. *O Quilombo dos Palmares*, 257.
25 "Brieve en Paieren uit Brasilien," a collection of documents by unidentified author(s), translated (from the Dutch) by Alfredo de Carvalho, *Revista do Instituto Arqueológico Pernambucano*, 87-96.

Chapter 7

Palmares Rising, Pernambuco in Decline

In the early 1640s, Palmares was thriving in the hinterlands while the European settlement in Pernambuco was falling apart. Drought and fires alternated with floods and epidemics. Cane production dropped. At the same time, sugar production elsewhere was driving prices down. The Dutch plan to extend usurious credit was compounding debt beyond anyone's reach. Mill owners compensated by forcing their slaves to work harder and by paying other workers little or nothing. Nassau always found a way to forgive the owners their debts a little while longer, but the lower classes continued to suffer.

In May of 1644, a month after the return of the Blaer excursion, the Dutch West Indies Company called Nassau back to Holland. He may have been happy to pull out. The tenuous relationship between indebted Portuguese mill owners and their money-lending masters could not hold out much longer. Sensing this, colonists on both sides protested Nassau's departure and warned the Company that his successors would undo all he had accomplished.[1] They were right. The new rulers, less politically judicious, insisted on collecting debts, which usually meant seizing farms and

1 Bueno, *Brasil: Uma História*, 95.

mills, which meant that the owners had less and less reason to cooperate with their overlords. The reluctant cooperation of the Portuguese broke down to acts of desperate greed. Those who still had enough political or economic sway induced the Dutch to seize sugar from less powerful owners, driving them out of business and temporarily helping the stronger mills survive.

As climactic extremes and political ambition lashed the economy, the lower classes suffered most. Driven by sheer hunger, they were already rising up, not as revolutionary armies or even as mobs but as highway robbers who ambushed shipments and robbed anyone with anything to steal. With the Dutch government tearing down the socio-economic structure of the mills while peasants ignored the law for the sake of survival, civil life in Pernambuco was once again breaking down.

As the mill owners lost their property, they gained something in common with the plebes. They possessed nothing and therefore had nothing to lose and every reason to resist the status quo. Rich and poor began to plot together. The Dutch had to go.

One of the leading instigators was the suddenly patriotic João Fernandes Vieira, who was one of the biggest debtors in the captaincy. He had made a fortune capturing fugitive slaves, then used that fortune, plus borrowed money, to buy up mills that the Dutch has seized. Now he had a chance to rid himself of the debt by ridding Pernambuco of his Dutch creditors. Wrapped in the flag of selfless patriotism, he became the organizer, financier, and military leader of a new uprising.[2]

In August of 1645, the Portuguese rebellion began. They called it the War of the Divine Light. Bahia, still under Portuguese control, sent the Indian brigades of Felipe Camarão and the black regiment of Henrique Dias north to Pernambuco. Fernandes Vieira, desperate for manpower, offered a broad promise well beyond his authority. He offered "all negro, Arda, Mina, Angola, Crioulo, mulatto, *mameluco*, freed slaves and captives" freedom and payment for their military services.[3]

2 Freitas, *Palmares: Guerra dos Escravos*, 69.
3 Pereira, *Anais Pernambucanos*, 202.

The Dutch countered with black mercenaries brought in from Congo, though the Africans proved unwilling to engage in much combat. Ill treated and ill fed by their employers, they often slipped out of their barracks in search of food. Since the mercenary relationship was not working, the Dutch declared their mercenaries slaves. But the chaos of war made it easy for Dutch and Portuguese slaves to escape. Inevitably they fled inland toward Palmares. The Europeans had to fight each other while trying to round up fugitives before they became enemies on a third front. At the same time, property owners saw the fugitives as a new source of slaves.

Brazil's struggles against the Dutch smoldered and flared on and off for almost ten years as the Portuguese settlers tried to stay in the sugar business with the people they were trying to oust. Portugal itself could not contribute to the effort. Dom João IV, barely back on the Braganza throne, was fighting the War of Restoration against Spain. It wasn't an all-out war, just a long series of skirmishes that did not end until 1668. But the tension with Spain left Dom João in no position to aggravate the Dutch. The Iberian Union had been unable to prevail over Holland and hadn't even dared contribute to the anti-Dutch resistance in Brazil. Now Portugal was fighting for its independence, and Brazil was its own colony. But as the war in Brazil dragged on, the politics of Europe shifted once again, and Spain was allied with Holland. If the Portuguese resisted the Dutch occupation of Brazil, Spain might step up its resistance to Portugal's struggle for independence. Once again, Portugal was of no help to Pernambuco.

The best Portugal could do was establish the Companhia Geral do Comércio do Brasil—the General Brazilian Trading Company. It was a quasi-private company controlled by the Crown under the model of the West India companies of England and Holland. The Companhia's original mission was to facilitate exports from areas not controlled by the Dutch. But the aristocrats who controlled the Companhia used it to create monopolies for companies in the homeland and to control prices for products coming out of Brazil. It would continue to prohibit Brazil from planting olives or grapes, ensuring Portugal a market for its own oil and wine. Salt, too, would have to come from the motherland, as would salted cod. An

armada would protect shipment convoys twice a year, though it would take a decade to build. Though the Companhia established a certain stability and security, it also stifled development in Brazil.

Without support from home, the Pernambucans resorted to guerrilla warfare fought at their tactical convenience. It came to be called "Brazilian warfare," arguably a precursor of the way Brazilians would play soccer four hundred years later, using fast-moving ad hoc tactics to make up for lack of overall strategy and organization. It was also the guerrilla style of the Palmares military effort.

The hit-and-run tactics, backed up—if not inspired—by the Indians under Felipe Camarão and the ferocity of the blacks in the regiment led by Henrique Dias, gradually wore down the Dutch, pushing them from the interior and surrounding them at Recife. The city proved impregnable to the thin and lightly-armed ranks of the Portuguese guerrillas, but the situation in Europe was changing. Holland was at war with England, people were rebelling in its Zealand, and the Dutch fishing industry needed salt from Sétubal, Portugal, to preserve its fish. By January 1654, the defense of Recife wasn't worth the effort. Holland agreed to leave. Portugal was so weak that it had to agree to pay four million cruzados in compensation for Holland's losses in Brazil. Those losses included just about everything Nassau had built. Those who would pay for those losses were the people of Pernambuco. They would, in effect, be taxed for the damage they'd caused in forcing the Dutch to leave.

Under the agreement, Jews would be allowed to emigrate. Many would return to Europe, but some sailed off for Suriname, Jamaica, or New Amsterdam, a thriving Dutch settlement at the mouth of the Hudson River.[4] Though it has been conjectured that some Dutch Jews and New Christians may have fled to Palmares rather than face Portuguese rule, there is no evidence of this. But it can be reasonably assumed that any Jews who fled to Palmares would have been more welcome there than anywhere else in Portuguese Brazil—unless they were one of the many Jews who had been slave owners.

4 Fausto, *Concise History of Brazil*, 42.

The Portuguese in Brazil had done what their king in Lisbon had presumed impossible. They had ousted the most powerful empire on earth. But now they faced an even more intractable and enduring enemy: thousands of slaves who had escaped during the fighting were now in the ranks of Palmares. Thousands more, denied the freedom they had been promised for helping oust the Dutch, headed in the same direction, taking military skills with them. A swath of burgeoning *mocambos* now stretched across two hundred miles of the interior of southern Pernambuco. Palmares was stronger and more organized than ever while the Portuguese colony was staggering through a decade of chaos and destruction. Palmares was no longer an array of isolated village-states. It was a nation.

Chapter 8

The Palmares Nation

Sometime in the first half of the seventeenth century, a man named Ganga-Zumba became the leader of Palmares. Historians surmise that Ganga-Zumba had been a chieftain in Africa who naturally assumed leadership once he'd escaped captivity in Brazil. He may well have escaped enslavement with followers, or he may have been known as an African leader by people already at Palmares. It's also possible he was born there.[1] If so, his old age in 1678 would indicate that he'd been in Palmares since its earliest days.

Three of Ganga-Zumba's children were named Toculo, Acaiene, and Zambi, who were captured by the Portuguese in a raid in 1677. They and others bore Ganga-Zumba ten grandchildren.

Portuguese referred to the leader of Palmares as a *rei*, or king, and they believed the name Ganga-Zumba could be translated as *Grande Senhor* or Great Lord.[2] It may have been the title of anyone in the position of

1 Freitas, *Palmares: Guerra dos Escravos*, 102.
2 "Memórias dos feitos," *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* 39, 293-321.

supreme leader, or it may have been the individual's name. *Ganga* means *lord* in various languages throughout central Africa.[3] The chief of a *ki-lombo* war camp was the *nganga a nzumbi*, a priest who dealt with the spirits of the dead.[4] To the Portuguese, a Great Lord was a king. They had no other word for the top leader of a nation. "Prime minister" was a novel concept in Europe, referring only to the first of a king's several ministers.

Historians have debated the extent to which the central and local governments of Palmares may have been democratic or parliamentarian. The head of state of Palmares was autocratic enough that people who came to him had to kneel and clap their hands to show respect. The existence of a council of elders, however, implies that some kind of citizen or municipal representation held a certain power. According to the slave-spy whom Manuel Inojosa sent into Palmares, people elected elders to a council, and the council elected a general leader. This would imply that the leader would need some amount of political support to stay in office or make crucial decisions. The spy never used the word *rei* to describe the leader. The practice of village chiefs electing a principal chief was a tradition among the Imbangala of seventeenth century Angola, the same Central African area that had military training villages called *kilombos* by the Jaga.[5] In that King Ganga-Zumba's mother, Aqualtune, led the town that bore her name, it is evident that women participated in politics and perhaps could be elected to the top leadership position. The relationship also reinforces the possibility of hereditary selection not unlike that of Europe and some of Africa. The second-largest city of Palmares, Surupira, was ruled by the king's brother, Gana-Zona. Though that could support the suggestion of rule by family lineage, history presents many cases of autocratic rulers appointing their brothers to control the military.

There is no indication that the leader was entitled to leadership through religious office, nor did he have magic or religious powers. The secular election system was a solution to the practical situation of people

3 Kent, "Palmares: An African State in Brazil," *Journal of African History*, 169.
4 Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery*, 127.
5 Anderson, "The *Quilombo* of Palmares: a new overview," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 545.

of various religious beliefs and backgrounds and many different political traditions.

Whether Ganga-Zumba was as autocratic as a European monarch, we do not know. We have a few clues from a document written in 1678, titled *Description with Important News from the Interior of Pernambuco* (*Descrição com notícias importantes do interior de Pernambuco*) but the writer, whoever it was, gave no indication of how he came to know what he described. It doesn't seem possible that all these facts, if facts they are, were based on observation. They could have been the reports of prisoners or merely rumors.

> [In Palmares] are found all the structures of war, with higher and lower ranks, as much for the success in combat as for assistance to the king. All are obedient to one, who is called Ganga-Zumba, which means Great Lord, and all who were born in Palmares or have come from outside recognize him as King and Lord. He has a palace big enough for his family, is assisted by guards and officials, who usually have royal houses, and is treated with the respect of a King and all the honors of a Lord. Those who come into his presence kneel on the ground and clap their hands as a sign of recognition and acknowledgement of his excellence. They address him as Majesty and obey him with admiration. He lives in the Royal City, which they call Macaco, a name inspired by the death of a monkey in that area. This is the capital of the several cities and villages, and it is fortified with a wattle-and-daub wall with openings for defense, and on the outside there are iron spikes everywhere and pits so deep that they are dangerous even to the vigilant. The extensive city has more than fifteen hundred houses. Among them are ministries of justice for necessary actions, and all the semblances of any Republic can be found among them.

> Though these Barbarians have completely forgotten their subjection [to Portuguese rule], they have not lost all respect for the Church. In this city they have a Chapel where they retreat in times of trouble, and icons to which they appeal for their needs. Upon entering the Chapel, an icon of the Baby JESUS, quite perfect, can be seen, and there's another of Our Lady of the Conception, and another of São Brás. They always choose one of the more highly trained people, whom they venerate as a Parish Priest and call Ganga. This person baptizes them and performs marriages. The baptism, however, is not in the form determined by the Church, and the marriages are unique, not within the laws of nature. Their appetite is the only regulator of their marriages, each man having the women he wants. They teach each other some Christian orations, and they observe the documents of the faith that are within their capacity. The King who reigns in this city is accommodated with three women, a mulatta and two crioulas. From the first he had several children, from the others none. The style of dress is the same as ours, clothed more or less in accordance with what's possible.[6]

And what was possible? Skirts of twined palm fibers. Tunics of wild animal skins. Precious lengths of manufactured cloth from Europe. Clothes stolen from farms. Sandals of twisted grass. Jewelry of polished wood, buffed nuts, fragments of shells, seeds of color, sections of bone.

As for the chapel, the icons of Jesus, Our Lady of Conception, and São Brás indicate that the Palmarians retained certain Catholic beliefs and rituals, but the deviations in sacraments tells us that they departed from others as necessary to satisfy their spiritual needs. São Brás—Saint Blaise—for example, was warned by God that he should hide in the mountains to avoid capture by Armenian officials. He is the saint of throats, the

6 Freitas, "Descrição com notícias importante do interior de Pernambuco." *República de Palmares*, 22.

part of the body most often cut to execute a captive, and, like many rebels, he was decapitated. Conspicuously absent from the line-up of icons was Santo Antônio, patron saint of Portugal and the one who is called upon to recover things that have been lost—fugitive slaves, for example.[7] By the middle of the seventeenth century, Palmares included at least eleven *mocambos* of notable size. Macaco, the de facto capital, perched on a steep ridge called Barriga. *Macaco* is Portuguese for *monkey*, but the word may have an African origin. *Barriga* meant *belly* to the Portuguese but may have come from a Kariri (Indian) word "Behig," meaning Reds, possibly a reference to people who had been inhabiting the mountain for centuries. Maybe the Portuguese thought the mountain looked like a belly; maybe they thought the Indians were calling it Belly.[8]

Macaco was surrounded by double or, later, triple stockades and a wide scattering of pits studded with sharpened stakes. The city had some fifteen hundred houses and a population of perhaps eight thousand. Another village, Osenga lay twenty kilometers to the west between the Parabina and Jundia rivers. Amaro, fifty-four kilometers northeast of Serinhaem, had a thousand houses and five thousand inhabitants. Zambi was ninety-six kilometers (60 miles) northeast of Porto Calvo. Thirty kilometers (18 miles) to the north of Zambi were two *mocambos* named Tabocas (which means Wild Canes). Acotirene was thirty kilometers north of Zambi. Dambrabanga,[9] possibly near today's town of Viçosa in the state of Alagoas, and the Dois Irmãos mountains, was eighty-four kilometers (52 miles) northeast of the Tabocas and 50 kilometers (31 miles) southwest of Macaco. Andalaquituche was 150 kilometers (93 miles) northeast of today's Alagoas. Alto Magano and Curiva were near Guaranhuns, in today's state of Pernambuco. (These are the distances and directions given

7 Mott, "Anto Antônio, o Divino Capitão-do-Mato" cited in Reis and Gomes, *Liberdade Por Um Fio*, 125.

8 Brandão, *Os Negros Na História de Alagoas*, 29.

9 It is generally called "Dambrabanga" in "Relação das Guerras Feitas ... ," but called "Bambiabonga" in a very similar document titled "Memórias dos feitos que se deram durante os primeiros annos da guerra com os negroes quilobolas dos Palmares, seu destroço e paz aceita em Junho de 1678," Codex CXVI-2-13 in the Public Library in Evora, Portugal, transcribed in *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (1876), Part I*, 293-321.

in Relaç˜pao das "Guerras Feitas aos Palmares de Pernambuco no Tempo do Governo D. Pedro de Almeida, de 1675 a 1678." (See Carneiro, 202.) Unfortunately, there is no way to get them all into relative positions on a modern map. Dambrabanga cannot be northwest of today's Porto Calvo and the two Tabocas of Palmares yet south of Macaco. Macaco is the only site in a known location. It's near today's União dos Palmares, which is west-southwest of Porto Calvo. The only explanation is that the locations of Subupira and Dambrabanga are off by 180 degrees, both falling *south* of Macaco.)

Subupira was the city that served as military headquarters. According to the "Relação" report, it was about thirty-six kilometers (22 miles) from Macaco, forty-eight kilometers (30 miles) north of Dambrabanga, and two hundred and seventy kilometers (168 miles) from Porto Calvo. The city was fortified with stone and wood, according to a Portuguese document written during an incursion of 1678, "with eight hundred houses, a league and a half long across three very high mountains draining to the Rio Cachingi (sic) and within which water is quite abundant, and this was the outpost where the blacks prepared to combat our attacks. All of it was surrounded by deep pits, and where we attacked was spread with spikes."[10]

It has been suggested that the names of some of the *mocambos* may come from African words. Macaco may have come the Luango *makoko*; Tabocas may have come from an Mbundu word, *Taboka*; Andalaquituche may have come from a Kisama word, *Ndala* Kafuche; Osenga may have come from Kwango word, *Hosanga*; Subupira may have come from a Zande phrase, *subusupu hara vura*; Dambrabanga may have been formed from Benguella-Yombe words, *Ndombe* and *banga*. [11] If the names of these places are indeed of African origin, it would indicate that the leaders of Palmares were from Africa, not *crioulos* born in Brazil. The scattered sources of the words, if they indeed they are sources, would attest to the multi-cultural population of Palmares as a whole, possibly with some concentration of African cultures at individual villages.

10 Freitas, *República de Palmares*, 22, 36.

11 Kent, "Palmares: An African State in Brazil," *Journal of African History*, 169.

But those are only guesses based on the sounds of the words. They aren't necessarily even the real names of the places, the names the Palmarians used. They're only the words that the Portuguese reported that the places were called, and the locations were only where the Portuguese estimated they could be found. The distances could not be measured with any accuracy, especially to places the Portuguese may never have seen. The names of the places were only what they thought they heard from captives and others, people who spoke other languages and weren't inclined to tell the truth to their captors.

The descriptions of the locations don't lead us to any sites discernible today. The only exception is the mountain still called Barriga that roughly fits the description of the site of the fort at Macaco. It stands above the Rio Mundaú, just outside of today's town of União dos Palmares in the state of Alagoas. União dos Palmares, in fact, was known as Macacos until 1831, when the village was raised to the status of vila and given the name Vila Nova da Imperatriz.[12] The Macaco (or Macacos) of Palmares may well have been a village on the Rio Mundaú, down near running water but under the protection of the massive fort on the mountain.

By mid-century, this archipelago of hamlets, villages, and towns had all the qualifications of a nation. At least some of them had local governments, at least some of those governments involving a chief and a council. These individual localities reported to and paid tribute to a central government. The entire population shared economic and military objectives. All of the *mocambos* contributed conscripts to a common system of defense. The nation had laws and a system of criminal justice. Homicide, for example, was punishable by death. Adultery, theft and desertion were also capital crimes.[13]

According to various reports, by 1677 Palmares was a cohesive, multi-cultural society within which social discrimination was, as far as we know, minimal. Blacks, Indians, and a few Europeans shared their community just as they shared their common needs and common enemy. They

12 Brandão, *Os Negros Na História de Alagoas*, 29.
13 Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos*, 48.

addressed each other as *malungo*, a term of solidarity not unlike the *comrade* used by later revolutionaries. The same term, from an Mbundu word meaning, "on the boat," was used between slaves who had arrived on the same ship.[14] Its use united Africans of various cultures and Brazilian-born *crioulos* in a common cause.

Palmares had a small ruling class that couldn't have lived much above the living conditions of the general populace. At least some *mocambos* had someone serving in the capacity of priest, but it's unlikely a religious order or hierarchy existed. Palmares had no leeway for divisive internal cultural, economic, or other social differences. The primary concern with survival—security and enough to eat—overrode such relatively petty concerns as racial or economic differences. They had to get along, speak a common language, and share common values just as they shared their food. The alternative was death or enslavement.

The population of this nation was growing.[15] The Blaer excursion of 1645 estimated the population of Palmares Grande and Palmares Pequenho to be around eleven thousand, though that probably didn't account for all the *mocambos* in the Palmares territory. A report on excursions taking place between 1675 and 1678 estimated a population between sixteen thousand and twenty.[16] In a document dated 1675, Francisco de Brito Freire, who had been governor fifteen years earlier, wrote that he heard that the population of Palmares was thirty thousand.[17] Granted, he had no way of counting the people in places his soldiers couldn't even find, but 20th century historian Paulo Freitas also surmised that the number could have been that high. Yale history professor Stuart B. Schwartz, on the other hand, estimates that the total captive slave population of Pernambuco during most of the seventeenth century averaged only twenty thousand, making it doubtful, to him, that the population of Palmares could have been that twenty thousand or larger.[18] Half the blacks in Pernambuco

14 Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels*, 124, and Novo Dicionário Aurélio.
15 Freitas, Palmares: *Guerra dos Escravos*, 72.
16 Carneiro, *O Quilombo dos* Palmares, 206.
17 Freyre, *Nova Lusitânia, História da Guerra Brasílica*, paragraph 527, 281.
18 Schwartz, *Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery*, 123.

would have been living in Palmares. Other estimates of the number of slaves in Pernambuco in the middle of the seventeenth century are as high as thirty-three thousand to fifty thousand.[19] Archaeologists Paulo Funari and Charles Orser estimate the black Pernambuco population at about sixty thousand, Palmares at twenty thousand.[20]

There are reasons to believe Palmares may have had such a substantial population. Slaves were fleeing to Palmares by the thousands, decreasing the number of slaves while increasing the number of Palmarians. At the same time, the black, white, and Indian women of Palmares, though relatively few, were having babies. If the men were sharing the women and the *quilombo* needed more people, the women probably had lots of babies, half of whom were female and by early adolescence bearing even more babies. By mid-century, some of the oldest women may have been pre-menopausal grandmothers of girls nearing puberty—three generations producing babies, quite likely as fast as they could. We have no information on infant mortality in Palmares, but if the women were strong, food supplies adequate, and the rural venue not prone to epidemics, babies born there may have been more likely to survive than babies born in Recife or even Europe. A few hundred women having ten or more babies would increase the population by a several thousand within a generation or two. If fertility was sufficient, the size of the population of Palmares over the course of several generations would have had little relationship to the size of the population of slaves in Pernambuco.

One clear fact, however, hints at a substantially lower population. More than twenty Portuguese and Dutch incursions never managed to find many people. People tended to flee as invasions neared, but it would be difficult if not impossible for so many thousands of people to disappear. Likewise, population centers of a thousand people or more could not be hidden. Another unanswered question is why a population of tens of thousands could not muster enough fighting men to overcome invading forces of only a few hundred.

19 Simonson, *História Econômica do Brasil*, 133.
20 Orser and Funari, "Archaeology and slave resistance and rebellion." *World Archaeology*, 68.

Palmares was taking in blacks, Indians, and whites fleeing or taken from European society: deserting soldiers, political refugees, thieves on the lam, people in the wrong religion, kidnapped women, the homeless, the indentured, the poor, the emancipated who had no way of supporting themselves in Portuguese society. In the harsh and arbitrarily cruel Portuguese governmental/economic system, the weak inevitably lost any conflict. If any Jews or Protestants remained from the Dutch days, they were living contrary to both Church and crown. A broad demographic had good reason to flee to a place that was relatively equitable, prosperous, and free, a place of cooperation rather than cut-throat competition, a place where they could work a piece of land, albeit for a common rather than personal benefit. Between the fat of the land and farming dedicated to food crops rather than cash crops, the Palmarians lived and ate reasonably well.[21] It is a testament to human dignity that a society without slavery was satisfying people's basic needs better than the society that had the supposed benefit of unpaid labor. Palmares demonstrated that the inefficiency of slave labor was caused not by the race of the workers but the use of force and violence to motivate them.[22]

Brito Freire's *Nova Lusitânia* report (in which his name is spelled Freyre) noted that thanks to their industriousness and hard work, Palmarians enjoyed year-round abundance of food.[23] Palmares controlled the best farmland, and Palmarians were trading with frontier settlers. Domingos Loreto de Couto, a cleric, historian and literary critic who wrote about Palmares a century later, wrote that such commerce had to be carried out under "secret agreements" unknown to the government. Implicit in the agreements was the understanding that "homes and slaves would be safe" from destruction or capture by Palmarians.[24]

Cattlemen from Bahia, wandering the stark outback inland from Palmares, living off milk and beef, clothed in leather to protect themselves from thorns and branches, "as brave and fearless as the *bandeirante*, as

21 Ennes, *Guerras nos* Palmares, 61.
22 Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos*, 73.
23 Freyre, *Nova Lusitânia—História da Guerra Brasílica.*
24 Couto, – *Desagravos do Brasil e Glórias de Pernambuco.*

resigned and tenacious as the Jesuit...," paid tribute to Palmares.[25] They exchanged gunpowder, salt, weapons, tools, meat, milk and tools for grazing rights in the *sertão*, the parched and thorny interior of northeast Brazil. They also provided information about troop movements and plans being made on the coast. These itinerant cowboys had no interest in the society on the coast. They didn't want the government taxing their products. They didn't want landowners claiming and fencing pasture land. They didn't want to be considered trespassers. They had no interest in owning slaves. Though by no means part of Palmares, they had every interest in the rebel nation remaining a force that preserved the freedom of the *sertão*.[26]

It was through this secret and informal trade that Palmares products—corn, tobacco, cane, sugar, potatoes, oils, baskets, and other artifacts—reached the coastal cities and to some extent sustained life there. By the same route, in barter, manufactured goods from Europe—arms, gunpowder, lead shot, tools, textiles—found their way to Palmares.[27] Though Palmares and Pernambuco were at almost constant war, they found ways to support each other.

25 Cunha,, *Rebellion in the Backlands (Os Sertões)* 73. See detailed description of these *vaqueiros*, 50-173.
26 Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos*, 75.
27 Carneiro, *Quilombo dos Palmares*, 22.

Chapter 9

A Series of Assaults

Palmares was by no means Pernambuco's only problem. The captaincy also had to deal with the blacks who had served in the Henriques Regiment during the war against the Dutch. The earliest incarnation of that organization of blacks and creoles had formed in 1633 under Henrique Dias, a slave donated to the cause by a generous landowner. Motivated by a promise of freedom, the detachment (not yet a formal regiment) served courageously and capably. In 1639, Dias was named Governor of Creoles, Negroes, and Mulattos. By 1647, the ranks of the group had swollen to three hundred, including current and former slaves, even slaves who had fled their owners and joined the army in hopes of making their freedom official.[1] In a letter written in 1648, Dias described the ferocity of his men. "This regiment is composed of men from four nations: Minas, Ardas, Angolas, and Creoles [the first three being regions of Africa defined by the Portuguese, the last consisting of blacks born in Brazil]. These men are such miscreants that they fear nothing and have no need to. The Minas, so

1 José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello, *Henrique Dias—governador dos crioulos, negroes e mulattos do Brasil*, Recife, Massangana, 1988. 9, 23, 25.

Chapter 11

Zumbi's Palmares

King Ganga-Zumba referred to young Francisco—young Zumbi—as a nephew, but in African tradition, the word probably indicated a close political or social relationship, not family relation. The pronunciation today, in Portuguese, is *zoom-BEE*, but in those days it may have had the African pronunciation *ZOOM-bee*. The word may have come from Angola's Kimbundu language, in which *nzambi*, with stress on the first syllable, means "supreme being." It may come from *nzumbi*, meaning "ancestral spirit." The name has been mistranslated, perhaps originally by the white colonists who feared and hated him, as "evil spirit," especially one of phantasmal appearance in darkness. *Nzumbi* may be the root of the English word "zombie," brought to the United States by enslaved Kimbundus. As with the name Ganga-Zumba, we do not know whether Zumbi was the name of an individual or a title by which an individual was referred to.[1]

Fr. Melo's boy came into a nation that by this time had established its own unique culture. It had its own religion, language, laws, social mores, history, and values. It is tragically unfortunate that today we know so little of these elements of the culture of Palmares and how a singular soci-

1 Anderson, "The *Quilombo* of Palmares: a new overview," 3.

ety was so rapidly formed from the various cultures of the people who migrated to the place. We have to rely on scraps of information to surmise the general characteristics of that culture. The brief description of the chapel provided by Manuel Injosa's spy, for example, gives us only a few clues about religion in Palmares. In that the chapel displayed icons of Jesus, São Brás, and Our Lady of the Conception, we can conclude that Palmares was to some extent adherent to the Catholic persuasion of Christianity. But apparently something else was going on. Historians have suggested that religion in Palmares was syncretic, an amalgamation of beliefs pulled together to solve a particular culture's problems. Given the ethnic diversity of the people, some degree of syncretism would seem to be inevitable. The population of Palmares came from far-flung parts of Africa, various Indian tribes, and Portuguese society in Brazil. Some of those Indians may have still held their traditional beliefs. Others, like the fugitive slaves, had been drenched in the rites and promises of Catholicism. In that the vast majority of Palmarians were there because of extreme dissatisfaction with life in white society, it's surprising that they retained any respect for the religion that had justified their enslavement.

But they did retain hope in some kind of savior, and that faith may have resulted from some sort of syncretism that adapted to the spiritual needs of a diverse, uprooted, disaffected people. This is known to have happened in Bahia. A millenarian cult known as *santidade*—holiness—gained popularity among *mamelucos* and Indians who had been exposed to and subsequently fled from Christianity. Blacks came to be involved, too. Their practices involved not just prayer and baptism but smoking enough sacred tobacco to fall into a trance and speak in tongues. In at least one group, members were baptized by a female leader, a "Mother of God." One of the most attractive beliefs was that "God was coming to free them from their captivity and make them lords of the white people."[2]

Information about the *santidade* movement is very limited. Most of what we know comes from testimonies in trials held by the Portuguese in-

2 Metcalf, "Millenarian Slaves," *American Historical Review*, 5, citing the denunciation of Álvaro Rodrigues in the Lisbon inquisition trial of Domingos Fernandes Nobre.

quisition. A few letters from officials in Brazil to officials in Portugal refer to the problem of *santidade* communities. None of the information makes an explicit link to Palmares, but in 1610, the governor-general of Brazil wrote to the king to report some twenty thousand *santidade* Indians and "*negros de guiné*" living in the wilderness. In 1612, a Portuguese official referred to *mocambos de negros* called *santidades*.[3] Judging by the vestiges of Catholicism at Palmares combined with the makeshift morality—the polyandrous marriages, for example—the nation had devised a religion and mores that suited its spiritual and moral needs.

Zumbi returned from Porto Calvo to not only a political organization with a national identity and an established culture, but a military force with several significant advantages. The fortified cities of Palmares, though unable to withstand prolonged siege, were defended well enough to allow early evacuation and the stashing of staples where they couldn't be found. A network of spies was able to give Palmares advance warning of military operations leaving the coastal cities. The people of Palmares were well practiced at pulling up stakes and disappearing into the hills and forest. Warriors felt no moral compulsion to fight battles out in the open in the style of European warfare. They made no attempt to finish off invaders. They were apparently satisfied to have made them regret their invasion.

Zumbi may also have inherited the military know-how of an African the Portuguese referred to as "a Moor." Little is known of this man. Only one document refers to him, distinguishing him from other Africans and briefly noting that he had fled` to Palmares and designed the fort at Macaco.[4] We can deduce that if he fled, he'd probably been a slave, though it's possible he was a criminal or heretic who had to flee Portuguese society. In that he was a referred to as a "Moor," he was probably a Muslim from northern Africa. He was mentioned as someone who was making invasions difficult or impossible.

3 Ibid., citing Diogo de Campos Moreno, *Livro que dá razão do estado do Brasil 1612*, 110.

4 Ennes, Doc. 24, "Carta do Governador de Pernambuco Caetano de Melo e Castro, de 18 de Fevereiro de 1694, sobre a gloriosa restauração dos Palmares," in *Guerras Nos Palmares*, 194.

Zumbi also inherited a rather productive economy. Palmares was producing foods and artisanal products that the Portuguese settlements needed, and relationships with these communities were trusting and respectful enough that they could exchange goods. Palmares, in other words, had access to firearms, swords, gunpowder, lead shot, and iron for arrowheads and spearheads. The Palmarians also had friends in these white communities who trusted the blacks more than they trusted the agents of the Portuguese government. Some communities, however, considered themselves threatened by Palmares and wanted government protection.

Zumbi arrived at a Palmares that faced serious challenges. Though it was advancing in self-sustaining crops and technology, the economy of Palmares was still extensively parasitic. Much of its barter was beefed up by an extortive tributary threat with implications of protection. Much of what they needed they simply stole, raiding farms or bushwhacking travelers. Much of what they stole had been bought with sugar money. Fundamentally, Palmares still depended on its enemy.

Zumbi found himself the Lord of War of a nation that had been fighting and fleeing for almost four generations. Ganga-Zumba was getting old. He and his people were tired of running, fighting, rebuilding, and waiting for the next attack. It was becoming obvious that they would never do away with their enemy on the coast. But at the same time, they could never surrender themselves to enslavement. They needed a solution, and they were unsure whether the aging Ganga-Zumba or the young Zumbi would think of it.

councilmen, noblemen, and townspeople at the *Capela* Bom Jesus to offer thanks to their god "for the extremely felicitous conquering with which those enemies were dominated."[7]

Religious obligations satisfied, the conquerors liquidated their human loot according to the valuation of six disinterested men. Each soldier and officer received his portion, minus the inevitable—the 20 percent *quinto* tapped off for the royal treasury.

Confident that the surviving Palmarians were ready to give up, Carrilho released two of the elderly in-laws of one of the king's sons, she "an African woman from Angola" named Madalena, he an old man named Mateus Dambi.[8] They were to carry a message to Ganga-Zumba: that a fortified encampment now stood on the ashes of Palmares. If everyone did not turn themselves in to the governor of Pernambuco immediately, Fernão Carrilho *himself* would return to finish off the king and all that remained of Palmares. He hoped the message would inspire the surviving Palmarians to "ask for peace with desperate fear."[9] As soon as the king of Palmares agreed to stop fighting, the war would be over. The messenger was also to tell Ganga-Zumba that Carrilho was already preparing another incursion to finish the job he had started.

7 Ibid., 216-217.
8 Rodrigues, *Africanos No Brasil*, 144.
9 BNRJ, Códice 22, 2, 28, 26 de Janeiro de 1680.

Chapter 13

Peace with Desperate Fear

The people of Palmares had every reason to believe and fear Carrilho's threat. Never before had invaders enjoyed such ease in finding *mocambos* and overrunning them. Resistance, for reasons they knew and we don't, had been virtually nil, and the early warning system hadn't worked. Zumbi, the Lord of War who should have prevented or defended against the attack, was not mentioned in Carrilho's reports. And Carrilho's forces weren't the only victors. Just as Carrilho was overrunning Subupira, Sergeant-Major Manuel Lopes Gavão, coming up from the coast with supplies, ran into some refugees fleeing the assault. Among them was the king's brother and military leader, Gana-Zona, chief of Subupira. Lopes killed several and captured fifteen. Gana-Zona may have been among the prisoners. Things were looking bad for Palmares—not just the damage of the attacks and the wounding of the king but the fact that the Portuguese were now able to send effective incursions into Palmares territory.

Governor Almeida did not let himself appear too eager for peace. On February 14, 1678, he issued a proclamation calling for volunteers to invade Palmares yet again. He informed interested citizens that Palmares

was weakened, the rebels now few and scattered, and he warned that if Palmares was not wiped out now, "the rebels could multiply in such a way that the captaincy could come to experience worse problems than it had so far suffered, and that settlers in the captaincy would now finish off those barbarians easily, so it would be imprudent not to do so."[1] Presumably with the permission of his king, the governor then announced that all captives from the excursion would be exempt from the king's *quinto*.

At the same time, in the retrospective of history if not the perspective of people cowering near the ashes of their cities, Governor Almeida was beginning to recognize the near impossibility of a military extermination of their enemy. Though key cities and villages had been destroyed, many thousands of inhabitants were still there. Seventy-five years of failure and the limited success of the most recent victories added up to little promise of decisive victory. At the same time, economic problems were making it more difficult to raise money and manpower for incursions. The governor had no money for war. Tax revenues were flowing out of the captaincy rather than remaining to solve its problems. The colony was still paying off what Portugal owed the Dutch for war damages. On top of that, since 1661 Brazil had been helping Portugal pay the dowry that secured the marriage of Dona Catarina, a daughter of Dom João IV, to England's Charles II. The English knew her as Queen Catherine. Portugal owed England 300,000 pounds, and England owed Portugal military support in the War of Restoration with Spain. Brazil contributed to the dowry through a tax on slaves, olive oil, wine, and other imported goods.

The expense of the tax came on top of mandatory contributions to expeditions against Palmares. The handful of powerful landowners and mill owners managed to use their power to weasel out of the contributions. The less powerful land and mill owners ended up shouldering a disproportionate share of the contributions. As much as they could, they transferred the financial burden to yet lower classes, paying less to workers and suppliers. These workers were the same people who were expected to serve as soldiers in the expeditions against Palmares. They were also the least

1 Carneiro, *Quilombo dos Palmares*, "Os Sucessos de 1668 a 1680," 243-244.

affected by the attacks from Palmares. Owning neither land nor mills nor slaves, they lost little in the attacks and had little interest in preventing them. Those who lived inland were learning that they could avoid attacks by doing business with Palmares.

In the aftermath of the Carrilho expedition, the people of Palmares had no way of knowing that the Portuguese had strong reasons to pursue a peace settlement and little means to continue the military option. A negotiated settlement, if it worked, would eliminate the threat of attack by Palmares, negate its attraction to people still enslaved, do away with the expense of assembling expeditions, and avoid the political stress of demanding war taxes and drafting unwilling soldiers from the lower classes.

The Palmarians may have suspected Almeida's eagerness for peace when a black officer from the Henrique Dias regiment showed up at Macaco. A report to the Overseas Council described the officer's trip to Palmares:

> "Captain Antônio Pinto Pereira traveled, exploring lands above Palmares where rebel negroes are, and said Captain followed a trail under all risk to himself, going alone, and met with rebel negroes, and proposed his reasons that they settle down and not bother the whites and make peace. And the negroes took him to the leader who governs them, Ganga-Zumba. He communicated his reasons and convinced him to seek peace with the whites, to send his three sons and two sons-in-law and others in the company of said Captain to effect this peace with the Governor."[2]

Captain Pereiraa's most convincing reason to accept peace was that Carrilho was preparing his return to mop up the remains of the rebel nation, his mission: to scour the region to make sure not one person was left alive. But the governor was offering an alternative. The Palmarians could live in peace, be treated well, and own their own tract of land. All the women and children from Palmares currently held in captivity would

2 AHU – Pernambuco – Caixa 8, 9 de fevereiro de 1682, fl. 2.

be returned. In effect, they'd be living on a reservation. All Ganga-Zumba had to do was agree that peace was better than war.

War or peace? Not such a difficult decision for an aging king with a wounded leg and a kingdom in ashes and disarray. Ganga-Zumba could not resist the offer. Though Palmares had offered peace to each new governor as he arrived from Portugal, Ganga-Zumba was now ready to beg for it. He sent three sons and a dozen other citizens to meet with Dom Pedro de Almeida. They were accompanied by the Henrique Dias officer who had delivered the offer. They arrived on the eighteenth of June, 1678, the eve of the celebration of Portugal's patron saint, St. Anthony. As they marched into Recife, they caused quite a stir.

The commotion brought on by the visit of those barbarians was understandable. They came in with their bows and arrows and a firearm, with their private parts covered, some with cloth, others with furs, with beards, some of them braided, others straight, others shaved, all of them heavy-set and valiant. The oldest son of the king came on horseback because he had been wounded in a battle of the past. All of them prostrated themselves at the feet of d. Pedro d'Almeida and clapped their hands in a sign of surrender and recognition of his victory. There they asked the whites for peace.

Though these emissaries all but cowered before the governor, they did so as representatives of a sovereign and unconquered nation. They pleaded that they had no desire for war, had never desired it, had always fought just to protect themselves, had always asked for peace, but though governors had often promised it, it had always been followed by war, and they were tired of war. Their wives had been killed or captured. Their cities and food supplies had been destroyed. They had nothing, and all they asked was freedom, peace, the right to trade with settlers, and the privilege of serving the king of Portugal. And the only freedom they were asking for was the freedom of those who had been or would be born in Palmares. People in slavery would stay in slavery. Anyone fleeing to Palmares in the future would be returned to their rightful owners.[3]

3 Kent, "Palmares: An African State in Brazil, *Journal of African History*, 172.

Ganga-Zumba's desperate eagerness to negotiate leaves historians wondering why Palmares saw itself as weak and defenseless. Where were its thousands of people? How could the nation fail to raise an army capable of defeating a force of fewer than two hundred? What had changed at Palmares to render it so fearful and submissive? The best explanation seems to be that Ganga-Zumba was growing old. He may have been making bad decisions, and he may have been ignoring good advice. He may have seen the futility of trying to defeat an enemy by running away. Whatever his feelings, he was not listening to his chief military officer. Zumbi was not agreeing to the negotiations, at least not from such an obsequious position.

Three days later, Almeida handed off this olive branch to a new governor, Aires de Souza e Castro. The emissaries from Palmares went to him and repeated their supplication.[4] De Souza enjoyed seeing these enemies profess such respect for him. He had clothes brought to them and festooned them with ribbons. He and Pedro Almeida took their new friends to Recife cathedral. Together they entered a church specially decorated with silks and adornments. The governors praised God and Santo Antônio. The priest praised the governors. The governors called for the baptism of the Palmarian emissaries, marking the beginning of their new lives. The people of Recife applauded de Souza for his pomp and benevolence.[5] Happy days were on the way. They could have their slaves—*keep* their slaves—*and* not have to worry about former slaves raising hell on the frontier.

The next day de Souza called together his council of authorities and influential men and had a treaty drafted. It offered peace, emancipation for those born in Palmares, the liberation of Palmarian women captured during recent incursions, the right to trade with people in cities and towns, and a new place to live. If Ganga-Zumba accepted the treaty and other Palmarians resisted, it would be Ganga-Zumba's responsibility to eradicate the rebels.

It went without saying that people who lived in Palmares but hadn't been born there were still the property of the owners from whom they'd been relieved. If anybody talked about it, nobody wrote it down, at least

4 Rodrigues and Ribeiro, *Civilização Holandesa no Brasil*, 145.
5 Taunay, *História Geral das Bandeiras paulistas*, 118.

not in a document we have today. Ganga-Zumba was done saving slaves who had not joined his nation. He was saving his own people.

Governor de Souza wrote a treaty written with all the formality traditionally extended to a sovereign nation. He dispatched it with a black officer from the Henrique Dias regiment, a sergeant-major chosen for his ability to read the treaty out loud for the supposed illiterates of Palmares. He was accompanied by the entourage that had come to Recife, minus Ganga-Zumba's wounded son, who remained in town for medical treatment.

The formality of the protocol graced the treaty with sincerity. At the same time, nothing in the past—*nothing*—indicated that the Portuguese would deal honestly or respectfully with people they considered less than human. At the same time, the opportunity for peace came after more than seven decades of invasions, the most recent the worst of all and possibly a harbinger of horrors to come. The future of Palmares looked bleak…or bright, depending on the response to the peace proposal.

We don't know how the king reacted to the proposed treaty. It would make sense that he called together his council, what remained of it after the capture of its several chiefs and leaders. The discussions were almost certainly heated. A wrong decision could mean the deaths of thousands, the enslavement of thousands more, the end of Palmares, and the extinguishment of all hope for blacks under the rule of Portugal. Should Palmares regroup and resist? Should they trust the governor? And what of the stipulation that required them to turn away any slaves fleeing the hell of the cane fields and sugar mills? Should the Palmarians save their own skins if it meant denying refuge to skins of the same color they still suffered whips, chains, hunger, torture, and mortal exhaustion?

Whatever the nature of the discussions, the ultimate decision was not unanimous. Zumbi was among those who refused to accept the truce. Given his intelligence, respect, and power, he probably expressed his objectives vociferously, and it is not hard to imagine him doing so with heated urgency. He had seen white society from the inside. He'd lived it. He'd had conversations with a priest. He had witnessed public floggings

just outside the rectory where he was raised and educated. He may have heard the priest's comments on it, may have known an outrage against the Brazilian way of life. He knew the people—the *kind* of people—who were making the promise of peace, and he knew how disastrous that promise might be.

The decision, whether by the rule of the king or the rule of the council, was to accept the treaty. Ganga-Zumba and his people would abandon Palmares and move to an unsettled area thirty-two kilometers from Serinhaém. It was an extensive forest with plenty of palm trees at the headwaters of the rivers Formoso and Serinhaém.[6] They would be subjects of the crown, but they would be free from ownership. They could live in peace.

The sergeant-major accompanied Ganga-Zumba and 40 others to Recife to sign the treaty. Among the entourage were a brother and a nephew of Ganga-Zumba. Still suffering from his arrow wound, Ganga-Zumba rode a horse. On November 5, 1678, Governor Aires de Souza de Castro received them graciously. They celebrated mass and ate well. In a grand if suspicious gesture, the governor adopted two of Ganga-Zumba's sons and gave them his own last name. He also made Ganga-Zumba an officer of the Portuguese army. The king and the governor then signed the treaty. We don't know whether Ganga-Zumba signed with an ostentatious John Hancock or a crude X or something in between. However he certified his word, it would prove to be of more worth than the governor's.

The site chosen for the émigrés from Palmares was a place that didn't have much more than a name: Cucaú. Although it was wilderness, it was known for its fertile soil, a good place to live once forest had been converted to farmland. It had "no shortage of palms for their sustenance."[7] It was just a day's walk from Serinhaém. Jesuits were assigned to help the blacks adjust to civilized life.

Governor Souza de Castro then proceeded to subdivide Palmares and distribute the slices to men who had long felt it their just reward. The

6 "Memórias dos Feitos," *Revista do Instituto Históirico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, 295.
7 Freitas, *República de Palmares*, "Descrição," 48.

big winners were those who already owned land, and those who had participated in the military excursions to Palmares. Fifty leagues (300 sq. km, 115 sq. miles)— almost a third of the land—went to João de Freitas da Cunha, a powerful landowner. Twenty leagues (120 sq. km, 46 sq. miles) went to Fernão Carrilho, for the triumph that had driven Ganga-Zumba to negotiate on his knees. Gonçalo Moreira got six leagues (36 sq. km, 14 sq. miles).[8] Not much trickled down to black, Indian, *mameluco* and poor white soldiers.

Former governor Pedro de Almeida sailed off to Portugal and delivered to the Overseas Council a report declaring Palmares all but dead, "with so few people scattered across various parts, that any squad of twenty or thirty soldiers could finish off the enemy."[9]

He was pretty proud of the way he pictured his newly conquered territory,

> . . . the mountains free where they had been impenetrable to all diligence. The settlers now find themselves safe, the farms larger, the roads unblocked. And this triumph is very lucrative for Your Highness because this campaign was at no cost to the treasury because, with no reimbursements and no expenses to your funds, your revenues increased with the *quintos* that were charged, and with the hope of multiple increases that can be collected since those backlands are rich in excellent timber, with very fertile valleys for mills, and vast pastures for cattle. We have concluded the total restoration of the Captaincy of Pernambuco, because now it is found conquered from the same enemy who from inside our gates vexed us for so many years. With felicitous success

8 Ennes, Doc. 8, "Relação das Legoas de terra q. se tem dado por sesmaria em todaz Estas Cappitaniaz de Pernambuco despoiz q. Governador Ayres de Sousa de Sastro, e tem seçado o prejuizo fazião os negroes dos Palmares q. foi a causa porq. as pedirão as peçoaz desta Relação," in *Guerras Nos Palmares*, 153.

9 Freitas, *Palmares: Guerra dos Escravos*, quoting unspecified source, 121.

> they who assaulted us with their arms now promise to serve us with their labor.[10]

But the distribution of land proved moot, optimistic, and merely theoretical. The supposed owners were unable to get anywhere near their excellent timber and vast pastures. Though a host of Palmarians had followed Ganga-Zumba to Cucaú, many others had remained. Zumbi was among them, and they now considered him their king. They had stayed at Palmares to continue the fight that their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents had fought, and they were more ferocious and better organized than ever. It was the strongest fighters who had stayed behind, and many were freed of the burden of families.[11] Among them were the most desperate—those who had not been born in Palmares. Still considered fugitives and fair game for recapture and re-enslavement, they were defending not just hearth and home but life and liberty. Despite the optimism still warming the hearts of former governor Almeida and the Overseas Council in Lisbon, three or four dozen men were not going to mop up Palmares. Portugal and Pernambuco had a new king to contend with. He had already fled freedom once, abandoning white society in Porto Calvo in favor of a society at war with whites. Of all those who remained at Palmares, he had the most to gain if he returned to white society.

Modern myth holds it that Zumbi would rather die than live in slavery or, at best, as a vassal of King Dom Pedro. The myth also dignifies him with a conviction that it would be morally wrong for Palmarians to accept freedom if it meant condemning others to perpetual chains. The notion fits well with modern thought, but we have no idea whether such altruism existed in the moral squalor of seventeenth century Brazil. If Zumbi ever made a statement about the freedom of others, we have no record of it. But it would be reasonable to surmise that a young man raised in the Catholic faith by a priest sympathetic with the plight of blacks and slaves would feel certain moral obligations.

10 *Revista*. Instituto Histórico Brasileiro, 303-329.

11 BNRJ—Codice 22, 2, 28, 16 de agosto de 1679.

We do have evidence, however, of black empathy for peers in slavery. Those blessed with emancipation often joined brotherhoods—*irmandades*—of blacks who were dedicated to freeing others. They pooled their paltry supplies of money to buy freedom for those still owned.

Whatever the reasons that Zumbi and others held their ground, those who opted for the freedom of Cucaú were increasingly sorry they'd done so. Their numbers were apparently rather limited. It may have been only part of the populations from Ganga-Zumba's *mocambo*, Macaco, and two others.[12] According to a report written in Lisbon for the king, "almost three hundred souls" came down from Palmares.[13] Another document spoke of "over four hundred souls." The Overseas Council received another report that reported eight hundred. Governor Aires de Souza de Castro said he had over a thousand living there. These numbers represent barely a tenth or twentieth or thirtieth of the estimated peak population of Palmares, but among them was a good part of the leadership of the former Palmares. They knew the Palmarian territory and Zumbi's military tactics and traps. Under the terms of the treaty, they were obliged to share this knowledge with the governor. The whites on the coast were their allies. The blacks in Palmares were their enemies.

Zumbi wasted no time preparing his scattered and shaky nation for war. He improved the system of spies and remote observation posts. He uprooted vulnerable *mocambos* and moved them to more inaccessible locations. He procured weapons and munitions by buying them from settlers or stealing them in raids on mills. He called every man into military service and condemned to death anyone fleeing to Cucaú. He beefed up the fortification of Macaco. He made of Palmares a Sparta, a nation that was an army.

Cucaú had left Zumbi in a critically precarious situation. Palmares had been split in two, and it now had two enemies: the whites on the coast and the blacks at Cucaú. Cucaú was especially dangerous. They could

12 BNRJ—Codice 22, 2, 28, 19 de julho de 1679.
13 AHU Codice no. 265 PE. Also AHU – Pernambuco – Caixa 14, 15 de julho de 1707, fls. 5/5v/; AHU Ceará – Caixa 1, 7 de julho de 1699, fls. 3/3v/4/4v; BNRJ Codice 22, 2, 28, 16 de agosto de 1679, 119.

negate the only advantages that Palmares had: the location of its village and the tactics of its leader.[14] To defend Palmares against Portugal, Zumbi had to eliminate Cucaú.

Though Cucaú was an enemy, it was also functioning as an unwitting ally. Zumbi had several agents inside the community, and they were taking advantage of Cucaú's ability to trade with settlers in white villages. Goods traded with nearby settlers, including firearms and gunpowder, ended up in Palmares. Fugitive slaves who arrived at Cucaú were spirited away to Palmares. Agents used their freedom to roam around the area, monitoring troop movements and other developments. Though the treaty obliged Ganga-Zumba to suppress such activities, he was either powerless to prevent them or wasn't really trying. The governor heard local complaints that Cucaú was the center of such illicit activities. Since they ran against the agreements of the peace treaty, they were reason for reprisal—the last thing Ganga-Zumba needed and perhaps exactly what Zumbi hoped for.

By the early 1680s, Ganga-Zumba knew there was something wrong. He reported to Governor de Souza de Castro that he feared a conspiracy. The governor sent the ever dependable Manuel Lopes Galvão to surround the community. Trade was cut off.[15] Soon whites were invading Cucaú to burn fields and capture people. Cucaú, confined to a certain territory, perilously near and accessible to Serinhaém, unfortified and deprived of the fighters who had remained in Palmares, was powerless to defend itself. More and more people, disillusioned with life under the treaty, abandoned Cucaú and returned to Palmares.[16]

At the same time, the governor was suffering the expense of keeping a garrison of Indian and *mameluco* fighters at the Bom Jesus e a Cruz encampment at Subupira. Every time the outpost needed supplies, farmers had to contribute meat and fish. Slave owners had to contribute their workers to carry the food and accoutrements. Compounding the problem, Pernambuco was still making payments to the dowry of Dona Catarina in

14 BNRJ – Codice 22, 2, 28, 19 de julho de 1679.
15 M.M. de Freitas, *Reino Negro de Palmares*, 450.
16 BNRJ—Codice 2, 22, 28, 8 de agosto de 1680, 132.

London. The governor of the wealthiest captaincy in Brazil could barely afford to defend his territory against a renegade nation of blacks, Indians, half-breeds and criminals, a nation that had been defeated, split in two, and divided against itself. Palmares was still a problem, and Cucaú was turning out to be an additional problem rather than a solution.

Toward the end of 1679, the governor called on João de Freitas da Cunha to lead a force of two hundred men to mop up the resistance at Palmares. He could not have chosen a more self-interested commander. Da Cunha had fifty square leagues (300 sq. km, 115 sq. miles) of Palmares land coming to him as a reward for his earlier invasions. All he had to do was kill, capture, or chase off the current occupants.

Da Cunha's men, including some "settled" Indians from Alagoas, marched straight into a cold and torrential rain. Illness weakened their ranks even before the first skirmish with Zumbi's fighters. Whenever the two forces clashed, the black fighters fled into the underbrush, the whites charging after them. But the retreat was tactical, baiting the invaders into an ambush. The tactic worked more than once, and little by little, the defenders decimated the invaders. When the last of da Cunha's men straggled back to Alagoas, they were exhausted, famished, ill, aching, and stripped of the arms, ammunition, food, and slave porters they'd left with. The governor was not pleased. The mission had accomplished nothing besides "giving the blacks all the glory and haughtiness, infuriating them and making them more insolent than ever."[17]

The governor wanted to try again, this time with his personal secretary, Antônio Carlos Guerreiro, going along to record what happened. Also in the ranks: a priest, for "spiritual healing."[18] To pay for the operation, the governor diverted revenues from the dowry tax.[19] Dona Catarina was just going to have to wait. The expedition set out in early 1680 under Gonçalo Moreira da Silva, who had received six leagues (36 sq. km, 14 sq. miles) of

17 M.M. Freitas, 454.

18 AHU—Inventório Luísa da Fonseca—docs. 4010 and 4021, 4 de abril de 1682, unpaginated.

19 Carneiro, *Quilombo dos Palmares*, "Quantia Despendida para Câmara de Alagoas com a Guerra nos Palmares (1680)" in "Sucessos," 248.

Palmarian land he had never seen. The men journeyed some fifty leagues (300 km, 185 miles), came across a few abandoned *mocambos*, burned a few fields, killed no one, captured no one, and by early March returned with nothing to show for the spending of Queen Catarina's dowry.[20]

At more or less the same time, Sergeant-Major Manuel Lopes Galvão returned to Palmares. The last time they'd met, Zumbi had been limping away from a skirmish in 1675 with a bullet in his leg. This time Lopes Galvão took with him some people from Cucaú, including, apparently, Gana-Zona, son of Ganga-Zumba. The ex-Palmarian blacks, serving as guides, did not hesitate to take their former enemies into the territory of their former friends. "The *maioral* [a leader or elder, probably Gana-Zona] of the blacks who lived in Cucaú (who submitted to obedience once they had arrived) accompanied the blacks in that campaign, serving as a guide for those who executed it, showing enthusiasm and loyalty..." With the help of the guides, Lopes Galvão was able to avoid the exhausting meanderings that had worn down excursions of the past. In short order he found and overran several *mocambos* and killed or captured over eight hundred people.[21]

Or so he said. The governor admitted that his brief time in Brazil had not yet given him the wisdom needed to properly interpret the claims of military leaders who returned with tales of victory.

While Lopes Galvão was still in the interior, the situation at Cacaú grew more tense, possibly in response to Gana-Zona's increasingly aggressive attitude toward Palmares. The pro-Zumbi conspirators that Ganga-Zumba had feared rose up. Someone is said to have slipped poison to Ganga-Zumba, and he died. The rebels moved fast to kill his closest advisors and lieutenant, but the fighting spilled out into the surrounding forest. Gana-Zona, who may have returned from Palmares in the middle of the fight, led a guerrilla resistance against a substantial force of conspirators.

The anarchy and desperate ferocity made it easy for Gonçalo Moreira da Silva to march in and take control, ostensibly to restore order. He

20 AHU – Pernambuco – Caixa 11, 20 de dezembro de 1697, 2.

21 AHU—Códice 265 PE. There is no specific indication that Gana-zona himself went, but the "maioral" (an officer or elder) is supposed to be him.

captured the leaders of the rebellion—João Mulato, Canhongo, Amaro and Gaspar—and later had them decapitated. Two hundred others—apparently the remainder of the population of Cucaú who hadn't fled to Palmares or been killed in the uprising—were taken captive and divided among the area's largest landowners to serve sentences of "perpetual service."

The end of Cucaú relieved Zumbi of a serious threat, but it also relieved him of key supporters and a conduit of supplies. Governor de Souza e Castro decided to take advantage of the situation by offering Zumbi yet another last chance. He authorized Manuel Lopes Galvão to extend a peace offer. It stated that "the governor once again has pardoned him in the name of His Highness" for all the crimes he committed against [white] people. If within four months he turned himself in, he would be able to live in the same freedom as his uncle Ganga-Zumba, a man who knew how to keep his word, while those who had rebelled, as did João Mulato, Cangonha, Gaspar, and Amaro, ended up in prison, soon to be beheaded.[22]

No one but its re-enslaved residents of Cucaú mourned its passing. The only gestures of sympathy were a couple of legal objections issued by Church officials. One was the bishop of Pernambuco, who protested the enslavement of minors, who he believed should not be held responsible for the crimes committed by adults.

A stronger protestation was issued in Lisbon by the Jesuit Manuel Fernandes. He objected to the enslavement of the people at Cucaú on the grounds that a) they were under Jesuit jurisdiction, b) the blacks there had been made Christian and thus were not eligible for enslavement, c) minors, the elderly, the infirm, being incapable of the crimes committed, were by definition innocent, d) since condemnation to perpetual slavery was tantamount to a death sentence, the individuals, being free people, were entitled to trial, and e) the freedom endowed to those who moved to Cucaú was not conditional.[23]

22 AHU – Pernambuco – Caixa 11, 13 de Janeiro de 1694, fls. 1/1v; also Carneiro, "Os Sucessos," 247-248; Documentos Historicos vol. 28, 151.

23 Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos*, 130.

The legal appeals did nothing to reverse the killings and enslavement, proving that the validity of the law of Portugal was worth no more than the word of its governor in Pernambuco.

Though most of the residents of Cucaú ended up slaves, a few were left free. One, Pedro Soeiro, was apparently too decrepit to be worth owning. Sick and hungry, he presented himself to the commander Fernão Carrilho "to be had and fed," but Carrilho would have nothing to do with him. He told Soeiro to take his case to the king.

Hoping to put an end to the whole mess, the governor sent André Dias on a mission to seek out Palmarians wherever he might find them. Dias carried license to kill anyone he found, be it in the mountains or in a frontier town or in a settler's house. Zumbi's men were numerous enough to range throughout Pernambuco and blatant enough to be found among whites. Nonetheless, Dias was unable to find anyone at all.

Desperate to contact the elusive king of Palmares, Governor Souza de Castro issued a proclamation calling for "anyone at any level who in any way can inform Captain Zumbi that the Governor once again has pardoned him, in the name of His Highness Whom God Protects, for all the crimes he has committed against our people, as long as he hands himself over to our forces."[24]

With one hand the governor was offering freedom; with the other he threatened war without mercy "for any armed negro." Lopes Galvão sent the offer to Palmares in the hands of an officer from the Henriques regiment. Four months passed without response from Zumbi. Given the trouncing of the da Cunha mission, the failure of the Moreira da Silva mission, and the end of Cucaú, Zumbi had little reason to exchange the certain freedom he had for the dubious freedom offered by the governor. Of the governor's two offers, war was by far more credible, and Zumbi was apparently ready to accept it.

24 Carneiro, *Quilombo dos Palmares*, "Os Sucessos de 1668-1680," 247.

Chapter 14

The New Palmares

With no response from Zumbi, Governor Aires de Souza de Castro had to follow through with his threat of war. For the first time, he was going to attack Palmares with an expeditionary force composed of blacks only, the Henrique Dias regiment. They had been very effective at overrunning *mocambos* in Bahia, and they had contributed men to excursions in Pernambuco. They were now led by Domingos Roiz Carneiro, a son of slaves who had found a way to move up in the world.[1] The town council of Alagoas tapped the well-to-do for enough foodstuffs to sustain the troops, "the people" being exempted because they had nothing to offer.[2]

In October of 1680, the regiment set out from Alagoas. They soon hit up against a Palmarian position and scattered its defenders. When they found a *mocambo*, they overran it and took captive a chief named Maioio. Then they attacked a fortified position at the Serra da Barriga and only after lengthy combat and many casualties on both sides did they overrun and

1 Alves Filho, *Memorial dos Palmares*, 98. Edison Carneiro says middle name was Roiz, 132. Freitas, *Palmares: Guerra dos Escravos*, 134, says middle name was Rodrigues.

2 Carneiro, *Quilombo dos Palmares*, 249.

subsequently burn the fort.[3] One soldier later reported that the Palmarians fought with "desperate courage."[4] Was this the fort around Zumbi's capital city, Macaco, atop the Serra da Barriga? If so, it was a major victory for the blacks of the Portuguese over the blacks of Palmares. But such a victory would have been much more celebrated. Maybe the expedition misidentified the location, or maybe it was a village below Barriga, on the Rio Mundaú, perhaps not as fortified as Carneiro would have his superiors believe. Or maybe it was a figment of someone's exaggeration.

The regiment attacked a third *quilombo*, possibly on the Rio Mundaú. Commander Carneiro estimated some 300 people lived there. He reported that the residents defended it fiercely, "selling their lives at a high price."[5]

The regiment returned to Alagoas, claiming victory over Palmares and bragging of the death of Zumbi. As usual, the reported victory was premature, the death of Zumbi greatly exaggerated. Within a year, Zumbi sent a raid into the outskirts of Alagoas. The raiders did what damage they could, grabbed weapons and gunpowder, freed several slaves, and kidnapped two or three white women. Though the raid went well, the retreat was ambushed by a brigade of Indians under Sebastião Pinheiro Camarão. The raiding party was nearly wiped out, but a few got away with the women. The leader was among the dead, and Camarão reported, yet again, that it was Zumbi.[6]

Zumbi was still alive, but the governor was now more concerned with the women than with the elusive king of Palmares. He had Sergeant-Major Clemente da Rocha Barbosa and Camarão pull together enough men for a rescue mission. They found a *mocambo* which the blacks defended courageously before pulling out.[7] Carneiro assessed the dead the defenders had left behind. One looked like someone whose name would be Zumbi. In hopes of reward, he reported the death of the king of Palmares

3 AHU—Pernambuco—Códice 18, 22 de dezembro de 1693, 350

4 Freitas, *Guerra dos Escravos*, 134.

5 AHU—Pernambuco—Caixa 8. 24 de março de 1683, 1. See also Domingos Loreto do Couto, *Desagravos do Brasil e glorias de Pernambuco*, 107-108.

6 Couto, *Desagravos do Brasil*, 106.

7 BNRJ—Códice 22, 2, 28, 29 de agosto de 1682, 143.

to the king of Portugal. But this death of the king lasted no longer than his previous deaths.

It's hard to say whether anyone was winning the war at this point. Zumbi's forces were able to raid Alagoas and defend themselves elsewhere, but invading expeditions were managing to overrun Palmarian positions. Neither side was about to conquer the other's territory, but at the same time, either side could inflict damage on the other. The Portuguese were capturing so many prisoners that they couldn't afford to kill them all. Fearing that re-enslavement in Pernambuco would make it too easy for them to return to Palmares, the governor sent them to Lisbon to work in the boatyards. There they worked for wages just like everybody else, though with no option for employment elsewhere.[8]

In late 1681, Dom Pedro II appointed João de Souza to replace Aires de Souza de Castro as governor of Pernambuco in the following year.[9] João de Souza was a professional military man, and the king sent him to the governor's seat with a sword and an olive branch—an edict issued by the crown on March 10, 1682.[10] It specified precisely what was to be done about Palmares. The purpose of the offer-and-threat strategy was to drive another wedge into the population of Palmares, the same kind of wedge that had resulted in Cucaú. If it worked, it would inspire a good part of the Palmarians to return to the fold of the society they had fled, thus weakening the ranks of those who had chosen to take their chances in the wilderness.

On the sword side of the edict, the king ordered a continuation of the military effort under a military governor commanding professional soldiers dedicated to the cause. The edict called for local people to join the fight. Palmares had a choice: cooperate or die.

On the olive branch side of the edict, the king offered the possibility of peace through cooperation. It acknowledged the freedom of any Palmarian who had been free before moving to Palmares, and it established a legal process to ensure appropriate slavery or freedom. Any captive who could provide paperwork proving freedom could present his or her case to

8 AHU – Pernambuco – Códice 265, 29 de agosto de 1682, 34.
9 AHU - Pernambuco – Códice 119, 6 de novembro de 1681, 258-259.
10 Documentos Históricos, vol. 68, 49-59.

a judge. Those who claimed freedom but had no paperwork could present their cases to a judge, and the judge could require each plaintiff's supposed owner to give the supposed slave time off to plead his or her case. The court would even pay the cost of the legal aid. The names of blacks declared free were to be posted.

The offer of freedom was not going to tempt most Palmarians. It applied only to any Palmarians who descended from white settlers and weren't black or mulatto—in other words only Palmarians of white and Indian blood. Anyone who had been a slave before fleeing would be returned to slavery. That included anyone born to a woman who had been a slave, slavery still being an inherited status, a virtually congenital condition that was passed down from mother to child. Those who had moved to Cucaú and not participated in the rebellion were considered free. Those who had rebelled against Ganga-Zumba, however, would be charged with treason. If conviction was by circumstantial evidence only, the individual would merely be exported to another area to serve as a slave there. Those convicted more positively would be sentenced by a junta of judges, one of whom would be the governor himself. News of the capture and execution of the leaders of the Cucaú uprising had not reached Lisbon yet, so the king's edict did not need to specify his preferred fate for the guilty, who had already been executed, if not with his highness's post-facto instructions: The two main instigators were to be beheaded, "…their heads taken to the scene of the crime and raised on poles tall and public that they may be seen by all and not taken down until time has consumed them, so that they may serve as an example not only of satisfaction of guilt but also of horror to others so that they dare not commit a similar crime."[11]

To prevent subsequent flight to Palmares, no black Palmarian returning to slavery, excepting children under the age of seven, would be allowed to remain in Brazil. Those who owned Palmarians had to export them or face legal action.

In the semi-anarchy of Pernambuco, the king's edict was widely ignored. Landowners and mill owners did as they pleased or at least as much

11 Freitas, *Palmares: Guerra dos Escravos*, 140, quoting unidentified source.

as they could get away with. Those who possessed captured Palmarians were unlikely to respect their pleas of prior emancipation or to voluntarily export them. The junta of judges didn't meet until March of 1683, and even then they didn't get around to hearing any cases.[12]

The powerful were in no mood for appeasing the rebels or taking the king's semi-conciliatory approach. When João de Souza succeeded Aires de Souza de Castro as governor in early 1682, he did not choose to offer peace and react to its rejection with the military option. He preferred to pound Palmares and leave the offer of freedom to anyone who then asked for it. Aware that innumerable invasions had accomplished nothing, he called on the man who had successfully overrun Palmares five years earlier, Fernão de Carrilho. Carrilho, still hoping to take possession of the twenty leagues (120 km., 75 miles) he'd been given there, accepted the command. With express orders not to negotiate *anything* with *anybody*, he set off in July, 1683, with a band of three hundred men.[13] The governor may have been so insistent—he actually wrote down a detailed explanation of what Carrilho was to do *and not do*—because Carrilho was known to have a cattle farm in Palmares territory, presumably with Zumbi's permission, a not-uncommon situation accomplished through some kind of protective payments.

Carrilho was unable to repeat the success of his previous invasion. He found little to attack until a detachment of twenty-five men led by a Carlos Ferreira came across forty men working a field. Though for the moment the Palmarian men were working as farmers, they were also armed and ready to defend their field. As the fighting broke out, all but five of Ferreira's men ran off, and after an hour of combat, the squad had to pull out. Carrilho's force hiked off to look for an easier or more significant objective. Suffering hunger, thirst, and the pains of difficult trails, they pressed on to the Mundaú River, tantalizingly close to the Macaco fortress

12 Documentos Seiscentistas Brasileiros in Anais do Museu *paulista*, São Paulo, 1927, t.3, Part 2, 7-128.

13 Ennes, Doc. 3, "Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino de 29 de Novembro de 1684, em que o Governador de Pernambuco D. João de Sousa dá conta do mao procedimento q- teue na guerra dos Palmares Fernão Carrilhos eleito cabo dela," in *Guerras Nos Palmares*, 139.

at Barriga but also a perfect place to become surrounded by Zumbi's guerrillas.[14]

Reports vary on what happened next. Carrilho told the governor he was trapped and had no choice but to negotiate. The governor was fairly certain that Carrilho had been meaning to negotiate with Zumbi even before he left Alagoas. His proof was in two letters that Carrilho had written asking that the "no negotiation" stipulations in his contract be changed. The governor refused. And now there he was, conveniently surrounded at the foot of Barriga, faced with the choice of negotiation or death. As far as the governor was concerned, Carrilho's readiness to do what he wanted rather than what he was told to do fell within the parameters of his character. He was, in short, a predisposed and self-interested liar.

According to what the governor heard, Carrilho's negotiations came to involve Palmarians and Portuguese commingling in the camp in a manner unbecoming of men who were supposed to be at war. The governor, receiving a report of the suspicious behavior, sent orders to Carrilho to destroy, not talk to, the enemy. Carrilho cut off the talks but let the Palmarian forces escape. Later, according to a report that reached the governor, he alerted the people in the *mocambos* he was approaching so they could evacuate before he got there.[15]

The governor was convinced that Carrilho was pursuing something other than the mission he'd been sent on. He was consorting with the enemy, dickering with those he was supposed to be killing. It looked as if Carrilho might have been using the mission only to justify expenditures for the men, equipment, and supplies he needed to get to his pastures in Palmares. It looked like a clever idea, but one he'd soon regret. The governor, certain he had a scoundrel on a commander's mission, sent João de Freitas da Cunha to relieve Carrilho of his command.[16]

Though recovering from an illness, da Cunha accepted the challenge and headed inland with fifty men. Finding Carrilho, he promptly put him under de facto arrest and had him escorted to the coast. The gover-

14 AHU—Pernambuco—caixa 12, 20 de dezembro de 1698, 2.

15 Ennes, Doc. 3, in *Guerras nos Palmares*, 139-140.

16 Ibid., 140.

nor charged him with disobedience, stripped him of rank and salary, and dispatched him to a prison in the captaincy of Ceará, one of few places in Brazil less hospitable than Pernambuco.[17]

Meanwhile, back in the wilderness, surrounded by rebels not nearly as defeated as Carrilho had reported, Freitas da Cunha, vanguard of the Portuguese empire, recognized the strength of the enemy that Carrilho had faced. He held back until reinforcements arrived under the command of Manuel Lopes Galvão, a man who knew how to gallop into a situation and take control. Zumbi used the time to pull out and ensconce his forces at a *mocambo* called Gôngoro. Da Cunha and Lopes Galvão trailed him but balked at the challenge of assaulting the Palmarian position. They needed yet more reinforcements. Some arrived under the command of one Belchior Pinto.[18] The subsequent assault managed to burn Gôngoro and a few other Palmarian villages, but Zumbi's men fought them off and forced them to withdraw.

By the time da Cunha regrouped, Zumbi had organized a diversionary attack on Alamo (or Alama), a hamlet on the coast.[19] Da Cunha rushed to the rescue, but by the time he arrived, Zumbi had disappeared. Da Cunha hounded him for the next month, torching the few *mocambos* he could find, decapitating the few captives he caught, but never really confronting or defeating Palmarian forces. Another detachment fought Zumbi near the Serra Salabangá, a site unknown today. It may have been near the Palmarian city of Dambraganga, near today's town of Viçosa in the state of Alagoas. Da Cunha's men killed seven Palmarian fighters and captured thirteen. The captives were split evenly among the soldiers, who then sold them for exportation from the region.[20]

17 Ibid. 139-140.

18 Arquivos Nacionais do Torre do Tombo, Chancelarias Reais, d. Pedro II. Oficios e Terras (Doações) Livro 26, 26 de janeiro de 1700, 9.

19 Ennes, Doc. 46, "Consulta do Cons. Ultr. de 20 de Dez. de 1697, sobre nomeação de pessoas p. a Comp. de infanteria q. vagou na Cap. de Pern. no 3. de q foi Mestre de Campo Zenobio Achioly de Vasc. pello intertinimento de Antonio da Silva Barbosa," in *Guerras nos Palmares*, 280-281.

20 AHU, Pernambuco—Caixa 11, 14 de março de 1696, 2.

Late in 1684, Governor de Souza called the forces in. Da Cunha's ten months in the field hadn't yielded enough killed or captured to justify the expense and effort.[21] His efforts hadn't amounted to much more than terrorism.

Zumbi was not content to have merely chased the latest expedition out of his territory. Not long after Freitas da Cunha vacated Palmares, Zumbi proved his ability to not only go on the offensive but to expand his effort northward toward the Captaincy of Paraíba. He attacked a a coastal outpost called Nossa Senhora das Neves, a relatively easy target mainly inhabited and defended by Indians who fought for a few hours but then fled. In response, the governor fired off a warning to the governor of Paraíba, who launched a column to track down the invaders. Seventy-two days later, after suffering hunger and thirst—including two days without a sip of water—the posse concluded that the blacks had returned to Palmares.[22]

In an even more daring raid, Palmarians stormed a prison in the town of Alagoas and managed to free some of their people. Again, the main defenders were Indians who didn't put up much of a fight.[23]

On one of these excursions to the coast, marauding Palmarians captured the wife of a Porto Calvo mill owner.[24] Zumbi may have kept her as his own wife. A court document of 1696 notes that "...as for Maria Paim, a white woman who calls Zambi [sic] her husband and father of her children and treats him as such, it should be understood that she was forced, in that she was taken from her guardian against her will and thus should not suffer punishment."[25]

Why Zumbi decided to take the offensive is still open to question. The attack was not going to chase the Portuguese out of Brazil or Pernambuco. Maybe he hoped to capture arms and supplies. Maybe it was

21 ANTT, Chancelarias Reais, d. Pedro II. Oficios e Terras (Doações) Livro 26, 26 de janeiro de 1700, 9.

22 Ibid., fls. 369/369v/370.

23 Couto, *Desagravos do Brasil e glorias de Pernambuco*. 101.

24 Carneiro, *Quilombo dos Palmares*, 70.

25 Biancarelli and Rattner, "Pistas Diversas," *Folha de São Paulo*, November 12, 1995, Section 5, 6, citing unnamed document transcribed by Décio Freitas.

political, vengeance meant to discourage future incursions. Maybe he just wanted to prove something.

He certainly proved something to Governor de Souza. Souza's captaincy was out of money and weak on manpower, and the motherland had nothing to contribute to the effort. Reprisal was not an option, more incursions impossible in the foreseeable future. After all his vehement objections to negotiation, the governor decided to see if Zumbi might be open to compromise. He enlisted a black officer of the Henriques Regiment to see if Palmares might be interested in some kind of peace settlement. The officer stayed for a few months—we can only wonder why—but returned without a response.

On February 19, 1685, João da Cunha Souto Maior replaced João de Souza as governor. He brought with him instructions from Dom Pedro II to negotiate peace with Palmares. The king also wrote a letter, dated February 26, 1685, directed to Zumbi himself:

> "I, the King, make it known to you, Captain Zumbi of Palmares, that I pardon you for all the excesses you have carried out against my Royal House as well as against the people of Pernambuco, and that I thus make it understood that your rebellion has been justified by the evils practiced by some evil *senhores* in disobedience to my royal orders. I invite you be in any location you wish, with your wife and children and all your captains, free from any captivity, as my loyal and faithful subjects, under my royal protection, as known by my governor, who is going to the government of this captaincy."[26]

The letter is signed simply "Rei." *King.*

It is not known whether the letter ever arrived in Pernambuco or arrived in Zumbi's hands. Though it did not result in anything, it was an

26 Freitas, *Guerra dos Escravos*, 144, citing an unidentified document in the Biblioteca da Ajuda in Lisbon.

unprecedented extension of protocol, a king in Europe addressing a rebel king—a *black* rebel king—of a foreign country, a sovereign state.

This letter might well be interpreted as the precursor to an end to the eighty-year war and a victory for Palmares. If Zumbi accepted the offer and stopped his guerrilla offensive, if the king held to his word and made sure the governor enforced it, if white settlers on the frontier learned to get along with their black neighbors, if the Palmarians could continue to live in Palmares and continue to accept fugitive slaves, and if everyone adhered to the terms of the peace agreement, then everyone would have what they wanted: peace for Palmares, secure infrastructure on both sides, a stronger economy on both sides, and all the benefits of transnational commerce.

But Zumbi had no reason to trust the governor or the king. He hadn't fallen for the treaty trick five years earlier, at Cucaú, and he certainly wasn't going to fall for it this time. He couldn't afford another error like Cucaú. He could not accept a promise or a compromise. His choices were life or death, freedom or slavery. It was an easy decision. Accepting the victory that the king offered would almost certainly result in terminal defeat.

In the same situation as the governor he was replacing, Souto Maior had no experienced commanders and no funds for supplies or ordnance. A poor crop of cane had worsened Pernambuco's financial situation. Settlers were complaining that attacks continued, but they were unwilling to contribute more resources to a military effort. The rebels were still running rampant, attacking farms, killing whites, raising hell without fear of counterattack. Souto Maior and everybody else were going to have to live with Palmares.

Nonetheless, Zumbi started a tactic of negotiating for time. Offers, modifications, and refusals went back and forth. Eventually it become apparent what was happening. Two former governors—Aires de Souza de Castro and João de Souza—warned Souto Maior and the king that peace was not the answer, that the results of negotiation were predictable: Palmares would drag out the back-and-forth offers and counter-offers for as

long as possible, gaining time to fortify defenses, receive recruits who escaped bondage, resurrect *mocambos* destroyed in the latest incursion, perhaps harvest and hide another crop. The talks forestalled incursions from the coast but did not prevent Palmarian raids on places defended too lightly. One such place was the mill of a widow named Maria Soares. Although she kept a contingent of Indians patrolling her property outside of Serinhaém, Zumbi's men succeeded in burning her fields. She wrote to the king himself to request a few white soldiers to keep the Indians organized and lead them into Palmares to attack the root of the problem. The king must have appreciated her gumption. By the end of 1686, he sent her some assistance.

Senhora Soares wasn't the only one losing her patience. Everyone from dirt farmers to mill owners was demanding action. They didn't want a negotiated settlement. They wanted a final solution. They wanted the king to contribute the necessary funds and manpower to secure a crucial corner of his own kingdom. And they wanted the governor to do his job, which they claimed he was far from doing. They accused him of abusing the government till and enriching himself with prohibited commerce. He was so unpopular that when some of his soldiers arrived at Penedo to arrest some local people, mobs chased the soldiers away—an unheard-of defiance of royal power. Worse, it would seem that the soldiers were reluctant to carry out the governor's orders. Pernambuco was getting close to breaking up.

In 1686, a plague broke out. They called it the *mal-de-bicho*, the bug disease—a deadly fever, later likened to yellow fever, that raged up and down the coast of Brazil. Thousands died, among them the archbishop and Fr. Antônio Vieira. Governor-General Matias da Cunha was almost one of them.[27]

Nobody knew what had initiated the disease. No comets had passed since the previous plague. God had been petitioned with all due prayer. The best doctors could figure was that it was born of "vapors exhaled by

27 Taunay, "Subsídios para a História do trafico africano," Annual Publication of the Terceiro Congresso de História Nacional, 141.

cadavers," some of which were clerics rotting in coffins beneath church floors. It would take ten years for doctors to confer and devise solutions agreeable to the governor.

One attempted solution: bonfires of *pau-brasil* burning over graves for three days, even over the sepulchers in churches, "to prevent the repeated corruption of the airs."[28] Graves were tamped down, paved with stone or brick, and buried in dirt atop five palms high. The dead were buried outside of town but were not to be left in swampy places. They could no longer be interred under churches. Houses were washed with vinegar and fumigated with remedial herbs and weeds. The clothes and bedding of the sick and deceased were burned as were the cups from which they had drunk. Houses cleaned by women or slaves had to be cleaned by eight o'clock in the morning; houses cleaned by men just had to be done by nightfall. Bonfires would be lit at the door of every fifth house, in turns, each night for 40 nights.[29] All filth had to be removed from alleys and streets and dumped in the river in such a way that it would not wash up on the beaches. Anyone who threw garbage anywhere except the river would be imprisoned. Slaves leaving filth on the beach would be given 25 lashes. Women caught on the streets at night without husband or father, presumably "public women," would be given 50 lashes. Captain Manoel Pinto was given the job of taking a roster of all prostitutes and "scandalous" women in Recife. Shopkeepers could not sell spoiled products. The sick, at least some of them, were taken to hospitals, and those who could not afford it did not have to pay for medical treatment.[30] Surgeons and barbers were prohibited from bleeding patients outside of a hospital. The sick who arrived on ships either went straight to a hospital or left on the ships they'd

28 Ennes, Doc. 82. "Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino de 25 de Agosto de 1695, em que o Governador, e Capitao Geral de Pernambuco Caetano de Melo de Castro, dáConta a sua Megistade de se continuarem as doenças no Recife, e pede se lhe appliquem os meyos que parecerem mais Convenientes para se evitarem, e vão os papeis que se acuzão," in *Guerras nos Palmares*, 452-453.

29 Ibid., Doc. 88, "Bando sobre fazeremse fogueiras, limpeza das Cazas, e ruas; e Curas dos doentes; e queimadas as roupas; e outros particulares," 464.

30 Ibid., Doc. 83, "Parecer do Marquez de Montebelo acerca das instruções dos Medicos João Ferreira da Rosa e Mdomingos Pereira da Gama sobre a cautela de se enterrarem os defuntos for a do povado fazendo-lhe fogueiras. s.l.n.d.," 455-456.

sailed in on.[31] The plague would not end until 1693, when only one person in Recife died of the plague, though by 1695, it would be back.

As the plague and poverty and attacks from Palmares combined to cause panic, desperation, and unrest, Governor Souto Maior realized that his own people could become more of threat to his power than Palmares was. In late 1686 he dispatched a letter to the king declaring that he was making the unilateral decision to end the negotiations he'd been told to pursue with Palmares:

"Although I owe them pardon in Your Majesty's name so that they might live peacefully in this captaincy with the liberties that Your Majesty has conceded them in your royal orders, I am receiving from city councils and neighboring people complaints of the oppressive acts [the blacks] are committing, sacking their houses and taking their captive slaves. I have suspended execution of the pardon and resolved (despite having no resources to spend on this war) to have them punished as an example..."[32]

Souto Maior's decision didn't solve any problems, but it did help focus people's wrath on Palmares rather than on his governorship. He called for volunteers to enlist in a militia and dipped into the funds that had been collected for upcoming payments on Queen Catherine's dowry, money he felt he needed far more than the Queen of England did. Enlistees, he offered, could keep the slaves they captured, and they would not have to pay the usual tax on slaves.

Six hundred volunteers—white soldiers, black soldiers, and mercenary Indians and mamelucos—rallied to the call. Fernão Carrilho eagerly offered his services for the command of this army, even if only as a "simple soldier."[33] He expressed this desire from his dungeon in Ceará, where he was wasting away pending his appeal of the sentence previous governor João de Souza had given him. Domingos Rodrigues Carneiro came forward with a corps of black mercenaries. And no less than Santo

31 Ibid., Doc. 85: "Bando sobre o superintendente da Saude ter cuidado em tomar a Ros a gente do mar; e os doentes hirem pera o Hospital," 460-461.
32 Ibid., Doc. 7, "Consulta do Governador de Pernambuco de 78 de Novembro de 1685, em que dea conta dos nouos excessores e tiranias, que fazem os negros dos Palmares em todas aquellas Capitanias, 150.
33 Ibid., Doc. 7, 151.

Antônio himself, a carved wood icon dressed in linen uniform, joined the army, his salary payable to the Franciscan monastery in Olinda.[34]

The forces of Portugal could not have had a more appropriate saint on their side. The Son of a Seraphim, the Mane of Portugal, the Light of Italy, the Glory of Padua, the Splendor of France, the Admiration of Spain, the Ark of the Testament, the Hammer of Heretics, the Throne of God, the Wonder of the Angels, the Terror of Hell, the Sun of the Whole World,"[35] and a native of Lisbon, no less, Santo Antônio had already been given the title of *capitão-do-mato*—bush captain, the job dedicated to repossessing fugitive slaves—because he had long been known as the saint of lost possessions, including those who had fled west. He was Brazil's *divino sargentão*. In his fleshly lifetime, he had resurrected the dead, cured all sorts of diseases, made a baby speak to defend the honor of his mother, changed a frog into a chicken and a chicken into a frog. A saint who could perform such miracles should also be capable of returning felonious blacks to their rightful owners. From the pulpit, Fr. Antônio Vieira, S.J., would praise him for his multifarious abilities: "If your child is sick, Santo Antônio! If your slave flees, Santo Antônio! If you need something in a hurry, Santo Antônio! If you are awaiting sentencing, Santo Antônio! If you lose the least little thing in your house, Santo Antônio!"

But Fr. Vieira never said, "Armies never accomplishing anything? Santo Antônio!"so it wasn't until 1868 that it was decided to actually enlist him in a militia rather than drag only his icon into the wilderness. Thanks to his courage and efforts in the war against Palmares, Saint Anthony would receive promotions throughout Brazil over the next two centuries.[36]

Letting bygones be bygones, Souto Maior made Fernão Carrilho the commander of the expedition. On January 10, 1686, a sizable little army set out from Alagoas for Palmares. Another 120 men "armed with guns and arrows" under Gergório Bezerra departed from São Francisco (i.e. Pene-

34 Mott, "Santo Antônio, o Divino Capitão-do-Mato," in Reis and Gomes, *Liberdade por Um Fio*, 124.
35 Ibid., 110-111, citing Frei Agostinho da Conceção, "Sermão do glorioso lusitano santo Antônion, pregado no seu convento e mesmos dia na cidade do Rio de Janeiro a 13 de julho de 1674."
36 Ibid., 119.

do).[37] They chose that month so that they might arrive just as crops in Palmares were ripening. The army could use the crops to feed itself while at the same time denying the enemy the fruit of their labors. Whatever the looters couldn't eat or carry, they would burn.

This vandalistic annoyance was about all they accomplished. Despite Carrilho's experienced command, the militia re-enacted the experience of innumerable militias before. It took them a month to find a *mocambo*. Their arrival surprised no one. Ambushes had been set. Resistance was fierce and bloody. And when the attacking forces finally broke through, they found the *mocambo* abandoned. They killed a few, captured a few, among them a "nephew" of Zumbi. But they weren't by any means defeating Palmares. They were just wandering around, waiting to get hit. Carrilho fumed that the Palmarians found themselves safe only because they were so good at fleeing.

Jerônimo de Mello led a detachment of 150 men in pursuit of the retreating Palmarians. Near the *mocambo* of Tabocas, they engaged the Palmarians at the Serra da Batalha—Battle Ridge—and met in a few other skirmishes, including one at the Serra Santa Cruz. Both sides suffered casualties; neither side suffered decisive defeat.[38] Zumbi's strategy of pulling back but resisting advances was working very well.

Along came wintery summer. Though hardly the stuff of blizzards, the chill of the rain aggravated the decline in health and energy of Carrilho's men. Carrilho, seeing no point in continuing, took them back to Alagoas. "If it weren't for the winter," he wrote with his typical bluster, "I would have had the good fortune I expected, the conquering of these negroes." Expecting reprisals—quite likely as bad as the punishment he had just inflicted—he posted squads of black mercenaries on the outskirts of the more vulnerable interior towns of Sarinhaém, Ipojuca and Porto Calvo.[39] Zumbi did indeed launch reprisal attacks, but not on far-flung farms and interior towns. His men had the confidence to go down to the coast and hit Alagoas, São Miguel, and Penedo.

37 AHU – Pernambuco – Caixa 9, 24 de agosto de 1686, 1.
38 AHU – Pernambuco – Caixa 1, 14 de março de 1696, 2.
39 AHU – Pernambuco – Códice 18, 22 de dezembro de 1693, fls 1/1v.

An unsigned letter to the Overseas Council, written in June of 1686, attributed to Carrilho though it often referred to him in the third person, did not shrink from describing the power of the enemy: "These blacks are robust and tolerant of all kinds of work, through practice or nature, and they are large in number and always growing. They lack neither skill with arms nor daring of heart…"[40]

Could Carrilho be blamed for failing to overrun a territory so bravely and skillfully defended? Surely not. And despite that failure, among the blacks he "was known as a wizard," the commander the blacks feared more than all others, the anonymous writer noted. His letter proposed a comprehensive strategy for his next invasion. To instill fear, soldiers and even Indians would be allowed to summarily hang any fugitive slaves they found, and any other blacks they caught, including children, could be sold. Trails into the territory would continue to be improved and widened "so that not only people but cattle could use them, which has seemed impossible before because of the density of the brush as much as the steepness of its hills."[41] Carrilho himself would command a fortified outpost deep inside enemy territory. It would be defended by satellite villages of Indians who would be uprooted from Jesuit villages and transplanted to Palmares. The Indians would not only defend the fort but allow Palmarians fewer places to hide. They would also impede the flight of fugitive slaves, though women and children would be spared and sold. Blacks and Indians, the letter said, were "bitter enemies" and the Indians would be glad to attack not only to get rid of the blacks but to eat them.[42] All they needed was a little liquor, some knives, and some encouragement.

Carrilho never got the opportunity to see if his fantasized drunk cannibals could accomplish what the Portuguese and Dutch military forces could not, nor would he be allowed to establish his fort behind enemy lines. Dom Pedro II had a better idea. It wasn't an especially new idea, but it was the king's, so it sailed into Recife with a certain priority. It was the same strategy that had been failing since 1603 except that it was to be

40 Ennes, *Guerras nos Palmares*, 44.
41 Carneiro, *Quilombo dos Palmares*, Ibid., 52.
42 Ibid., 132.

applied with more vigor and consistency. A large contingent of soldiers, blacks and Indians—the king thought 400 would suffice—were to hit and harass the Palmarians to the point where they wanted to die, give up, or move away. The contingent would set up a camp in Palmarian territory. It would arrive at harvest season so the invaders could eat what the defenders had planted. They would be periodically replaced to prevent exhaustion. From the camp they would seek and destroy every *mocambo*, burn every house and field, and hound every refugee until Palmares became uninhabitable. And when individual rebels agreed to give up, they would be pardoned and removed to Portugal or one of its island territories.

The strategy itself wasn't much different from the strategies that had failed in the past, but for the first time, the Crown would organize the attack as a kind of business. There would be a special treasury for war funds, and any revenues from the war, from plunder or prisoners, would be added to the treasury.[43]

Zumbi had his own plans. While the king and governor worried about the financial side of war, Palmares sent secret agents into the towns along the coast. Their mission was to organize a rebellion within white territory. Once a network had been established, slaves and freed blacks were to rise up and begin massacring the whites. Zumbi's forces would then descend from the hills to take advantage of the chaos, ideally to the extent of wiping out the colony and dominating all of Pernambuco. But a black woman betrayed the conspiracy, and its leaders were quickly discovered and executed.[44]

Though the plot had been foiled, white society could not ignore the very real possibility that master and slave, white and black, could, conceivably, in the foreseeable future, reverse their roles. The conspiracy had had the potential to succeed. Blacks outnumbered whites in vast proportions. Had blacks ousted whites from even part of Pernambuco, the rebellion may well have spread up and down the coast. Given the diminishing dominance of Brazilian sugar in Europe, the captaincies of the northeast

43 AHU – Pernambuco—Caixa 9, 1687, undated, 1.

44 Ennes, Doc. 12 "Cópia de [uma] Carta de 25 de Junho de 1687-q- se escrevo de Pernãobuco sobre os Negros dos Palmares," in *Guerras nos Palmares*, 160.

might not have been worth reconquering. A black nation may well have taken hold, radically altering Latin American history.

During this time when Palmarians agents were able to approach and enter the major cities, Zumbi himself is believed to have sneaked into Porto Calvo three times. On these trips, he visited the man who had raised him, Fr. Antônio de Melo. The visits were a poorly kept secret. Fr. Melo suffered reprisal for his continuing contacts, writing that "several times people have called me a member of the black rebels." Years later Fr. de Melo apparently wrote about the encounters in letters to a friend in Portugal, but shortly after historian Décio Freitas saw them, they were stolen and never seen again.[45] Unless they are found, we will never know the nature of the conversations between the Portuguese priest and the King of Palmares.

45 Freitas, *Guerra dos Escravos*, 125, and *Folha de São Paulo*, November 12, 1995, Section 5, 5. See discussion in Chapter 17 regarding dubious documentation of these visits.