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Zumbi of Palmares

Challenging the Portuguese Colonial Order

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Sugar exports fueled the economy of Portuguese Brazil in the seventeenth century, and as profits from European sales increased, sugar planters imported more slave labor, especially from Angola. These enslaved Africans proved to be a more efficient, productive labor force than the Amerindians. Large sugar plantations dotted the landscape in the Northeast, sometimes employing hundreds of slaves who planted the crop, cut the cane, and processed it into sugar loaves and aguardiente (white rum) for sale in coastal urban centers, such as Salvador in Bahia and Recife in Pernambuco. Few of these complex operations were entirely self-sufficient in basic supplies (manioc, corn, beans, livestock, etc.), which they bought from farms and ranches in the interior. Finished goods and many artisan products came from the nearest urban marketplace. In short, the economic life of much of coastal Brazil revolved around sugar production, supported first by indigenous and later by a mixture of Amerindian and African slave labor.

Slaves in Brazil resisted bondage in numerous ways: work slowdowns, sabotaging of machinery or tools, violence, and flight. By the seventeenth century, settlements of fugitive slaves called quilombos or mocambos emerged in the frontier zones. Most of these mocambos in the Northeast were small encampments, but one settlement, called Palmares, developed into an independent confederation of eleven towns that spanned the rugged frontier zones in the states of Alagoas and Pernambuco. At its peak, Palmares was an autonomous state, based on African political and religious customs, with between 20,000 and 30,000 inhabitants. Probably founded in the 1590s after a slave revolt, the eleven mocambos of Palmares survived for one hundred years supported by agriculture, fishing, hunting and gathering, trade, and raiding nearby Luso-Brazilian settlements and plantations. The Portuguese and the Dutch mounted many expeditions to conquer Palmares, but each suffered defeat by its determined defenders. The final, successful assault on Palmares took place in 1694, when a Luso-Brazilian force of over 1,000 men encircled the main mocambo of Macaco, battered down its walls with artillery, and then captured and looted the town. The smaller, weaker mocambos also fell to the attackers, who took the few surviving captives to sell as slaves in Rio de Janeiro. For the Portuguese, Palmares represented not only a military danger but also a bea-

con to all slaves intent on resisting colonial authority. Such a threat to the social and political order was unacceptable and had to be destroyed, regardless of the cost.

The most famous "Great Chief" or king of the Palmares confederation was Zumbi, who forcibly overthrew his predecessor, Ganga Zumba, for failing to mount an effective resistance against the Portuguese. Although Zumbi was born in Palmares, he was captured by a military expedition and raised in Porto Calvo by a Catholic priest, Antônio Melo, who baptized the boy and taught him both Latin and Portuguese. At fifteen, however, he ran away and returned to Palmares, where he ultimately usurped the position of Great Chief from Ganga Zumba in 1677. Given the scarcity of women in Palmares, many females had multiple husbands, but leaders such as Zumbi could have one or more wives of their own. Indeed, popular traditions record that Zumbi's wife was dona Maria, a white woman captured from her father's sugar plantation by a raiding party from the federation. Nevertheless, upon becoming the king of Palmares, Zumbi became a formidable political and military leader convinced that peace with the Portuguese promised only betrayal and enslavement. As a result, he fought off each Portuguese and Brazilian military expedition sent against Palmares until the final, successful conquest of Macaco in 1694. Zumbi escaped the carnage following the capture of Macaco only to fall into an ambush in November 1695; his body was mutilated and his severed head was displayed in Recife. Although Palmares and its most famous leader had perished and the Portuguese colonial notion of order had prevailed, Zumbi's memory continued to inspire all those who sought freedom in Brazil.

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Mythic hero, or traitorous enemy? Zumbi of Palmares is a man of legend celebrated in the movie *Quilombo* and honored by Afro-Brazilians every year in November. He was born in 1655 and died resisting capture in 1695. His life and the drama of Palmares, which have been told and retold in Brazil for centuries, have inspired generations of slaves and their descendants. It is one of the defining moments in colonial Brazilian history that reveals both the order—that is, the colonial system and its profound inequities—and the disorder (in the view of the Portuguese) of the slaves who escaped their world of *engenhos* (sugar plantations) and *senzalas* (slave barracks). In contrast, however, I would argue that the order was in Palmares and the disorder was on the coast, as fugitive slaves

re-created in the forested hillsides of Palmares their own autonomous society, free of slavery and of Portuguese colonialism. This essay will first, define *quilombos*; second, describe Palmares before the revolt that brought Zumbi to power; and third, assess the role of Zumbi in the final years of Palmares before its destruction by the great army of the 1690s. It will conclude with the elevation of Zumbi to a national hero who inspires those who struggle against or endure the legacies of slavery in modern Brazil. In myth and popular belief, Zumbi has not died but lives on to continue the struggle of his people.

Wherever slavery existed in colonial Brazil, settlements of fugitive slaves were sure to be nearby. They came to be called *quilombos* from the Jaga term (*ki-lombo*) for a fortified camp in Angola, and their inhabitants *quilombolas*. An alternate term, *mocambo*, derives from *mukambu* in Quimbundo, another Angolan language. In the case of Palmares, as in much of the Northeast, the more common usage was *mocambo*. They were often no more than small encampments where a group of slaves could hide out from their masters and overseers. Others grew to considerable size under the leadership of kings or queens. Those that existed on the fringes of plantations or mining camps sometimes served as temporary respites where slaves could escape from work for a brief period before being returned to the rigors of life as a slave.

Palmares, however, was different. It evolved into an autonomous community in the interior of the states of Alagoas and Pernambuco and posed a military threat, especially under Zumbi, to Portuguese colonial society on the coast. Its very success challenged the colonial order on the coast in a way that no other *mocambo* had ever done, and its destruction, so the Portuguese hoped, would deter all other such attempts in the interior of Brazil. But they were wrong. Slaves did not give up the struggle for freedom and formed *quilombos* as long as slavery lasted, or they learned from the brutal destruction of Palmares to remain hidden and preserve their autonomy in secret until discovered by the outside world a century after the abolition of slavery in 1888. They could escape destruction because they either settled in remote regions of Brazil, such as Kalunga in Central Brazil or the *quilombos* of the Amazon region and Mato Grosso, or they remained small and did not pose a military threat.

In contrast, Palmares was both remote from the coast yet close enough for expeditions to reach it. The *mocambo* took its name from a region where palm trees were plentiful—that is, *palmeiras* (palm groves) in Portuguese. A seventeenth-century description suggests why fugitives took refuge there. It was “a naturally rugged site, mountainous and forested,” where the light could not penetrate and lush vegetation impeded one’s steps and obscured the trunks of trees.¹ The tangled forests were pen-

etrated by numerous rivers, which provided secure sources of water, even in the dry season. In addition to the hostile vegetation, Palmares included a series of tall mountains with sharp escarpments. One of them was shaped like a stomach (*barriga*); hence it was named the Serra da Barriga, from which the inhabitants were able to view the region all around for a great distance and flee to the interior upon the approach of a hostile expedition. In the Serra da Barriga of what is now the modern state of Alagoas, formerly a part of the captaincy of Pernambuco in the colonial period, was constructed the principal *mocambo* of Palmares known as Macaco.

The chroniclers do not document when the first fugitive slaves fled to the Serra da Barriga. Décio Freitas, one of the historians of Palmares, argues that the first to establish themselves in a *mocambo* were a group of fugitives from a sugar plantation in the south of the captaincy of Pernambuco at the end of the sixteenth century. They had risen in revolt and killed their masters and overseers. If Freitas is correct, then Palmares began in a slave revolt of the late sixteenth century. When they chose to flee to the interior, these runaways were invading unknown lands, reputedly controlled by hostile Indian nations. What they found, however, in the Serra da Barriga was a terrain so difficult that even the Indians avoided it. According to tradition, about forty fugitives made it to the mountains and there built the first thatched-roof huts.² Their daring brought them freedom, and this generation died as free men who never again had to work on a sugar plantation.

The ancestors who began Palmares forged a new society in the mountain fortress. Reconstructing its “golden age” before the 1670s, when internal dissension combined with destructive expeditions led to disaster, is somewhat difficult because historians are dependent on outsider accounts and/or popular traditions. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, aggrieved planters began to complain about the blacks of the Serra da Barriga who were raiding their plantations for women. Not only did they capture black women but also white women and their daughters, *mulatas* (women of mixed African and European ancestry), and Indian women. Some women, however, may have fled voluntarily to escape abusive spouses and masters or, in the case of at least one prostitute, life on the streets of Recife. Since their numbers were small in the early seventeenth century, the men of Palmares also recruited other men to join them, including Portuguese soldiers who were fleeing forced recruitment. Whether plantation slaves were stolen, as in the Luso-Brazilian traditions, or voluntarily opted for freedom is unclear from the sources. There is no doubt, however, that recruiting through either capture or persuasion was a marked feature of the early period in the history

of Palmares. In 1597 a Jesuit priest complained that the "first enemies are the blacks of Guiné [Africa] in revolt, who are in some mountains, from where they come to make assaults and give some work."³

As they recruited their new members, the black, mulatto, Indian, and white inhabitants of Palmares created an economy based on subsistence agriculture, trade, and raiding. The first Palmarinos may have lived by hunting, fishing, and gathering palm products and cultivating the small plots of land they planted with corn and manioc, but as the settlement evolved, so too did the diversity of economic activities needed to sustain thousands of people. The basic communal principle that challenged Portuguese mercantile and capitalist ideals on the coast was that all property belonged to the *mocambo*, with the exception of one's own personal property. As a spy reported, "Everything was [belonged to] of all and nothing was of no one." In other words, as Freitas concludes, "the palmarino blacks had created a communitarian economy of self-subsistence."⁴

Families received the land on the condition that they give any surplus to the community. To obtain access to land, one had to belong to the community of the *mocambo*; later they had to be a part of a particular polyandrous family. A new recruit had to submit to a long period of trial, including raiding and capturing a replacement for himself, after which he would be incorporated into a family and given access to land. Men were the labor force; women were the ones who organized and supervised the work as "chiefs of the family." Each woman might have as many as four or five husbands who labored for her and their household, which was obviously an inversion of patriarchal Luso-Brazilian society on the coast.

The basis of the economy was agriculture. Two weeks before planting began, the families cleared the fields using the techniques of slash-and-burn agriculture, although the burnings must have announced their presence to neighbors and expedition leaders. Working together, they tilled the fields, planted the seeds, and harvested the crops. Because the soil was so fertile, they could plant two crops of corn each year. Their workday comprised six hours from dawn to noon as opposed to the twelve-to eighteen-hour days on coastal plantations. At the end of the harvest, they feasted and danced for a week. Their labor was not devoted to Europe's consumers of sugar but to their families. They harvested food crops—that is, corn, beans, manioc, sugarcane, and sweet potatoes. Any surplus was deposited in a warehouse located in the center of the town for the benefit of the *mocambo*—its chiefs and warriors, its children, the old, and the sick. They also set aside a surplus for emergencies, especially drought and external attacks. Additional foodstuffs were traded to nearby planters for manufactured items that they could not make themselves.

They also exploited tree crops, especially bananas. They planted orchards of fruit-bearing trees such as mangoes, which must have provided them with vitamin-rich fruits and fruit drinks. They also harvested the rich resources of the palm trees. They ate the palm fruit with manioc flour or made it into an oil to be used in lamps or as butter. They even ate the large worms that lived on the trees. With palm leaves they covered their houses and wove mats and baskets. For their clothing they wove cloth from tree bark and used the husk of the palm fruit to make pipes. They undoubtedly enjoyed palm wine as they smoked their pipes.

For animal protein, they hunted and fished and raised chickens and pigs but did not raise cattle, which suggests that pastures were unavailable or that they easily acquired beef by raiding or trading for cattle with nearby ranchers. The chroniclers certainly complained about the blacks of Palmares killing cattle. The quality of their diet was reflected in their fine physical shape. When the captives from Palmares were paraded through the towns, the malnourished poor marveled at their health and strength.

Sometime after settling in the mountains, Palmarinos solved one of the most difficult challenges that faced quilombolas—that is, obtaining iron and weapons. Initially, they raided nearby plantations for iron weapons and tools, but they soon found a source of iron ore, which they mined. Since many Africans had worked iron before their enslavement in Brazil, they undoubtedly applied their knowledge to iron mining and smithing. In the Serra da Barriga, they placed the forge next to their religious "temple" and council house, which suggests an African religious attitude toward the significance of iron. Although they were unable to make firearms, they could meet most of their needs for tools and weapon points. They also acquired firearms and gunpowder in tribute from the whites whom they permitted to live on their lands. Their ceramics included Amerindian pots and jars and Delftware imported from Holland.⁵ They also used hammocks and carved objects of wood.

What they could not make, they then had to acquire by trade or raid. The Palmarinos not only traded their surplus foodstuffs for guns and salt but also for manufactured goods. Since sugar planters tended to focus on monoculture and did not plant enough food for their slaves, the Palmarinos ran a thriving trade in corn and manioc with nearby planters who protected them, since they were dependent on Palmares for food for their slaves. Portuguese complaints about the white protectors and tributaries of Palmares help to document the ways in which it was linked to the local economy. Its residents did not live in isolation or avoid contact and relations with whites.

In this way, the people of Palmares lived by agriculture, fishing, hunting and gathering, trade, and raiding for an entire century. They were

able to exploit the same environment without exhausting their food sources while at the same time increasing their population size. Furthermore, they were able to produce a sufficient surplus to maintain a political and military elite and militia forces that defended their towns from attack. They even had settlers who lived on their lands and paid them tribute. Zumbi was supported from this surplus, and he and his people may have suffered from hunger only in time of war, drought, or crop failures.

The culture and society of Palmares are more difficult to describe. According to Governor Francisco de Brito Freire, they spoke their own new language, which at times appeared to be from Guiné or Angola, or Portuguese, or Tupi, a coastal Indian language. Whites could not understand their language and had to speak to them through interpreters.⁶ How those interpreters had learned the Palmarino language is uncertain, but Zumbi could also speak Portuguese and knew Latin. He would not have needed an interpreter to communicate directly with the Portuguese.

Just as their language was a mixture—apparently a creole language—cultural traits appear to have been drawn from both the Africans and Amerindians. The majority were black men who were increasingly removed from their African traditions as the generations passed, although new runaway Africans tended to reinforce some cultural traditions. Amerindian captive women brought their languages and cultures and undoubtedly transmitted them to their children and grandchildren. The central position of women in Palmares must have tended to reinforce the Amerindian influence. The fabrication of ceramics in Amerindian forms and designs is suggestive of the strength of their culture.

Since women were rare, especially at first, and highly valued, the Palmarinos evolved codes of conduct around polyandrous marriages to avoid constant fighting over women. The polyandrous family was the basic social unit of Palmares, and family relationships were established through the maternal line. The best surviving description of the polyandrous households of Palmares derives from a document of 1677, which gives a summary of a spy's report. He had lived among the Palmarinos for six months.

Each black who arrives at the mocambo [who has] fled from his masters is soon heard by the council of justice, which has to know his intentions because they are greatly distrusting, nor are they trusting solely due to the fact of being [a] black who presents himself; that as soon as they certify the good intentions of the black who comes, they give him [a] wife which he possesses along with other blacks, two, three, four, and five blacks, since [there] being few women they adopt this style to avoid conflicts; that all the husbands of the same wife live with her [in] the same mocambo, all in peace

and harmony, in imitation of a family, . . . that all these husbands are obedient to [the] woman who orders all in life as in work; that to each of these families the chiefs [*maiorais*], in council, give a piece of land to cultivate, and that the woman and her husbands do; . . . that in war they impress all in the moments of greatest need, without exception of the women who on those occasions appear more like *feras* [wild animals] than persons of their [own] sex.⁷

On the coast of Brazil, this lifestyle stood in marked contrast to the patriarchal planter-dominated society in which powerful white men lorded it over large households of women, including a wife, mistresses, and numerous slave concubines. Zumbi's mother may have ordered her household of men and children before losing her newborn to raiders from the coast, or she may have been one of the wives in a chiefly household, since the chiefs were permitted to have more than one woman. Ganga Zumba, Zumbi's predecessor, had three: a mulata and two black women. The children born in the quilombo of polyandrous or polygynous marriages never knew slavery. Zumbi, however, was the exception because he had been born free in Palmares but was then raised in the household of a Catholic priest after he had been stolen away.

The religion practiced in Palmares is uncertain, but it is unlikely to have been that of the *orixás* found in Candomblé, a contemporary Afro-Brazilian religion. Due to the slave trade from Congo-Angola to Brazil after 1580, the majority of Palmarinos were probably Central Africans. According to tradition, the first fugitives to settle Palmares were Angolans.⁸ There was also a minority of slaves imported in that period from what are now the modern countries of Ghana and Benin. Ganga Zumba was an Ardra from the slave coast, and he may have followed practices more similar to Dahomeian Vodun. Zumbi had been raised Catholic by a priest, as had other Palmarinos who kept statues of Jesus Christ, Our Lady of the [Immaculate] Conception, and St. Brás in the "church" in the largest mocambo of Palmares in 1645. There are references to priests and to non-Christian religious specialists at Palmares, and even the name Ganga Zumba suggests *nganga*, a common term for a religious specialist in Central Africa. Did Zumbi continue to practice some, if not all, of his Catholic beliefs, or did he abandon them for the new religion he found in Palmares, which may have been a mixture of Central African, Christian, and Amerindian religious traditions? There is one glimpse in the documents of a young Zumbi continuing to maintain a relationship with the priest who had raised him in his household, risking capture on three separate occasions to bring him gifts. Were Zumbi's furtive visits those of an adopted son to a beloved father, or as a Christian to a respected priest? Or was there a forbidden sexual relationship between the priest and the young Zumbi? Because of his capture at

an early age and his intensive education in Portuguese, Latin, and Church teachings, apparently Zumbi's religious formation was Luso-Brazilian in contrast to the more African and Amerindian quilombolas. On the other hand, he clearly chose a Central African name with religious and chiefly connotations after he was free to do so.⁹

Those who followed the more African religious traditions in Palmares were undoubtedly concerned with protection and security. Shrines with statues, amulets, and charms may have been common. Religious specialists would have been needed to protect the Palmarinos from spiritual harm, but they did not rely solely on spiritual safeguards. They fortified their towns with walls of wood or stone, and in time of war with tall palisades and hidden traps with sharp pointed poles that impaled men and horses. Before the Dutch invasion, the Palmarinos had a great council that met in the council house and elected a chief or a maior, who had many powers but not the absolute ones of a hereditary king or dictator. The most crucial decisions were resolved in a popular assembly. Thus, the early image of the leader of Palmares is of a nonhereditary and elected chief who had to consult an assembly. His subjects were few—perhaps no more than 1,000 in the Serra da Barriga in the 1630s. All this changed, however, with the Dutch invasion, which transformed the colonial Northeast and enabled thousands of slaves to flee to Palmares. Zumbi was born a year after the expulsion of the Dutch in 1654, and he entered a more complex society—that is, a confederation of town-sized mocambos led by the Great Chief, Ganga Zumba, in the 1670s. Under his leadership, Palmares had grown to enormous size. Macaco had 8,000 inhabitants, while Amaro may have had 5,000. Some 20,000 to 30,000 men, women, and children may have lived in the eleven mocambos of Palmares.¹⁰

The personal history of Zumbi of Palmares begins shortly after the expulsion of the Dutch from Pernambuco in 1654. A year later the governor of Pernambuco sent an expedition against Palmares. Confident in having defeated a powerful European enemy, the Portuguese governor commissioned Brás da Rocha Cardoso to lead an expedition of 600 men to eliminate their "internal enemy" who had grown in strength and numbers during the Dutch wars. Although the expedition of 1655 failed to destroy Palmares, the troops took prisoners, including a newborn who was only a few days old. The little boy was given as a present to a Portuguese parish priest, Antônio Melo, who served in the district of Porto Calvo until he returned to Portugal in 1682. The priest baptized the child Francisco and later taught him to read. By the age of ten, the boy knew both Latin and Portuguese. Until age fifteen, Francisco lived in a clerical household as the priest's servant and assisted him in his religious duties, such as saying Mass. Many priests in the colonial period maintained large households that included slave women, and some may have

cared for Francisco and imparted their values and religious beliefs. At the same time, the priest undoubtedly taught him Catholicism. The young Francisco may have absorbed both Afro-Brazilian and Portuguese beliefs and expressed them as an altar boy. The traditions do not make it clear whether the priest treated him kindly as an adopted son or badly as a captive.

Suddenly and inexplicably the teenager fled the life that he had known and took refuge in Palmares in 1670 at the age of fifteen. The reasons are uncertain. Had he continued to maintain contact with the people of Palmares and with his mother's family during the long years of exile as a priest's servant? Or had a particular act of cruelty or racial discrimination led him to flee the slave society of the coast? A more sinister motive is hinted at in a denunciation registered with the Inquisition. The charge against Padre Melo was sodomy. Did the young Francisco flee to escape unwanted homosexual abuse?¹¹ The latter theory seems unlikely because Zumbi later returned at the risk of his own life to give presents to Padre Melo, which suggests that he was fond of his adopted father. Because Padre Melo maintained a relationship with Zumbi until his return to Portugal, his enemies may have falsely denounced him to the Inquisition to ruin his reputation. Nevertheless, by 1685, Zumbi had a wife and children. According to popular traditions from Alagoas, his wife was dona Maria, a white woman who was the daughter of a sugar planter of Porto Calvo and who had been captured by the Palmarinos. When the theatrical dance of Quilombo is performed in Alagoas, she appears as Zumbi's queen, who at the end of the performance is handed over to an influential white man after the destruction of Palmares. Oral traditions suggest that within Palmares she had become a person of stature, who was no longer held against her will. When whites raided quilombos elsewhere in Brazil and discovered captive white women, they returned them to their families. Instead, Zumbi's wife (and his children?) were treated like fugitive slaves. Otherwise the usual sources do not refer to her except in one letter in which the Portuguese offered freedom to Zumbi, his wife, and children if he would make peace.¹²

Except for the brief visits to the priest who raised him, Francisco's future lay with Palmares. Perhaps because of his knowledge of the outside world as well as his literacy skills, he rose rapidly within the mocambo of Osenga, located near Porto Calvo. Two years after his return to Palmares, he was elected maior. Reflecting his reintegration into Palmarino society, he changed his name to Zumbi and his mocambo was renamed Zumbi. At eighteen years of age in 1673, he led a force that defeated an expedition led by Antônio Jácome Bezerra and achieved the rank of *cabo de guerra*. Two to three years later in 1676, he courageously resisted the attack of the expedition of 280 men led by Major Manuel

Lopes, who invaded and burned one of the mocambos that then had 2,000 houses. The Palmarinos suffered heavy losses, and Zumbi was wounded in the leg. After this battle, one chronicler described him as "crippled."¹³ In spite of that setback, it took him only four years more to become the general commander of the Palmarino militia forces as general of arms (*mestre de campo*). Zumbi thus led the militia forces when they confronted the expedition of Fernão Carrilho, which killed so many Palmarinos in 1677.

The former altar boy had quickly earned the trust and respect of the Palmarinos for his leadership abilities, but where had they come from? Padre Melo testified to his intelligence in a letter he wrote about Zumbi, but who had trained him to lead men into battle? The sources are silent. His political skills, however, were honed when he challenged Ganga Zumba, the chief of the mocambo of Macaco and Great Chief of the confederation of mocambos. Although the Portuguese called him *rei* (king), Ganga Zumba had to consult a council composed of the chiefs and cabos de guerra of each mocambo. Zumbi, in the role of chief of his mocambo, must have participated in the deliberations of the council. As a cabo de guerra, he was also subject to the commander-general of the militia. Since Ganga Zumba's powers were not absolute nor based on hereditary rights, he ruled at the wishes of the Council of Chiefs. In order to survive, the Palmarinos required a strong political and military leader able to mobilize the people in defense of Palmares. If he failed or showed weakness, the very existence of Palmares would be threatened.

The threat came in the powerful expedition of Fernão Carrilho, who attacked Palmares in 1677, killing many, wounding Ganga Zumba, capturing Field Commander Ganga Muiça, and taking numerous captives back to slavery on the coast. His people blamed Ganga Zumba for this disaster, accusing him of being drunk when he commanded one of the military forces. In all of the mocambos, except for Macaco, popular assemblies called for Ganga Zumba's removal. When the great council in Macaco took up the question, Zumbi assumed a leadership role and spoke for the opposition. He denounced Ganga Zumba for "military ineptitude" and corruption and used his oratorical skills to wage a "legal" battle to remove him. In spite of his efforts, however, he lost. Ganga Zumba remained as Great Chief of Palmares to the distress of those who feared the consequences of his inept leadership.

The opposition (possibly led by Zumbi) soon began to conspire to remove him by force. Learning of the plot against him, Ganga Zumba struck first by deciding to make peace with the governor of Pernambuco. He sent to Recife a delegation that included two of his sons to ask for "peace and friendship." In the words of an anonymous chronicler,

The appearance of those barbarians caused amazement, because they came naked, and with their natural parts alone covered. Some wore their beards in braids, others wore false beards and mustaches, and others were shaved, and nothing more. All were husky and powerful, armed with bows and arrows, and carrying only one firearm. One of the king's sons rode a horse because he still bore an open bullet wound that he had received during the fighting.¹⁴

The peace accords negotiated in 1678 included the provisions that those who made peace would receive lands at Cucaú and be able to trade openly with their neighbors, and that all blacks born in Palmares were free vassals of the king of Portugal. But the price for peace and the right to occupy Cucaú was Ganga Zumba's agreement "to return all the runaways who had come from our populated places."¹⁵ Since native-born Palmarinos had ties of friendship and family with the former slaves who had joined them, they feared that their family members and friends would be forced back into slavery on the coast. The peace accords thus cost Ganga Zumba majority support. Only 300 to 400 persons agreed to follow him to Cucaú, where he established a separate community under Portuguese "protection."

With Ganga Zumba no longer resident in Macaco, Zumbi seized the initiative. Using the militia forces of his mocambo, he moved against the mocambos that had remained loyal to Ganga Zumba. Some he took by force of arms, others by the power of persuasion. After consolidating his power over the other mocambos, he unified all adult men into a great army that then conquered Macaco, an easy victory because Ganga Zumba and his followers had retreated to Cucaú. With Ganga Zumba isolated and defeated, the Great Council then elected Zumbi as the head of the confederation of mocambos. What Zumbi had achieved was a palace coup in which he had seized upon popular discontent to organize militia forces that had unseated an unpopular ruler. His daring victory was then legitimized by the Great Council.

As Zumbi consolidated his power in Macaco and prepared for future wars, Ganga Zumba's people faced incursions on their land by white planters seeking their fugitive slaves. Supporters of Zumbi in Cucaú also plotted to seize weapons and foodstuffs to take to the defense of Palmares; but when they were discovered, they struck first, poisoning Ganga Zumba and killing his principal advisers. The Portuguese then took advantage of the conflict to repress Zumbi's supporters in Cucaú and executed four of the principal conspirators and enslaved 200 others. Ganga Zumba's attempt to live at peace in Cucaú in the midst of a slave society had divided the people of Palmares and ended tragically with his death in 1680.

Perhaps Zumbi and the Palmarinos concluded that to make peace was to be betrayed and enslaved. Why they henceforth fought the Portuguese and the planters so tenaciously may have been due to the terrible lessons learned at Cucaú: the Portuguese were not to be trusted, and to live in peace with them would only lead to enslavement. To preserve their freedom, they had to resist and fight for their people and their own way of life. What is clear from the documentation is that a newly unified and revived Palmares under the leadership of Zumbi took the offensive. Troops of forty to fifty men attacked plantations and towns, carrying off slaves, foodstuffs, and weapons. One wonders if they particularly raided plantations where their former comrades had been reenslaved. Not even the great sugar mill owners were safe from attack as they traveled from the coast to their plantations. For a period of thirteen years (1680–1693), Luso-Brazilian expeditions were ineffectual in stopping Palmarino attacks. Troops raised by forced recruitment in Bahia and Pernambuco were unable (or unwilling?) to defeat the Palmarinos. Thus, Zumbi and his people lived in freedom because they were able to defeat militarily all the small expeditions sent against them.¹⁶ In 1685 the king of Portugal tried to make peace with Zumbi and offered to pardon him if he would move to an *estancia* (ranch) with his wife, children, and captains, where they would receive royal protection from enslavement. Was Zumbi tempted to abandon his people? We can only judge from his behavior, because he continued to fight and did not make peace.¹⁷

That same year of 1685, Zumbi was helped by a great epidemic of yellow fever that struck coastal Brazil for the first time. The severity of its impact on Europeans meant that the colonial forces were unable to organize large expeditions. The year 1690, however, marked a shift in government policy from the support of small, poorly trained, and badly organized forces to the recruitment and provisioning of an enormous expedition designed to conquer Palmares and enslave its people. To attract men, the government promised the lands of Palmares to the victors.

First, the government ordered convoys of foodstuffs sent to Porto Calvo, the town where Zumbi had been raised. From there, they constructed a road to move oxcarts of supplies to the Serra da Barriga. A month later 3,000 unruly recruits arrived, including prisoners from the jails of Recife, whites, Indians, *mamelucos* (mestizos), and even blacks organized in Henriques regiments. By the time that they had gathered all of the men together, they had raised an army of 9,000, the largest ever put together in the colonial period. Included in this great army were the men from São Paulo (Paulistas), who were led by Domingos Jorge Velho. Thus, Zumbi and the Palmarinos were to face an army larger than the

Dutch had sent to capture Pernambuco.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the documents do not reveal the size of Zumbi's army.

The final assault on Palmares began with an attack of 1,000 men led by Domingos Jorge Velho, but Zumbi and his men easily repulsed them. The governor of Pernambuco then sent Bernardo Vieira de Melo to reinforce them. Once again, Zumbi and his troops defeated them. Palmares was then protected by hidden shafts that killed men who fell into them as well as by a great palisade that encircled the defenders of Macaco. On January 5, 1694, as Zumbi went to inspect the fortifications of Macaco, he saw the approaching artillery of the huge expedition. According to tradition, he questioned the sentry who had failed to warn the people of the army's approach: "And you let the whites encircle us? Tomorrow we will be invaded, and dead, and our wives, and children [will be] captives." He then ordered the negligent sentry executed and convened his war council.¹⁹

Meanwhile, the great army was attempting to surround Macaco, and cut off all routes of escape. While the army closed in, the people of Macaco slipped out in the early morning at about 2:00 A.M. All but the rear guard led by Zumbi had left the town when a sentry spied the fleeing Palmarinos and opened fire. Zumbi and about 500 men then fought desperately at the edge a steep precipice in the black of night. In the confusion, many tumbled over the side while the fortunate ones escaped to the forest, but so many had been wounded that their flowing blood "served as [a] guide to our troops." The survivors were then hunted down by the troops of Vieira de Melo, who reported killing 200 men, only saving the lives of the women.²⁰

At dawn the artillery batteries broke the walls of Macaco and the troops sacked the town, killing any of the defenders who remained. According to Frei Loreto de Couto, the troops advanced on Macaco "cutting and killing all they met" until there was no place to put all the bodies. Only 510 captives survived to be taken and divided as slaves among the victors in Porto Calvo. Macaco itself was looted and burned. After Macaco's destruction, the victorious army fell on the weaker mocambos and continued to kill the men and capture the women and children. Few of them lived, however, because the mothers killed their children so they would not be enslaved and afterwards starved themselves to death. Eighty of the survivors were sold as slaves to Rio de Janeiro.²¹

The victorious troops returned to the coast with their captives and left the Paulista Domingos Jorge Velho to "clean up." Rather than pursue the fugitives from Palmares, he seems to have furthered his own interests by "acquiring" cattle from nearby ranches and contrabanding captive blacks for sale in Bahia. Meanwhile, Zumbi could not be found. Somehow he had escaped the slaughter at Macaco with perhaps 200 of

his people. At this time, he remained hidden in an effort to regroup his small band of men.

Once the governor learned that Zumbi had escaped, he put a price on his head. However, Zumbi continued to raid for arms and ammunition. He was seen at the town of Penedo and recognized by the scars from his wounds. Nonetheless, he and his men remained in the area of Penedo. One of his principal lieutenants was a mulatto named Antônio Soares of Recife, who was captured on one of the raids. A Paulista and his men tortured him to reveal Zumbi's hiding place. Although Soares initially refused to inform on Zumbi, he yielded after receiving the promise of his life and his freedom and led the Paulistas to the forests, possibly in the Serra Dois Irmãos. At dawn, Soares left the forest and called out, "Zumbi! Zumbi! Zumbi!" When Zumbi appeared, Soares walked up to him like Judas going up to Christ. Rather than kiss him, however, he plunged a dagger into his stomach.²²

Although severely wounded, Zumbi fought valiantly, as did his companions who came to his aid. Only one of them survived. Zumbi died in the fighting on November 20, 1695. The Paulista and his men delivered his "small and thin body" to the officials of the City Council of Porto Calvo. An examination revealed fifteen gunshot wounds and innumerable blows from other weapons; after his death he had been castrated and mutilated. The last degradation by his enemies occurred in a public ceremony in Porto Calvo, where his head was cut off and taken to Recife, where the governor had it displayed on a pole in a public place. His objective was to destroy the belief that Zumbi was immortal. The mulatto Soares received his reward of a pardon, ratified by the Overseas Council in 1696, and lived to an advanced age in Recife.²³

Zumbi's betrayal and death, however, did not eliminate his influence or appeal to the slaves of Brazil and their descendants. Some of his followers who escaped the destruction of Palmares continued to live freely in quilombos, and the memory of Zumbi and Palmares led slaves to flee to quilombos as long as the institution existed in Brazil. Unlike Palmares, however, many remained hidden and unconquered, and their descendants lived in freedom until discovered in the twentieth century. They now claim rights to lands given to them by the Constitution of 1988.

In the cities of contemporary Brazil, Afro-Brazilians celebrate Zumbi's life and honor his memory each year on November 20. He has become the epic hero of Afro-Brazilians who celebrate his courage, leadership qualities, and heroic resistance. On the other hand, many in Brazil ignore him. One senses a reluctance to make him a national hero because he and the Palmarinos offered a direct challenge to Luso-Brazilian life and culture as well as to the colonial order. A society in which women organized the households, the people worked on a communal basis, and

elected black leaders governed a multiracial society that included tributary whites was the opposite of the colonial society on the coast. Zumbi was a powerful black leader who had defeated numerous Luso-Brazilian expeditions, and Luso-Brazilian authorities who had imposed a patriarchal, racially stratified, and inequitable colonial order on the coast could not tolerate such a man. Perhaps the former altar boy fought so valiantly for his people because he knew both worlds—the world of slavery and racial discrimination in which he had been raised, and the world of freedom and autonomy to which he escaped at the age of fifteen.

NOTES

1. Décio Freitas, *Zumbi dos Palmares* (Luanda: Ministério da Cultura, 1996), 7. My thanks to Flávio dos Santos Gomes for this reference.
2. *Ibid.*, 7–8.
3. Ivan Alves Filho, *Memorial dos Palmares* (Rio de Janeiro: Xenon Editora, 1988), 5.
4. Freitas, *Zumbi*, 10.
5. The evidence for Amerindian and European pottery in Palmares is from the archaeological investigations reported by Pedro Paulo de Abreu Funari, "A arqueologia de Palmares," in *Liberdade por um fio: História dos quilombos no Brasil*, ed. João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996), 26–51. This chapter also includes maps and the only known picture of Palmares from 1647 (p. 33).
6. Freitas, *Zumbi*, 12.
7. *Ibid.*, 11–12.
8. For Angolans as fugitives, see Ernesto Ennes, *As Guerras nos Palmares* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1938), 24.
9. Freitas, *Zumbi*, 21.
10. *Ibid.*, 15–16. Freitas believes that the total population of the mocambos did not exceed 20,000.
11. My thanks to Matthias Röhrig Assunção in a letter of October 13, 1999, for calling my attention to the *Veja* article of May 24, 1995, on the theory that Zumbi was a homosexual. The historian Luiz Mott located the denunciation of Padre Melo to the Inquisition; but Freitas, while considering the hypothesis "plausible," has not found any allusion to a sexual relationship in the correspondence of Padre Melo.
12. On Zumbi's wife, see "Quilombo" [of Alagoas] in *Dicionário do Folclore Brasileiro*, ed. Luis da Camara Cascudo, 5th ed. (Belo Horizonte: Editora Itatiaia, 1984). A brief and incomplete version in English is "White Man Won't Come Here": A Twentieth-Century Folk Memory of Palmares," in *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, ed. Robert E. Conrad (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 377–79. The document that refers to the peace offer to Zumbi, his wife, and children is reprinted in Décio Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos*, 3d ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal, 1981), 144.

13. Edison Carneiro, *O Quilombo dos Palmares*, 4th ed. (São Paulo: Editora Nacional, 1988; Brasileira, vol. 302), 40.
14. "The Great Seventeenth-Century *Quilombo* of Palmares: A Chronicle of War and Peace," in Conrad, *Children of God's Fire*, 375.
15. An English summary of the peace treaty and its provisions is in *ibid.*
16. Carneiro, *Quilombo dos Palmares*, 43–44. He lists at least thirteen expeditions between 1672 and 1694 that Zumbi would have fought against.
17. For the peace offer of the king of Portugal in 1685, see Freitas, *Palmares*, 143–44.
18. Freitas, *Zumbi*, 24.
19. Zumbi's words are recorded in document 54, "Requerimento . . . de todos os officiaes e Soldados do terço de Infantaria São Paulista de que hê M.e de Campo Domingos George [sic] Velho," in Ennes, *Guerras nos Palmares*, 323.
20. Freitas, *Zumbi*, 25.
21. *Ibid.*; Carneiro, *Quilombo dos Palmares*, 163.
22. Freitas, *Zumbi*, 26–27.
23. *Ibid.*, 27.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Four brief biographies of Zumbi are by: Décio Freitas, *Zumbi dos Palmares* (Luanda: Ministério da Cultura, 1996), which is the best; Severino Vicente da Silva, *Zumbi dos Palmares* (São Paulo: Edições Paulinas, 1990); Joel Rufino dos Santos, *Zumbi* (São Paulo: Ed. Moderna, 1985); and Leda Maria de Albuquerque, *Zumbi dos Palmares*, 2d ed. (São Paulo: IBRASA; Brasília: Instituto Nacional do Livro, 1978).

General histories of Palmares, some with published documents, include Jayme de Altavilla, *O Quilombo dos Palmares* (São Paulo: Comp. Melhoramentos, 1931); Ivan Alves Filho, *Memorial dos Palmares* (Rio de Janeiro: Xenon Editora, 1988); Edison Carneiro, *O Quilombo dos Palmares*, 4th ed. (São Paulo: Editora Nacional, 1988; Brasileira, v. 302); Ernesto Ennes, *As Guerras nos Palmares* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1938); Décio Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos*, 3d ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal, 1981); and Mário Martins de Freitas, *Reino Negro de Palmares*, 2d ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército, 1988). Additional printed documents on Palmares are in Robert Edgar Conrad, ed., *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); and Leonardo Dantas Silva, ed., *Alguns Documentos para a História da Escravidão* (Recife: Editora Massangana, 1988).

On *quilombos* in Brazil see João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, eds., *Liberdade por um fio: História dos quilombos no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996); Richard Price, ed., *Maroon Societies* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1973); and Stuart B. Schwartz, "Mocambos, Quilombos e Palmares: A Resistência Escrava no Brasil Colonial," *Estudos Econômicos* 17 (1987): 61–88.

Diego de Ocaña

Holy Wanderer

KENNETH M.

Spreading Christianity was central to the Spanish colonial enterprise in the New World, and Roman Catholic clergy founded convents and churches as they sought both to convert the Amerindian population and to police the faith among all Christians. Evangelizing took place not only in major cities such as Lima or Mexico City but also in smaller provincial centers such as Saña, on the north coast of Peru. In the sixteenth century, the rural economy of northern Peru had revolved around the city of Trujillo, yielding bountiful harvests of wheat, corn, beans, rye, grapes, olives, and fruits. Trujillo remained the home of the region's most prominent European families, and it was also the seat of local government, a bishopric, and several important religious houses. By contrast, Saña (founded in 1566) remained a smaller place, nestled among the forbidding sand dunes of the coastal desert, with only a parish church and three convents. Nevertheless, in the seventeenth century Saña experienced greater economic prosperity with the introduction of sugarcane cultivation, which later would become the foundation of the local economy and make it the preeminent city in the region. When the Jeronymite friar Diego de Ocaña visited the area in 1599, however, Saña was still a small provincial city with an ethnically diverse population in need of spiritual guidance and supervision.

The familiar festivals, saints' days, and devotional objects associated with Catholic devotion provided stability and structure to Spanish society in Iberia and the New World, but the crown and clerical authorities believed that they could also pose serious dangers if the laity did not adhere to orthodoxy. The Inquisition policed the actions of all but the native Andean population, but by 1610 the Archbishopric of Lima clerical and lay officials would initiate visitations to the Amerindian parishes to root out "extirpate" not only lingering pre-Christian religious practices but also what were viewed as errant forms of Christianity. Apart from such direct efforts to maintain the faith, Churchmen also monitored the veneration of holy images such as Our Lady of Guadalupe from Spain or New World devotions such as the Virgin of Copacabana, the original image of which was enshrined in 1583 on the eastern shores of Lake Titicaca in what is today Bolivia. These powerful expressions of faith could win new people to Catholicism in the New World, but officials of the Church hierarchy