

**Vagabond States:
Boundaries and Belonging in Portuguese Angola, c. 1880-1910**

by

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Glossary

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| ABCFM | American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the missionary society of American and Canadian Congregationalists, which established a strong presence in the central highlands from 1881 until the 1960s, when Portuguese authorities began to force them out on suspicion of aiding nationalist movements. |
| <i>Assimilado</i> | Literally “assimilated.” A category of Africans in the Portuguese colonies who had learned to speak Portuguese and practiced Catholicism. Under the New State (after 1923) it would become an official category of citizenship for Africans under Portuguese rule. |
| <i>Capitão-Mór</i> | Captain Major. Colonial military authorities stationed throughout Angola at forts. Angola was divided into captaincies, and each was headed by a <i>capitão-mór</i> . |
| <i>Degredado</i> | Exiled convict sent from the metropole to Angola. |
| <i>Empacaceiro</i> | African mercenaries employed by Portuguese authorities as early as the 17 th century to protect caravans, patrol border regions, transport slaves, carry written correspondence, and put down rebellions. |
| <i>Funante</i> | A type of itinerant trader operating in the interior of the Angolan territory, could be applied both white and black traders who conducted business on behalf of more powerful interests or trading houses at the coast. |
| <i>Gentio</i> | “Gentiles,” the Portuguese word used to refer to “unassimilated” Africans living under the authority of local rulers. |
| <i>Ladino</i> | Usually associated with Latin America, this term referred to slaves that were “seasoned,” meaning they spoke at least some Spanish (or Portuguese) and were relatively familiar with European customs. It sometimes appears in the Angolan documents to refer to Africans who were close to or familiar with European customs. |
| <i>Macota</i> | An Umbundu advisor to the paramount chief or king (<i>soba</i>). |
| <i>Mestiço/Mulato</i> | A person of mixed African and European descent. |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Morador</i> | Literally “one who lives [in a place].” This term generally referred to a “civilized” person who spoke Portuguese and engaged in trade with Europeans. Portuguese policy required such people to live throughout the Angolan territory, mainly to provide eyes and ears on the ground and share intelligence with colonial officials. |
| <i>Negros calçados</i> | Shod blacks; a term used to refer to black men involved in trade who often adopted Western dress and especially shoes. This term shows the degree to which sartorial practices indexed social status in relation to colonial power. |
| <i>Ombala (embala)</i> | The royal court, residence, and seat of government of Ovimbundu rulers |
| <i>Ovimbundu</i> | The collective, emic term for Umbundu-speakers in the central highlands region. |
| <i>Pombeiro</i> | Itinerant African trader, usually an agent of a coastal trading firm, displaying some trappings of European culture; these traders have a history of involvement in the slave trade. |
| <i>Soba (sova, olosoma)</i> | Portuguese corruption of Kimbundu and Umbundu words designating important rulers (kings or paramount chiefs) who presided over large areas of subordinate populations |
| <i>Sekulu</i> | Village-level leaders, subordinate to <i>sobas</i> |
| <i>Quimbundo</i> | A generic term for unassimilated Africans, like <i>gentio</i> , often applied by Portuguese-speakers to groups like the Ovimbundu |

Abstract

At the end of the nineteenth century, Angola was ostensibly “Portuguese.” But colonial settlement and bureaucracy in the south central African territory were limited to the Atlantic ports of Luanda and Benguela and a few small military outposts in the hinterland. The transatlantic slave trade had brought an influx of novel commodities and people to Angola’s shores since the end of the fifteenth century, gradually transforming the modes through which people defined identities and loyalties. Against the notion that a “slaving frontier” moved steadily inland and left relative stability in its wake, this dissertation shows how a diverse patchwork of political structures and authorities persisted into the twentieth century, confounding metropolitan Portuguese agents. Following Vellut’s articulation of a “lusoafrican frontier, some historians have grouped the motley mix of exiles from Portugal who ran off into the bush, *mestiços* born of their local liaisons, and black Angolans adopting Portuguese language, dress, and religion as “Luso-Africans.” While this classification performed useful work in previous histories of Angola, I argue that we should only use it carefully and critically, giving preference to emic categories to broaden the descriptive range. Locally forged categories of people—intermediary traders and scribes such as Ambaquistas and Mambari—performed and disseminated colonial authority from an early date by building trade networks deep into the continent. Their social and racial fluidity enabled them to navigate political and commercial networks with ease and diplomacy, bridging worlds. Luso-Africans and colonial agents had to contend with existing idioms of power recognized by people whom the state classified as *gentio* (unassimilated “gentiles”) well into the twentieth century. These *gentio* frequently rejected

colonial influence through violent uprisings such as the Mbailundu Revolt of 1902—one of the largest in Angolan history and an important conflict that has received relatively scant attention from researchers. Political elites from the Mbailundu Kingdom in Angola’s mostly Umbundu-speaking central highlands targeted Luso-African traders and Portuguese colonial agents, suggesting they were attempting to draw stricter boundaries between subjects of Mbailundu and all others who did not belong in their territory. Contributing to scholarly debates on Portuguese colonial power as “weak” or “subaltern,” this dissertation shows how traders of indigenous and mixed descent circulated European objects and affects, spreading colonial aesthetics and logics. Despite the dearth of Portuguese institutions such as schools, courts, or missions throughout most of the vast territory of Angola, these new players created their own niche. When the Mbailundu Revolt broke out in 1902, local elites defending “traditional” authority targeted intermediaries *and* Europeans as threatening outsiders who would no longer be tolerated. Portuguese authorities condemned Luso-African traders as instigators who stoked moral outrage. The state also accused Anglophone Protestant missionaries as inciters of revolt, resenting their superior wealth and the rapport they enjoyed with the Revolt’s leaders and with the *gentio*. Through microhistorical analysis of conflicts, oral histories and ethnographic observation, this work probes the nature of anxieties and misunderstandings that characterized this violent colonial situation, and shows how this violence continues to echo in twenty-first century Angola.

Introduction

Vagabond States: Boundaries and Belonging in Portuguese Angola, c. 1880-1910

explores the political and social landscape of the central highland region of Angola, a southwestern African territory that Portugal was attempting to bring under colonial control by violent force in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This dissertation focuses on the microdynamics of social existence clustered around the 1902 Mbailundu Revolt, in which subjects of the Umbundu-speaking kingdom of Mbailundu targeted European, *mestiço* (mixed race), and black traders. Portuguese forces finally crushed the Revolt and killed its leader Mutu-ya-Kavela in battle after six months of conflict. Mbailundu's defeat marked a definitive shift in the balance of power between existing political entities and the emergent Portuguese colonial apparatus. An in-depth exploration of incidents and conditions in the central highlands of Angola from about 1880-1910 reveals the degree to which shifting identity categories, conflicts over resources and trade goods, and remarkable class mobility defined the social context. In these violent and chaotic years, people sought power, prosperity, and protection in this hostile environment through a variety of affective strategies.

Boundary making became an increasingly crucial tactic for any group seeking to gain or retain power. The fluidity of social and racial categories that had obtained in the Angolan hinterland during the transatlantic slave trade became a threat. Agents of the colonial administration needed stricter boundaries in order to more efficiently claim control. *Sobas* (kings) from trade kingdoms like Mbailundu strove to separate their subjects from the predations

of independent traders who lingered uncomfortably at the margins of their influence. Colonial agents felt increased pressure after the 1885 Berlin Conference, which legalized Portuguese sovereignty in Angola and mandated “effective occupation” by Portuguese forces as a condition of maintaining that sovereignty. Social Darwinist theories of white racial superiority seeped in slowly but surely, emboldening agents and traders from the Iberian Peninsula to make stronger claims to authority over people already living in Angola.¹

Agents loyal to the Portuguese Governor-General of Angola and the King of Portugal sought to bring residents of the territory within the sphere of colonial logics and institutions and often feared the ambiguous role of people in between—the “Luso-Africans” or so-called “Creoles” studied by historians of Angola such as Jean-Luc Vellut, Joseph Miller, Beatrix Heintze, and Jill Dias.² Using exceptionally close readings of texts, drawings, and photographs, I focus on the diverse ways in which this group and others symbolized and enacted social status, defined inclusion and exclusion, and performed power. People could only be called “European” or “native” in comparison to someone or something else. Categories shifted and identities morphed depending on where people traveled and whom they interacted with.

Precision of meaning is important to the framing this dissertation; it is also one of the greatest challenges. In a recent work, eminent historian David Birmingham uses the term

¹ Throughout this dissertation, I refer to “Angola” meaning the territory in southwestern Africa that was claimed by Portugal after the Berlin Conference in 1885. While the borders of this territory were still being disputed at the turn of the 20th century between Portugal on the one hand and Britain, Belgium, and Germany on the other, this research is primarily concerned with the central highland region of modern-day Angola, taking the area around Mbailundu and the post-independence city of Huambo.

² Beatrix Heintze, ‘Hidden Transfers: Luso-Africans as European Explorers’ Experts in Nineteenth-Century West-Central Africa,’ IN Paul Landau, *The Power of Doubt: Essays in Honor of David Henige*, (Madison, Parallel Press, 2011); Joseph Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730-1830*, (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Jean-Luc Vellut, “Notes sur le Lunda et la frontière luso-africaine (1700-1900).” *Etudes d'histoire africaine* 3 (1972); Jill Dias, “Estereótipos e Realidades Sociais: Quem Eram os ‘Ambaquistas?’” *Actas do II Seminário Internacional sobre a História de Angola: construindo o passado angolano, as fontes e a sua interpretação* (Luanda, 1997), pp. 500-623.

“creole” cautiously, “with apologies to all those who have tried to find alternatives.”³ To his acknowledgement that the word has meant radically different things in a number of Atlantic and colonial contexts, I would add that the Portuguese “*crioulo*” (creole) rarely appears in colonial documents from the 1880s-1900s, and that a variety of other terms—trade-related or place-based categories such as *Mambari*, *Ambaquista*, *pombeiro*, and *funante*—are much more common. Furthermore, people’s skin color often goes unremarked in late 19th century documents describing officials’ interactions with traders, suggesting that a framework based on “race” (as it is broadly conceived in the 21st century western world) was not the dominant framework for colonial social classifications during this late period of conquest in Angola.

In the few cases where I use the term “Luso-African,” I follow Joseph Miller and Beatrix Heintze. Heintze prefers Luso-African to “creole,” because it “preserves much more of the temporary, processual character of cultural appropriation, productive of a ‘transitional stage’ and not a fixed, ethnic identity.”⁴ But while “Luso-African” has been a useful concept for thinking about in-between identities in Angola, the poverty of the term emerges in light of the growing literature on colonial Angola, which reveals that myriad social categories and groups coexisted and bled into each other. I argue instead for a more spatially conceived metaphor of social transformation, using the fluctuating frontiers that Birmingham describes as a lens to focus on how movement and migration shaped the cultural landscape in Angola both during and after the height of the Atlantic slave trade.

The work’s title, “Vagabond states,” points to both the competing political formations that emerged in this context, as well as the states in which many people found themselves—wandering the countryside, fleeing enslavement, carrying goods, seeking fortunes, or marching

³ David Birmingham. *A Short History of Modern Angola*. London: C. Hurst & Co, 2015, p. ix.

⁴ Heintze, ‘Hidden Transfers,’ 23. See also: Miller, *Way of Death*.

into battle. “Vagabond” also suggests a refusal or an inability to work. While colonial agents often leveled accusations of laziness at black Angolans, the concept I want to develop here turns this criticism back on the Portuguese administration itself. While those in positions of power in Lisbon and Luanda most definitely thought of themselves as acting on behalf of a legitimate state, the fact is that that state was largely illusory—it refused to work in any discernible way to provide for or protect the people residing within its shifting borders. The dissertation shows many examples of the fluidity of social and racial categories, which could mutate in the eyes of different beholders. This mobility complicates contemporary efforts to understand the implications of social categorization. I will show why it is important to follow the traces of words, terms, objects, and practices that carry residues of colonial power and influence.

The “*gentio*”

In addition to dealing with unruly whites and *mestiços*, colonial administrators were also wrestling with a large “unassimilated” population of *gentio* or “gentiles” that had accrued centuries of terror and had developed tactics to avoid enslavement. With its focus on the Mbailundu Revolt of 1902, this work is primarily concerned with Umbundu-speaking people from Angola’s central highlands, who fall under the collective designation Ovimbundu. “Ocimbundu” refers to an individual and “Umbundu” is an adjective.⁵ At the end of the nineteenth century, Umbundu-speakers more likely identified with the polity or kingdom to which they belonged.⁶ Mbailundu and Viye, for example, had a long history of rivalry and competition, which came to an end in 1890 when Portuguese troops overthrew Viye’s *soba*

⁵ Because of the large number of names and categories this work contains, I have opted to use “Ovimbundu” as an adjective to reduce confusion.

⁶ Linda Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola, 1840s to the Present* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000): 2.

Ndunduma with help from Mbailundu *Soba* Ekuikui II, leaving Mbailundu as the most prosperous and powerful kingdom.

The next few chapters will unpack some of the many emic terms to describe “race,” “ethnicity,” or social status in use in late 19th century Angola; for now it will suffice to say that colonial agents grouped most black residents of Angola who did not speak Portuguese or wear western clothing and lived under the authority of “traditional” rulers (*sobas*) in this “*gentio*” category. But many vassal *sobas* spoke at least some Portuguese, used Catholic names, and wore whatever combination of local and foreign fashions they could get their hands on. Attention to the remarkable fluidity of social identities via the analysis of emic names and categories is one of the major contributions of this work.

For instance, officials received a warning in March 1901 about a possible revolt brewing in Huambo and Quiaca (two smaller Ovimbundu kingdoms near Mbailundu). The person who shared this intelligence confidentially with the Captain Major of Bailundo, Francisco Xavier de Paiva, was a *sekulu* named Joaquim Sacco-Major. This *sekulu* “[spoke] Portuguese normally,” knew how to read and could write a bit, and had children being educated in the Bailundo Catholic mission.⁷ He prefaced his news to Captain Paiva about the insubordination of the two kingdoms by telling the Captain Major how fond he was of whites. Later the *sekulu* pleaded for protection from Paiva, saying the rebellious *sobas* would cut off his head if they knew he had warned a Portuguese official.⁸

Colonial agents had maintained shaky relationships of vassalage with locally established polities for at least two centuries, and the parties to vassalage treaties had different views of the

⁷ Arquivo Historico Militar, Lisboa. AHM 2/2/7/3. Captain Major Francisco Xavier de Paiva to Secretary of the Governor of Benguela District, 25 March 1901, p. 188.

⁸ AHM 2/2/7/3. Captain Major Francisco Xavier de Paiva to Secretary of the Governor of Benguela District, 25 March 1901, p. 188b.

obligations and benefits afforded by this relationship. “Luso-Africans,” whether they hailed from well-established Catholic families descended from distant Portuguese or Brazilian ancestors or were self-fashioned *nouveaux-riches*, meddled constantly in the affairs of both colonial and African political elites. Missionaries from the United States and Western Europe created mission stations where they harbored and educated runaway slaves and other vulnerable people, vexing the Portuguese agents who found their influence ended at gates of the mission stations. People sought favors across all kinds of social boundaries, depending on each other for food, goods, information, and companionship. Fleeing enslavement, forced labor, taxation, and incarceration, diverse groups of people established fortified communities throughout the Angolan hinterland.⁹ Rebel communities like those that formed at Kissama¹⁰ (south of Luanda) and Bimbe (in the mountains north of Mbailundu, discussed below) terrorized passing trade caravans and remained impenetrable to colonial forces into the twentieth century.

Vagabond States

These were what I call “vagabond states”—mobile or semi-sedentary population groupings within a vast territory that a small cadre of Portuguese elites in Lisbon and in Angola’s capital Luanda badly wanted to contain, tame, and absorb into a robust colonial system worthy of the ones boasted by European allies such as Great Britain. But that system was still largely imaginary in 1902. Indeed, even the colonial state wandered destitute across the hinterland like a vagabond; its representatives were often ill prepared and poorly provisioned, struggling to navigate the bewildering social and economic networks they encountered far from coastal settlements. Colonial hegemony did not penetrate the countryside uniformly, nor did colonial

⁹ Roquinaldo Ferreira, “Slave flights and runaway communities in Angola (17th-19th centuries).” *Anos 90*, Porto Alegre, v. 21, n. 40, (dez. 2014), 65-90.

¹⁰ Jessica Krug, *“They Glorify in a Certain Independence”: The Politics of Identity in Kisama, Angola, and Its Diasporas in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, (PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin Madison, 2012).

authority always have currency in places that were nominally under Portuguese control. Mbailundu and its counterparts cum rivals in Viye, Wambu and over a dozen smaller highland kingdoms maintained considerable control over the interior of Angola and the goods and people that passed back and forth through their territories. In the central highlands, they took advantage of the dramatic natural features—situating *ombalas* (royal courts and residences of *sobas*) within the natural caves and rock formations.¹¹



Illustration 1:
*Rock formation at Candumbo, near Huambo*¹²

Bimbe

Runaway slaves and fugitive convicts who had no interest in returning to their former states of bondage created their own communities, like the one in the fortified hills of Bimbe

¹¹ These well-defended communities had impressive loose stonewalls similar to those found throughout Zimbabwe. Predictably, Portuguese “archaeologists” were as late as the 1963 insisting that the stone ruins found throughout the central highlands could be traced to ancient forgotten migrations of Mediterranean peoples. Douglas Wheeler and René Pélissier, *Angola* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 25.

¹² *Candumbo stones, photo by author, 2013.*

which was famous for harboring fugitives and resisting state control. Participants in the 1902 Mbailundu Revolt fled north out of Mbailundu into the mountainous region of Bimbe to escape Portuguese retaliation. In a fortified community in the rugged mountains, this community resisted conquest for two years beyond the Mbailundu Revolt. The rebel leader Samakaka is said to have evaded Portuguese authorities by hiding there until 1904. The group survived by attacking and looting passing caravans, irritating Portuguese authorities and the traders whose goods they robbed. Historian Fola Soremekun describes Bimbe as a “secret haven for the disgruntled.”¹³ A Portuguese nationalist historian wrote that after the 1902 uprising, “a few indigenous chiefs, who had managed to escape prison or death, *not considering themselves vanquished*, [...] in a spirit of vengeance and retaliation, began to prepare a new insurrection.”¹⁴ While this new insurrection was never realized, it is clear that the spirit of resistance continued even after Bimbe was ostensibly raided and “pacified” by Portuguese forces in 1904.

As late as 1908, an administrator from Bailundo wrote the Governor of Benguela about the problem of unlicensed traders in the region around Bimbe, Quipeio, and Quiaca. He complained that these illegitimate traders established “disloyal competition” with traders who fulfilled their “civic duties” by acquiring the proper licenses, which of course involved payment to coastal bureaucrats.¹⁵ Colonial authorities sent a scribe from Bailundo to fine these traders in 1908, who reported: “in that region there are deserters from the army, runaway slaves, Europeans and indigenous people with no means of making a living, employing themselves with expedients and dark business [*negócios escuros*].”¹⁶ It is noteworthy that his description includes people from all walks of life, all of whom favored the Bimbe region because its isolated nature and

¹³ Fola Soremekun, “The Bailundu Revolt, 1902,” *African Social Research* 16, (1973), 468.

¹⁴ Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP) H. G. 37943P. Belo de Almeida, *Operações Militares de 1904 na Região do Bimbe (Bailundo)*, (Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca Agência Geral das Colónias, 1944): 13, emphasis added.

¹⁵ AHN, Luanda. Caixa 877. 5 junho 1908, Administração do Concelho do Bailundo.

¹⁶ AHN, Luanda. Caixa 877. 5 junho 1908, Administração do Concelho do Bailundo.

rugged terrain allowed them to avoid surveillance, capture, or taxation by colonial authorities. From the Bailundo administrator's perspective, this state of affairs harmed the prestige of Europeans, demoralized the *gentio* in the surrounding area, and threatened public safety and peace (not least by disrupting trade caravans). He recommended that the government in Benguela send a patrol of ten soldiers to protect *gentio* from the "extortions of these individuals" and to clear the area of "individuals, white or black, who do not have a known way of making a living," removing the many "adventurers" who refused "to subject themselves to honest work."¹⁷

Slavery, Mobility and Work

Centuries of slave raiding for the Atlantic trade and periodic drought meant that people in the interior of Angola were exceptionally mobile, making it extremely difficult for colonial officials to secure the most crucial resource of all—labor. Carriers¹⁸ or porters for long-distance trade caravans, which sometimes numbered over 1000, were in constant demand. This was the preferred method of transport through the mountainous central highlands and the dry plains to the east, where caravans went to exchange European goods like cotton cloth, rum, and beads for rubber harvested from wild plants, which replaced the slaves and beeswax for candles which had previously dominated the Angolan market.¹⁹ Since the climate was unsuited to pack animals, which perished at high rates when people did try to introduce them, anyone wishing to trade in large volumes of raw materials had to rely upon the slow and arduous process of putting together a large caravan.²⁰

¹⁷ AHN, Luanda. Caixa 877. 5 junho 1908, Administração do Concelho do Bailundo.

¹⁸ I prefer to use the word "carriers" over "porters," because it more closely reflects the Portuguese word "*carregadores*" as well as evoking the action of carrying loads.

¹⁹ Although even after the official abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, and after Portuguese and Brazilian traders continued to traffic persons from Angola to Brazil until 1888, an internal slave trade continued but did not reach the proportions of the former slave caravans.

²⁰ Birmingham, *A Short History of Modern Angola*, 32-33.

Shortages of caravan labor were constant, and people accustomed to a slavery-based economy did not transition easily to a system in which they were expected to sell their labor. While plenty of people were eager to work for fair wages, labor organization was complicated by the fact that most people in the central highlands were subjects of some *soba* or *sekulu* (a village leader subordinate to a *soba*). Even when carriers were paid, as it appears they nearly always were by the turn of the 20th century, their labor was not entirely their own to sell.

Starting in 1858, Portuguese law mandated the gradual liberation of slaves over two decades, who thenceforth were called *libertos* [freedmen] to reflect their new status. The Governor-General of Angola in 1861 noted that these *libertos* most often slipped away “into vagabondage” rather than work on European plantations or sell their labor as porters to whites.²¹ But the labor code of 1878, on the eve of total emancipation, included vagrancy clauses that made forced labor possible. An 1899 regulation reinforced laws against vagrancy.²² Years later the Department of Native Affairs, established in 1914, imposed harsh taxation and forced labor demands on all Angolans who did not fit the narrowly defined and jealously guarded criteria for *assimilado* or “civilized” status.²³

After a disastrous 1860 attempt to put down rebellions in the interior using European troops, when nearly half the soldiers died of illness, official Portuguese policy shifted away from the interior in favor of “coastal concentration, administrative centralization and withdrawal from frontier garrisons and commitments.”²⁴ In 1877, the Governor General of Angola wrote to Lisbon and maintained that it was futile to continue to advance into the interior: “the major settlements are like so many other islands drowned in a limitless native ocean... It is sadly

²¹ Wheeler and Pélissier, *Angola*, 62-63.

²² Jeremy Ball, *Angola's Colossal Lie: Forced Labor on a Sugar Plantation, 1913-1977* (Brill, 2015), 25.

²³ Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola*, 39.

²⁴ Wheeler and Pélissier, *Angola*, 56.

necessary to confess that our empire in the interior is imaginary.”²⁵ Nevertheless, this was also a moment of new energy and resources flowing from Lisbon in response to the recent creation of the *Sociedade Geográfica de Lisboa* in 1875, and the first nationally funded expeditions—by Capello and Ivens, and Serpa Pinto—to explore the interior of Angola in 1877-78.²⁶

Political Economy

Beginning around 1886, growing global demand brought a rubber boom to Angola, with the commodity accounting for nearly four-fifth’s of the country’s total export trade by the late 1890s.²⁷ Exports of rubber through the port of Benguela nearly tripled between 1870 and 1885.²⁸ Root rubber grew in the regions to the northeast, east, and southeast of the populous Umbundu-speaking central highlands, which were controlled by powerful kingdoms including Mbailundo (Bailundo), Viye (Bié), Ciyaka (Quiaca), and Wambu (Huambo).²⁹ The “rubber craze” from 1886-1900 coincided with the decline and Portuguese conquest of the Viye kingdom in 1890. An 1899 document listed 44 traders resident in the Bailundo district; *all* of their occupations were recorded as “rubber trade,” with only one carrying the additional distinction of growing sweet potatoes for the production of rum.³⁰

The decline of Ovimbundu economic power and sovereignty at the turn of the twentieth century left most people with only their labor power to sell. Portuguese troops and caravans wanting to pass through Viye to the rubber-producing regions in the east faced growing difficulty

²⁵ AHU, Lisbon. Albuquerque to Lisbon, October 19, 1877, Angola File, Pasta 47, No. 267, Quoted in: Wheeler and Pélissier. *Angola*, 59.

²⁶ Wheeler and Pélissier, *Angola*, 59.

²⁷ W. Gervase Clarence-Smith. *Slaves, Peasants, and Capitalists in Southern Angola, 1840-1926*. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Jeremy Ball, “A ‘Time of Clothes’: The Angolan Rubber Boom, 1886-1902,” *Ufhamu: A Journal of African Studies* 28(1) (2000), 34.

²⁸ Heywood. *Contested Power in Angola*, 15.

²⁹ Heywood estimates that the population of Mbailundo in the 1840s, which controlled about 85,000 sq. miles, was about 450,000. Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola*, 5. Portuguese spellings are in parentheses, and will sometimes be used to refer to Portuguese towns and forts. Phonetic Umbundu spellings (e.g. Mbailundo) will be used to refer to Ovimbundu polities.

³⁰ AHN. Caixa 5645, Maço: Comercio e Industria. “Lista de negociantes existentes no concelho do Bailundo no ano de 1899, com designação do género do comercio e industria que exerceram.” August 1899.

finding enough carriers. Still accustomed to the conditions in caravans led by their patrons or other known traders, carriers demanded pay equal to what they would receive on one of those caravans.³¹ Local rulers in and around Viye restricted the movement of caravans through their territories via heavy tribute requirements and sometimes, physical aggression. The defeat of Ndunduma of Viye in 1890 marked the beginning of the end of an era where *sobas* could hope to exercise such control.

The energy that bubbled up as the rubber trade boomed and Portuguese forces scored small military victories contrasted with a widespread sense of colonial inertia, which is reflected in letters and reports. Documents are peppered with suspicions that some missionary or visitor was conspiring to orchestrate a British takeover of the territory, or to publicly censure Portuguese authorities for their continuation of the slave trade to São Tomé.³² But despite considerable incentives to wrest power from the *sobas*, directives from Lisbon did not actively advance military conquest or build sustained administrative control in the 1880s. Even by 1902, when Mbailundu stirred the entire Benguela plateau and several neighboring regions into revolt, the response from military authorities on the coast was hampered by foot-dragging and a sense of denial about the severity of the threat.

Vellut shows how the dynamic nature of the Luso-African frontier left upstarts and intermediaries in control of most trade as Portuguese troops withdrew from major outposts in the Angola interior by the 1860s and 70s.³³ Rather than employing a narrative of colonial “decline”

³¹ René Pélissier, *História das Campanhas de Angola: resistência e revoltas 1845-1941, Vol. II* (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa, 1986), 66.

³² This actually did happen when journalists and even the industrialist of the famed Cadbury chocolate company traveled to Angola in the early 20th century to investigate labor practices. See William A. Cadbury, *Labour in Portuguese West Africa* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969[1910]); and Henry Nevinson, *A Modern Slavery* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1906).

³³ Vellut, “Notes sur de Lunda,” 141-2.

to describe such movements, Vellut suggests “dynamism.”³⁴ I would add *vagabondage* as a useful framework—the Portuguese colonial state was amorphous, itinerant, and frequently criminal. I am less inclined than Vellut to dispense with narratives of decline, since this is precisely the idiom that Portuguese officials used in their documentation of the Angolan countryside during the last decades of the 19th century. Some thinkers have suggested that pessimism and a sense of “moral decay” might even be considered a part of the Portuguese national character (if such a thing exists). From the 17th century when a Jesuit leader wrote that the Portuguese were considered “the Kaffirs of Europe”³⁵ by other Europeans, to the early 1900s when frustrated officials in Luanda fretted over the destitute settlers being dumped on them from Lisbon, ruin and decline were common themes in Portuguese literature and social commentary. In the post-Berlin Conference landscape, Portuguese pessimism was exacerbated by British scrutiny of labor practices in Angola. This was paired with the increasing influence of Anglophone Protestant missionaries from the United States and Canada from the early 1880s forward, especially in the central highlands.

Vagabond Settlers

Part of the sense of colonial affliction expressed by officials writing to Benguela, Luanda, or Lisbon focused on the low social and economic status of most of the Portuguese people residing in Angola. Historian Ralph Delgado describes the tendency of early white settlers in the 17th and 18th centuries to settle far from Portuguese forts and population centers, turning the Angolan hinterlands into “a theater of commerce and banditry, whether practiced by whites or blacks.”³⁶ Settlers in late 19th century Angola routinely slipped away into the deep interior to

³⁴ Vellut, “Notes sur de Lunda,” 142.

³⁵ Wheeler and Péliissier, *Angola*, 14.

³⁶ Ralph Delgado, *Ao Sul do Cuanza (ocupação e aproveitamento do antigo reino de Benguela)*, Vol. I. (Lisbon: n.p., 1944), 114-15.

trade freely, avoiding taxes and military service. Military officials frequently pointed to these men as instigators of conflict with local residents. A 1901 “Plan for the administrative reorganization of Benguella district” lamented the many “abuses practiced by free Europeans, vagrants and fugitive exiles (*degradados*) in the hinterlands; [...] released without resources, fired from commercial houses, they have gone into the interior recently and there they multiply their abuses, thus increasing the state of frenzy in which the *gentio* find themselves.”³⁷

The author of this report divided these troublemaking whites into “four classes” that corresponded to the types of violence and abuse they practiced. The first type took any opportunity whatsoever to exploit “the indigenous.”

The second fashioned themselves as “judicial authorities”—this tendency was so prevalent that this official claimed it was “rare [to see] a white man’s house that [was] not also a court.”³⁸ The arbitration of disputes was an important role traditionally filled by *sobas* and *sekulus*, but intermediaries like *Ambaquistas* and other “outsider” traders who set up shop in the interior had fashioned themselves as judges for interpersonal disputes for over two centuries by the late 1800s. This confusion of authority caused many problems for colonial agents and *sobas*. Historian Roquinaldo Ferreira describes the *tribunal de mucanos* (court of *mucanos*), as “an African institution incorporated into the Portuguese legal system by the middle of the seventeenth century that epitomized the interwoven nature of customs, power, and law in Portuguese Angola.”³⁹

³⁷ AHU, 1068 1069 1L, Folder 14.5.1902. “Projecto de reorganização administrativo do distrito de Benguella,” 9 December 1901, 8b.

³⁸ AHU, 1068 1069 1L, Folder 14.5.1902. “Projecto de reorganização administrativo do distrito de Benguella,” 9 December 1901, 9b-10.

³⁹ Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil during the Era of the Slave Trade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 99.

While *mucanos* could be used to challenge enslavement, they were also a means of enslaving people convicted of crimes. In the latter case, *mucanos* referred to “compensations that Africans would pay to each other due to acts deemed transgressive or criminal.”⁴⁰ Silva Porto wrote in 1879 that foreign traders like himself were subject to the nuisance of *mucanos*, “but the natives suffer even more because of inability to pay them, and in order to pay them they pawn their kinsmen, some of them being *pombeiros*⁴¹ who were unable to go to trade before first settling the matter.”⁴² Sometimes entire villages would have to be moved to new locations on account of contentious *mucanos* that did not reach satisfactory resolutions.⁴³

The third “class of whites” described in the 1901 administrative plan was “the traders (*aviados*)” who foisted bundles of produce on credit upon the indigenous *funantes* (another term for itinerant trader)⁴⁴ despite knowing the *funantes* were unlikely to pay them back. While this source refers to *funantes* as “indigenous,” the word could also refer Portuguese traders who traveled to the interior of the continent trading on credit from coastal firms. Historian Ralph Delgado wrote: “The *funante* turned out to be, generally, an adventurer: he lived without social laws, without respect for anyone, allowing himself to be overwhelmed by the predilections of indigenous womenfolk, eating their food and living their customs.”⁴⁵

The fourth type of white settler described in the administrative plan would go and live in the *ombala* (royal court) of a *soba* (king or chief), demanding tribute from caravans passing

⁴⁰ Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange*, 100.

⁴¹ *Pombeiros* were caravan workers with higher social status, either because they were associated with powerful traders or trading firms, or had accumulated enough personal wealth through trade to claim special privileges. They typically had responsibility for groups of porters in caravans. *Pombeiros* are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

⁴² Silva Porto, quoted in Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola*, 83.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Chapter Two discusses the variety of emic terms used for “traders” and other social categories in late 19th century Angola. Many of these terms entered the Portuguese language as corruptions of Kikongo, Kimbundu, and Umbundu words.

⁴⁵ Delgado, *Ao Sul do Cuanza*, 115.

through by claiming authority over the area.⁴⁶ Antônio da Silva Porto, the famous hinterlandsman or *sertanejo* who married into the royal family of Viye in the 1840s, was one such settler. He attached himself to the existing power structure in order to claim authority and status, and by doing this he managed to profit from his ability to mediate in trade and politics.

This widespread refusal of white settlers to stay within the orbit of state control posed major problems for colonial administrators, who commented regularly on how badly their behavior damaged the prestige of Portugal among black Angolans. Traders' insistence on acting as judicial authorities and collecting fines resulted in a muddled image of colonial authority, with a thin line between legitimate and illegitimate power. Portuguese military men remembered this humiliation decades later. Lieutenant Colonel Belo de Almeida wrote that the "gangsterism" and "banditry" practiced by "some white and *mestiço* traders with excessive ambitions and evil instincts, maneuvering far from the view of the authorities," had led to a series of revolts in the late 1890s and early 1900s.⁴⁷ The limits to Portuguese sovereignty were considerable, the reach of the colonial state was limited to remote outposts staffed with tiny numbers of military officials, and powerful African polities like Mbailundu continued to dominate trade, resist integration, and challenge the political supremacy of Portugal well into the 20th century.

Methods

Moving beyond the study of coastal Portuguese enclaves and urban "creole" communities, this study takes a detailed look at the diverse groups and individuals who lived and traded in the interior of the Portuguese territory. As many in the creolization debates have noted, that the stakes of assimilation and integration with European norms were extremely high for

⁴⁶ AHU, 1068 1069 1L, Folder 14.5.1902, *Projecto*, 1901, pp. 10-10b.

⁴⁷ Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP), H.G. 37943P. Lieutenant Colonel Belo de Almeida. *Operações Militares de 1904 na Região do Bimbe (Bailundo)*. Lisboa, Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca Agência Geral das Colónias, 1944, 12-13.

people of color,⁴⁸ and often meant life or death, freedom or slavery. Individuals and groups did not always get to choose the degree to which they “creolized,” nor how such transformations would be received by colonial agents, who ultimately had considerable power over black people’s fates, regardless of whether those people considered themselves “white” or “civilized.”

By offering a textured focus on this decisive set of events, this work enables an important historical recasting of Angola’s entry into a new era of modern settler colonialism. This transitional moment illuminates much about the cementing of social boundaries that accompanied Portuguese settlement in the Angolan highlands. Zooming in on a major conflict like the Mbailundu War, focusing on micro-level encounters and disputes within and surrounding the event, affords a close perspective on the means through which people competed and cooperated with one another. In 1902, Mbailundu leaders convened thousands of warriors who rebelled against a system in which power relations, opaque and nebulous, shifted continuously in response to the interests of competing groups. While most academic histories of Angola focus on the economic and political conditions of colonization, they tend to ignore the affective, symbolic, and mimetic expressions that characterized the time.⁴⁹ Using a microhistorical approach, this project “reduces the scale of observation” by analyzing interactions, disputes, and transactions at the interpersonal level.⁵⁰ It reads “records of uncertainty and doubt”—not only institutional power or violent domination—as constitutive of colonialism itself.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Although this term calls to mind a 21st century American way of designating anyone who is not “white,” a direct translation appears frequently in Portuguese documents, where “civilized” black and *mestiço* persons are often called *gente de cor* (literally “people of color”).

⁴⁹ See: Gerald Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese: the myth and the reality* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978). Also: Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola*.

⁵⁰ Carlo Ginzburg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It.” *Critical Inquiry* 20(1) (1993), 22.

⁵¹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 19.

I especially attend to the ways in which a variety of persons made use of *objects*—flags, charms, clothing, trade goods, weapons—to protect from harm, mark with prestige, claim authority and status, settle disputes, and enable social mobility. By tracing patterns of relative affective and material integration with and isolation from Portuguese social and political structures, we can parse out some of the ways in which residents of Angola were both constrained by colonial institutions and also able to navigate them with considerable agency.

Building on recent studies of Angola focusing on “creolization,” this work will show how the incorporation of European material culture on the one hand, and the establishment of affective ties to “Portugueseness” on the other, were key vehicles for the integration of black Angolans into colonial structures. Much of this recent work, by scholars such as Mariana Candido and Roquinaldo Ferreira, deftly illustrates many examples of hybrid practices or subject positions at play in colonial Angola. I diverge from these important works in two specific ways. I focus on a later, more confined period of time—about 1880-1910; and I delve more deeply into how people mobilized the power of *objects* and *affects* to claim identities and determine social status.

Following Balandier, this work considers the colonial as “a force acting in terms of its own totality,”⁵² rather than focusing on one particular population or social group. In this “colonial situation,” social categories were more fluid and less rigidly racialized than they would become by the middle of the twentieth century, at the height of European settler colonialism around the globe. Indeed, this work rejects the fundamental premise of much creolization theory—namely, that discrete social, cultural, or racial boundaries exist in any objective way. Instead, it follows anthropologist Stephan Palmié in viewing “cultures and languages as

⁵² Georges Balandier, “The Colonial Situation: A Theoretical Approach,” in ed. E. Wallerstein, *Social Change: The Colonial Situation* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 1966), 35.

artificially reified instances on variations produced by humanity's universal faculty to symbolize in infinitely diverse ways."⁵³

Attention to emic social categories is key to understanding how individuals and groups fashioned themselves in relation to an emerging colonial reality. New identities and classifications of persons involved in long-distance trade appear to have developed soon after first contact with Portuguese explorers and merchants in the Congo River region in northern Angola.⁵⁴ Designations like *Ambaquista*, *Quimbare*, and others I discuss below, traveled into the interior of Angola and developed new associations and meanings, sometimes untethered from their original associations. The amorphous and itinerant nature of these categories of persons mirrors the social context of a region transformed by Atlantic trade over several centuries, despite only sporadic contact between Portuguese settlers and populations in the interior until the late nineteenth century.

A critical look at the enduring effects of interaction between indigenous Angolans and representatives of Portuguese interests reveals the degree to which the former's engagement with European influence was often limited, but nonetheless had significant and tangible effects on their social status and their reception by other Angolans who had not had such encounters. More importantly for the present work, at the dawn of the 20th century when Portugal had ostensibly "conquered" the territory of Angola, people were still struggling to fashion themselves in various ways in relation to the Portuguese state and to "Portugueseness." These struggles often took the form of affective engagements with material culture imported from Europe, including relics of Catholicism and items of clothing, particularly hats and shoes. Responses to trade goods ranged from jealous desire to fear. Self-expression through religious practice and dress could index real

⁵³ Stephan Palmié, "Creolization and Its Discontents," *Annual Review of Anthropology* (35) (2006), 448.

⁵⁴ Cécile Fromont, *The Art of Conversion: Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of Kongo* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

or aspirational ties across social boundaries—through friendship, sex, or relationships based on material exchange.

Historian James Sweet urges a critical rethinking of the concept of “Atlantic creoles.”⁵⁵ He believes that the scholarly tendency to search for evidence of “assimilated” or “creolized” Africans, particularly among those who were enslaved in the New World, perhaps comes from a well-intentioned project of wanting attribute agency and empowerment to the processes of change that affected Africans in regions of slaving. But this project strikes Sweet as “imperial,” because it makes “Atlantic creoles” into an ossified “thing” rather than attending to the open and complex *processes* that resulted in cultural change in Atlantic zones.⁵⁶ It also assumes that there were ever groups of homogenous or “pure” Africans who were completely untouched by European ancestry or influence, to be used as some kind of baseline against which to measure degrees of “creolization” among other Africans.⁵⁷ Cecile Fromont similarly cautions that “Atlantic creoles” is a restrictive or inadequate term; she prefers to talk about “spaces of correlation” in which elites from the Kongo Kingdom “took part in generative processes of correlation through which they reinvented notions of prestige in the new Atlantic context.”⁵⁸

The variety of identities and affiliations discussed in this work show a common pattern of *legibility*. People strove to make themselves legible as one thing or another, depending on the context and the relative benefits of claiming a particular identity. My approach follows Sweet and Fromont’s processual approaches to creolization. By digging into the micro interactions underlying larger conflicts at a time of colonial conquest and rapid social change, I show that the

⁵⁵ James Sweet, “Reimagining the African-Atlantic Archive: Method, Concept, Epistemology, Ontology,” *Journal of African History* 55 (2014), 147-159; and James Sweet, *Domingos Alvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

⁵⁶ Sweet, “Reimagining the African-Atlantic Archive,” 150.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Fromont, *The Art of Conversion*, 136.

stakes were terribly high for people who had to make themselves legible to agents of the colonial state as well as African sources of authority, and choosing the proper identity in a given moment was a matter of life and death.

Mobile Goods and Afflictions

Affective engagement with imported material culture took many forms, not all of which were positive. While much response to new commodities focused on building and displaying status, some focused on the destructive potential of trade and the goods and people it brought. We can follow the movement of some words practices and objects as they traveled with migrants from Angola in the decades after the Mbailundu Revolt. Anthropologist C. M. N. White documented the “*lihamba*” (pl. *mahamba*) or ancestral spirits of Lwena, Chokwe, and Luchazi people who migrated from northeastern Angola (the present-day Lunda North and South Provinces) to the northwest part of Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia) around 1920-25.⁵⁹ New *mahamba* had begun to appear as migrants settled in the area. Some of these spirits were malevolent and caused physical affliction if not properly appeased. “*Vindele*,” which means “Europeans” in Umbundu, mainly affected males and was “derived from a relative who had died in the European settled areas of Angola, especially one who had died in connection with wars with the Europeans.”⁶⁰ Its victims dreamed about European goods, and their treatment required the construction of special house with chairs, a table, and a carpet or quilt spread on the floor. The afflicted would dress in European style and enter this house to sit down to a Portuguese meal of chicken and rice with a plate, fork and knife and drink beer from a glass.⁶¹ The material

⁵⁹ C. M. N. White, “Stratification and Modern Changes in an Ancestral Cult,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Oct., 1949), 324-331.

⁶⁰ White, “Stratification and Modern Changes,” 329.

⁶¹ White, “Stratification and Modern Changes,” 329.

artifacts and the performance of Europeanness in this case shape both the disease and the remedy.

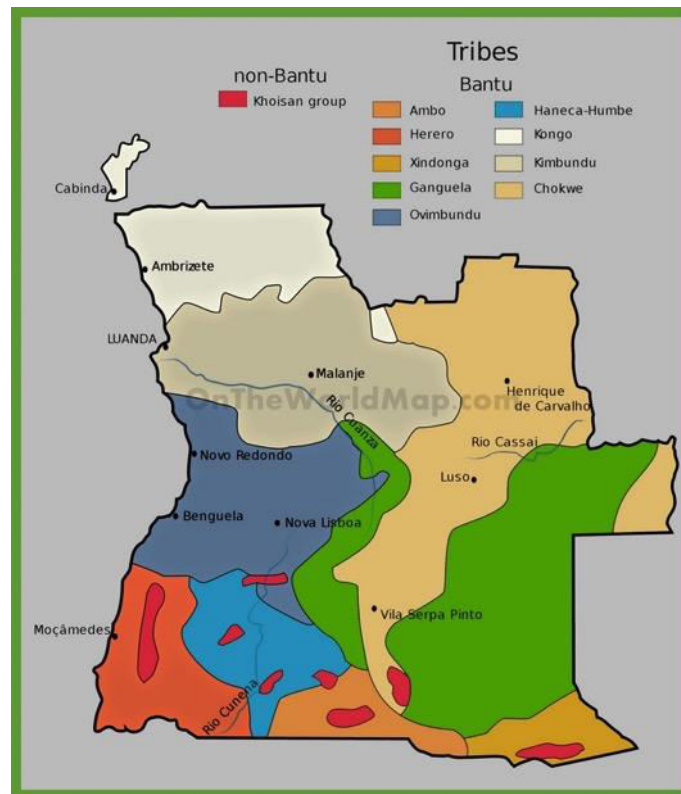


Figure 1:
*Ethnic Groups in Angola*⁶²

Around 1925-1935, Ovimbundu and Chokwe migrants pushed eastward from Angola into the Luchazi areas, and with their presence emerged a new affliction called “*Chimbundu*”—the singular term for an Ovimbundu person. A person acquired *chimbundu* by traveling to “the Umbundu country.” To treat it they had to wear European clothes and eat off of plates, but with one small difference from the remedy for *vindele*—the food consumed in this case was “green string beans and maize, characteristic of the Umbundu diet.”⁶³ Ovimbundu association with trade

⁶² <http://ontheworldmap.com/angola/map-of-ethnic-groups-in-angola.jpg>, accessed 3 February 2017.

⁶³ White, “Stratification and Modern Changes,” 329.

and European contact had found its way into a complex of spiritual beliefs that traveled and evolved with immigrants from Angola to other parts of Africa.

After 1935, White documented yet another new *lihamba* called *Kandundu*. Also derived from “European culture contacts,” the treatment required the wearing of European clothes and washing in an enamel basin.⁶⁴ “Creolization”—that clumsy shorthand for the intermingling of cultural elements, symbols, materials, and ideas—took many forms. In this case, contact with Europeans (or their Ovimbundu proxies) was “infectious” and capable of causing grave spiritual harm. To mitigate this destructive potential, one had to imitate certain aspects of a European lifestyle—clothing, food customs, and hygiene. Just as the populations in this region moved and transformed, *Kandundu* had traveled and morphed from a feared and venerated ritual object, as it had been in the central highlands of Angola a few decades prior, into an affliction.⁶⁵

New Boundaries

Following Vellut’s contention that the long-term transformation in social structures should be the basis for periodization in African history, I will show how the period from about 1880-1910 marked an accelerated transition from mercantile to settler colonialism.⁶⁶ During this brief moment, a proliferation of traders with fluctuating degrees of loyalty to the colonial “state” took advantage of widespread opportunities for social mobility through trade. These actors disrupted the power of trade oligarchies like the Mbailundu kingdom that had grown rich by controlling long-distance trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They also posed a problem for Portuguese officials seeking to centralize power and draw stricter boundaries

⁶⁴ White, “Stratification and Modern Changes,” 330.

⁶⁵ See *Portugal em Africa*, vol. X (1903), 128G; A. Featherman, “Kimbondas,” In *Social history of the races of mankind. First Division: Nigritians* (London: Trübner & co., Ludgate Hill, 1885), 460-79; William H. Sanders, “Kandundu – Spirit Worship in West Africa,” *The Missionary Herald at Home and Abroad*, Vol. 99 (December 1903), 554; Henrique de Paiva Couceiro. *Relatório de Viagem Entre Bailundo e as Terras do Mucusso* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1892), 33-35.

⁶⁶ Vellut, “Notes sur le Lunda,” 162. See also: Clarence-Smith, *Slaves, Peasants, and Capitalists*.

between those who could and could not claim authority over the large population of *gentio*, whom colonial authorities badly needed to tap for labor.⁶⁷ Coquery-Vidrovitch and Lovejoy highlight the confusion of class relationships among caravan workers, whose loyalties to their *sobas* or *sekulus* overlapped with their aspirations to amass wealth and status.⁶⁸

The malleable identities and complicated interests of diverse historical actors come into relief during times of conflicts, reminding us that all colonial contexts were “unique cultural configurations” rather than wholesale transplants of European societies to new places.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the cultural borrowing and innovation that contacts between Europeans and Africans activated were multidirectional. Angola at the end of the nineteenth century was home to communities and social configurations that agents of the Portuguese state could neither understand nor control. In order to secure power and control over the vast territory of Angola with limited human and material resources, colonial agents had to find new ways to draw firm boundaries between groups of people.

Trade relationships depended on frequent interactions between groups with considerable internal variation and no clear unity of interests. Despite the frequency of contact between these groups, significant social boundaries remained politically salient, even if people transgressed them often. In the aftermath of the Mbailundu Revolt, archival records show Portugal’s representatives struggling to dismantle the “chaotic system” of lawless trade by reinforcing boundaries and cementing colonial authority, thereby opening the way for the complete occupation of Angola.⁷⁰ Much of what impeded this desired hardening of colonial authority was

⁶⁷ Vellut, “Notes sur le Lunda,” 162.

⁶⁸ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Paul Lovejoy, “The Workers of Trade in Precolonial Africa.” In Coquery-Vidrovitch & Lovejoy, eds. *The Workers of African Trade*. (Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1985): 17.

⁶⁹ Anne Laura Stoler, “Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, 1 (1989), 136.

⁷⁰ Jean-Luc Vellut, “Garenganze/Katanga—Bié—Benguela and Beyond: The Cycle of Rubber and Slaves at the Turn of the 20th Century,” *Portuguese Studies Review* 19(1-2) (2011), 146.

the inability of Portugal's most elite representatives to control their own compatriots in Angola, who were of humbler social status than the literate, well-spoken men who occupied positions like governor or military captain.

Frontier

Jean-Luc Vellut developed the idea of a "Luso-African frontier" in a 1972 article on the history of Lunda and Chokwe trade.⁷¹ (Germane to this study's focus on emic terms and naming, the ethnonym "Chokwe" is itself a product of the upheavals caused by colonial incursions—it means "those who left [or fled]" eastward to escape the slave trade).⁷² Vellut argues that the decline of large trade empires like Mwant Yav (in the Lunda-Chokwe area in the northeast reaches of the Portuguese territory), Viye (now Bié Province in the central highlands), and Mbailundu in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the direct result of rapidly changing economic conditions, including the arrival of chartered companies backed by Portuguese or English capital that employed Luso-Africans as their agents. On a micro-level, fragmentation of power resulted from increased opportunities for wealth accumulation by ordinary people, which undermined the ability of traditional elites to maintain their status and authority.⁷³ These entrepreneurs amassed considerable wealth and used their prosperity to claim political authority over groups of dependents, bypassing the traditional requirements of bloodline or noble birth in Ovimbundu society.

Joseph Miller imagines "a moving frontier zone of slaving violence" that swept through the interior of Angola in the era of the Atlantic slave trade.⁷⁴ He distinguishes his sense of frontier from Vellut's "cultural syncretic" one. Miller is most concerned with the demographic

⁷¹ Vellut, "Notes sur le Lunda."

⁷² Miller, *Way of Death*, 38.

⁷³ Vellut, "Notes sur de Lunda," 139.

⁷⁴ Miller, *Way of Death*, 141.

effects of this slaving frontier, which tended to scatter the population throughout the countryside and did not favor the development of large, enduring settlements. Wandering groups of people were difficult to bring under the control of colonial authorities, who mostly kept to their enclaves by the sea or their isolated forts. This long-term dispersal of people combined with the influx of new forms of material wealth had profound effects on how authority was understood and wielded. “The heat of the slaving frontier,” Miller writes, “reforged the old links of hierarchy” by transforming social structures “into chains binding nearly everyone to *nouveaux-riches* lords spreading masses of cheapened imported goods everywhere to impose new and greater degrees of subordination and dependency.”⁷⁵

As sources of authority splintered and claims to power multiplied, traders created their own worlds that were increasingly distinct from both indigenous and colonial structures and institutions. The widespread availability of trade goods like guns, rum, cloth and tobacco created possibilities for social mobility, which ultimately destabilized merchant kingdoms like Mbailundu. African elites had no choice but to deal with the threat posed by insubordinate trader-chiefs in far-flung regions, who gained power by accumulating large stocks of rum and rubber. Miller describes a world in which African logics of use-value, patronage, and face-to-face relationships of exchange clashed with Atlantic structures of anonymous, long-distance, currency-based commerce. Traders of diverse origins, often of African descent but operating outside of Ovimbundu village life, bridged these two worlds. Miller argues that “working misunderstandings” emerged between parties and kept business going.⁷⁶ By the late 19th century, depersonalized forms of capitalist exchange, forged within the Atlantic system and backed by the

⁷⁵ Miller, *Way of Death*, 153.

⁷⁶ Miller, *Way of Death*, 173.

advancing colonial apparatus, had gained primacy in Angola and threatened to displace locally rooted codes of conduct.

Social interactions aimed at exchange, gift giving, tribute, or trade brought vastly different worldviews and moral frameworks into stark relief. The oft-repeated story of how the Mbailundu Revolt began is an excellent example. Mutu-ya-Kavela, an important military advisor to the newly enthroned *soba* Kalandula, allegedly owed payment to a trader for a keg of rum he purchased during the enthronement celebrations. When the trader complained about the unpaid debt to officials at the Bailundo fort, they sent soldiers to the *ombala* to demand payment from Mutu-ya-Kavela.⁷⁷ He refused, even going so far as to add that Mbailundu no longer recognized Portuguese authority.

The newly appointed *Soba* Kalandula went to the fort to try to negotiate with the Captain Major, but he was arrested along with several *sekulus* and advisors. This was the final straw, and Mutu-ya-Kavela began calling meetings with Mbailundu's allies throughout the highlands to discuss a course of action. Attacks on trading houses followed, with several traders and their employees being kidnapped or killed by rebel troops. Tens of thousands of warriors joined the effort, and they surrounded the Bailundo fort for several weeks. It was the great fortune of those trapped inside, including the Captain Major, that the Mbailundu warriors did not attack before they were repelled by the Portuguese forces arriving from the coast in June. After the leader of the revolt Mutu-ya-Kavela was killed in battle in August, a few pockets of resistance remaining in the highlands were crushed violently by Portuguese artillery in September, effectively putting an end to the large Mbailundu Revolt and to Ovimbundu sovereignty.

⁷⁷ Douglas Wheeler and C. Diane Christensen, "To Rise With One Mind: The Bailundo War of 1902," In *Social Change in Angola*, ed. Franz-Wilhelm Heimer (München: Weltforum Verlag, 1973), 54-92; and Soremekun, "The Bailundo Revolt, 1902."

Creolization and Protection

The work of colonization of Angola, through itinerant trade in its earliest form, and evangelization and direct installation of resident authorities throughout the countryside by the late 19th century, was carried out largely by “assimilated” black and *mestiço* Angolans. Angolans of color held important government and military posts well into the twentieth century, and many of these people considered themselves Portuguese for all intents and purposes.⁷⁸ Claims to “Portugueseness” were the best way that darker skinned people could hope to avoid enslavement or forced manual labor, risks faced constantly by Angolans classified as *gentio*. Being the subject or dependent of a *soba* or *sekulu*—as opposed to resident of a town or an employee of a trade firm or trader—was the primary criterion for *gentio* status. But as this work will show, there was considerable overlap between the people historians might call Luso-Africans and communities of *gentio*.

Recent work by historians Mariana Candido and Roquinaldo de Ferreira has shown how free people of color in Angola, although ostensibly protected from enslavement under Portuguese law, were nonetheless constantly at risk of kidnapping and enslavement by personal enemies, unscrupulous traders, roving bandits, or enemy *sobas*. Candido describes cases where “assimilated” people, whose protection from enslavement was legally guaranteed, nonetheless had to sue for their freedom on many occasions during the early to mid-nineteenth century.⁷⁹ In a case from 1811, the *soba* of Mbailundu arrested Dona Leonor, a *mestiça* widow of a Portuguese trader, and her two daughters. The women had traveled to the kingdom on business, likely to

⁷⁸ The dynamics of claiming Portuguese identity in early twentieth century Angola will be explored in historical case studies in Chapter 1.

⁷⁹ Mariana Candido, *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World: Benguela and its Hinterland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 53.

collect unpaid debts.⁸⁰ The Mbailundu *soba* kidnapped the three women and sold them into slavery, sending them to the coast. Upon arrival in Luanda, Dona Leonor was able to appeal to the Governor General to successfully contest her enslavement and restore her freedom.

This anecdote shows how precarious the status of “assimilated” Africans, *mestiços*, and vassals remained in the face of enslavement; it simultaneously shows that the same people were sometimes able to access legal institutions which restored their freedom based on various kinds of proof of their “civilized” status. This state of insecurity, as well as the social mobility afforded by free trade and amorphous concepts of race, persisted well into the twentieth century, long after the abolition of the slave trade in 1878.⁸¹ An internal slave trade continued to flourish, with many thousands of “contract workers” or *serviçais* (“servants,” as forced laborers were called after abolition) bought and sold within Angola or shipped to the nearby Portuguese cocoa-producing islands of São Tomé & Príncipe. Between 1888 and 1908, some 67,000 *serviçais* were shipped from Angola to São Tomé.⁸² The horrors of being shipped away through an Atlantic port never to return did not disappear for black Angolans with the end of the transatlantic slave trade.

Roquinaldo Ferreira illustrates “the fluid boundaries that separated free from unfree people in Angola.”⁸³ It is quite remarkable that so many people were actually able to contest their capture by accessing the Portuguese legal system, and shows the degree to which black and brown people fought to maintain positions of relative power, wealth, and status in Angola even at the height of the Atlantic trade. The flexibility of social status was evident even a century before the period discussed in the present work. Like Ferreira, I use a microhistorical approach to reveal “the ways in which individuals created their own spaces without strict adherence to the

⁸⁰ Mariana Candido, “African Freedom Suits and Portuguese Vassal Status: Legal Mechanisms for Fighting Enslavement in Benguela, Angola, 1800-1830.” *Slavery and Abolition* 32(3) (2011), 447-458.

⁸¹ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 139.

⁸² Ball, *Angola's Colossal Lie*, 33.

⁸³ Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange*, 89.

imposing forces of Portuguese institutions.”⁸⁴ In the last year of the eighteenth century, colonial officials lamented the increasing numbers of *negros calçados*, literally “shod blacks,” who considered themselves “white” and expected the privileged treatment that came with that status. Portuguese observers feared that if this trend continued, “soon there [would] be no blacks” in Angola.⁸⁵ “Whiteness” was a fluid category more related to status, education, and lifestyle than to skin color—even the simple absence or presence of shoes was enough to throw a person’s social status into question. But the undeniable reality is that being black or brown made a person vulnerable no matter how elevated their social status may have been in a particular context. Because status and privilege were context-dependent, and most Angolans were hyper-mobile, people moving through space often found themselves vulnerable and unprotected.

Angola’s Long Twentieth Century

It is necessary to dig through many layers of violence and social change that followed the transitional period around 1880-1910 in Angola, in order to understand how racial fluidity coexisted with the seeds of a much more rigid hierarchical system that was taking hold. In 2013, when I asked people in Angola about the Mbailundu Revolt, some reacted as though I had asked about something that happened in the Stone Age, since memories of much more recent conflicts tend to crowd spaces of collective memory in 21st century Angola. Historian Mariana Candido experienced similar reactions when she went to Angola in 2011 to research the transatlantic slave trade.⁸⁶ The country has endured long and brutal conflicts since 1902, making the era of colonial conquest seem especially distant when viewed through the haze of all the violence that came after it. After centuries of slavery, forced labor, and brutal repression, the 1920s saw an increase in influx of settlers from Portugal. Railroads were completed, industries and agriculture grew, and

⁸⁴ Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange*, 245.

⁸⁵ Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange*, 61.

⁸⁶ Candido, *An African Slaving Port*, 313.

black and brown Angolans became increasingly marginalized in relation to white settlers, who were favored for jobs, housing, and government positions. In 1926, “assimilated” became an official category of citizenship which black Angolans could ostensibly claim under the *indigenato* (indigenous) statutes to protect themselves from forced labor conscription and receive access to education; in practice less than 1% of the population ever achieved this designation.⁸⁷

By the mid-20th century, at the peak of Portuguese settlement in Angola, colonial views of black assimilation could be summed up by statements such as the following from the Angolan High Commissioner: “So-called civilized Africans [...] are generally no more than grotesque imitations of white men ... [with] a primitive mentality, poorly concealed by the speech, gestures and dress copied from Europeans.”⁸⁸ While this dissertation shows many instances of people fashioning their identities in ways that seem to transcend rigid definitions of “race,” it also shows that attitudes like that of the High Commissioner were latent even in the 1880s to early 1900s, and could affect the fates of black and brown people at any time. Birmingham suggests that, “identity was effectively determined by culture rather than pigmentation.”⁸⁹ Although this was true to some degree and in some contexts, it is essential to point out that Angolan society under Portuguese rule, even in its administrative infancy, was founded upon racial slavery and was thus an inherently racist society. I agree wholeheartedly with Gerald Bender, who writes that colonial Angola, “structured on racial inequality and excluding blacks from equal participation, can be considered a racist society, irrespective of any direct invocation of the physical criterion of colour.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 151.

⁸⁸ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 212-13.

⁸⁹ Birmingham, *A Short History of Modern Angola*, 3.

⁹⁰ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 212.

The period of conquest highlighted in this work reveals the ambivalence of a colonial administration that depended upon the participation and cooperation of black and brown Angolans, but was simultaneously built upon the premise that white Europeans were superior and deserving of rights and protections that nonwhite or “less white” persons were not. Angolans staged a protracted and bloody struggle for independence beginning in 1961 and ending only in 1975, long after most other colonial powers had let go their African territories. The country descended into civil war almost immediately. This bitter conflict, which pitted the *Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola* (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA) against the *União para a Independência Total de Angola* (Union for the Total Independence of Angola, UNITA) lasted until 2002. While the MPLA has often been seen to be based in Luanda and associated with coastal “creole” elites and Kimbundu-speakers, UNITA was firmly rooted in the central highlands and Ovimbundu society. The memories and political residues of this recent conflict will be discussed in the Chapter Six.

Sources

Documents for this research were collected from the following archives in North America: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) Historical Archives at Houghton Library at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the United Church of Canada Archives (UCCA) in Toronto, Canada. In Portugal sources came from: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP), Arquivo Histórico Militar (AHM), Sociedade Geográfica de Lisboa (SGL), Arquivo Histórico do Ultramar (AHU), and Torre do Tombo (TT), all in Lisbon. In Angola: Arquivo Nacional de Angola (ANA) and Biblioteca Municipal de Luanda (BML) in Luanda, and the Biblioteca Municipal do Huambo (BMH) in Huambo.

In April-September 2013 in Angola I worked in archives and visited historical/memory sites in the central highlands, Benguela, and Luanda. I conducted 12 taped interviews, including one with a large group of elders in Bailundo. I met with the current king of Mbailundu, Ekuikui V, at his home in Bailundo, and visited the *ombala* but was not invited inside. I went to Candumbo, where one of the last battles of the 1902 conflict was fought.

I photographed objects from an Ovimbundu divination basket, collected and catalogued in the 1930s in the highlands by Canadian missionary Leona Tucker, in an offsite storage facility in London with the generous assistance of Catherine Elliott of the British Museum in May 2012. Postcards from 1930s Angola at the British Museum were found during the same London visit.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter One, *Vagabond States*, sets the stage for the rest of the dissertation by describing the structures and institutions by which Portugal attempted to establish colonial control south of the Kwanza River and inland from Benguela, as well as the limits and challenges to this control. By the late 19th century, Portuguese interests reached well into the interior of the continent, but the direct power of colonial officials was sharply limited by that of *sobas* and *sekulus*, rulers whose polities remained the dominant force for social organization among the majority of people in the central highland region well into the 20th century, whom colonial officials called *gentio* (gentiles). Colonial outposts had been established and abandoned during the previous century, and higher officials still had trouble staffing the posts that remained by the turn of the 20th century. Meanwhile, states like Mbailundu and Wambu retained relative independence, with large numbers of their citizens working as carriers in the long-distance caravan trade. This chapter explores the political relations between “colonial” and “local” entities, focusing on mobility and the shifting nature of power that characterized these “vagabond states.”

Chapter Two, *Caravan Trade and Fluid Categories*, introduces several emic social categories that were prevalent in this region and time period. It illustrates the degree to which self-presentation influenced perceptions of race and social status in 19th century Angola. People who were most directly involved in trade with Europeans often developed new identities based on this association. Groups such as the *Ambaquistas* often made their living by working as scribes and secretaries, fashioning themselves as direct mediators between *sobas* and Portuguese authorities while retaining a distinct social position that was separate from both. Ovimbundu, who dominated the caravan trade through the highlands, were divided into several competing kingdoms—Mbailundu, Wambu, and Viye being the most important in the last 19th century. Even by this time, American and Canadian missionaries were grouping all Umbundu-speakers into something approximating the western concept of an “ethnic group.” Some signs of a collective purpose arose in the Mbailundu Revolt as people cooperated across the boundaries previously imposed by inter-Ovimbundu rivalries. But even this identity had been forged in the crucible of the Atlantic trade, with the central highland kingdoms acting as intermediaries between the coast and the interior. Umbundu-speakers from these kingdoms sometimes earned the title *Quimbares* or *Mambaris* in their caravan journeys far from home. The chapter also argues that carrier strikes were a frequent form of resistance to colonial/white domination, showing the Mbailundu Revolt as a major example of an effective work stoppage. The exceptional mobility of Ovimbundu was a feature of their trade-based political economy, showing how their blending other categories complicates the colonial category of *gentio*.

Chapter Three, *A Just Vengeance:” Mediation, Authority, and a Murdered Luso-African Trader*, narrates the events surrounding a small revolt in early 1902 in the interior of Novo Redondo, the region immediately north of Mbailundu. The murder and alleged cannibalization of

a trader named Silveira by local *gentio* in retaliation for his abusive behavior drew a feeble response by Portuguese authorities at the coast. A small, ill-equipped military column marched inland to investigate the trader's murder, and the details of their march provide a window into the diverse individuals who lived in the interior in various states of removal from both colonial and indigenous power structures. The colonial state's unwillingness to respond competently reflects the tepid relationship between independent, in-between traders like Silveira, and coastal officials who were reluctant to protect such traders because they held them responsible for the disorder that reigned in the interior. News of these events, including the weak colonial response, traveled to Mbailundu via busy caravan routes and emboldened elite members of the leadership in an around Mbailundu to stage the large, general revolt that had been building for some time.

Chapter Four, *The Mbailundu Revolt: Violence, Boundaries, and Mutu-ya-Kavela's Moral Outrage*, narrates the Mbailundu Revolt through a microhistorical and affective lens. One of the largest uprisings in Angola's colonial history, it lasted from April – September 1902 when three columns of soldiers sent in by coastal authorities effectively crushed it. While historians have studied this revolt before, this chapter offers an exceptionally close reading of individuals who played crucial roles in the uprising and its destruction. I focus on the affective traces found in historical documents and enduring memories and stories in 21st century Angola. I move close to the individual lives disrupted by the violent events of 1902; I interrogate the moral outrage and terror that drove people to action. This is a textured understanding of an important revolt—an event that changed the course of Portuguese colonial history in Angola by opening the way for a railroad and all but vanquishing the Ovimbundu kingdoms of the central highlands. The Revolt also left sedimentation that endured and morphed through subsequent wars in Angola, lasting into the 21st century.

Chapter Five, *A War Camp, Missionaries on Trial, and Colonial Anxieties*, describes the role of Protestant missionaries from the United States and Canada before and during the Mbailundu Revolt. Congregationalist missionaries hailed from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in Boston and its counterpart in Toronto, the Canadian Congregationalist Foreign Missionary Society (CCFMS). These missionaries had their own history of negotiating power and influence with *sobas* and *sekulus* since their arrival in the highlands 1881, and in many ways were much closer to forming an effective “state” than Portuguese agents. Their fluency in Umbundu language and their intimacy with Ovimbundu people set them firmly in the line of fire of colonial officials who were suspicious of their deeds and motives. The state blamed the missionaries for inciting rebellion despite much evidence to the contrary, whereas one missionary’s ongoing correspondence with the Captain Major of Bailundo during the siege on the fort indicates otherwise. Whereas the missionaries had been tolerated up until this point, these trials marked a new phase of boundary making by the colonial state. The time had come to bring these foreigners to heel and reinforce the hierarchy that should have been in place all along—the Portuguese administration was the only legitimate authority in Angola, and all other entities would henceforth answer to it.

Chapter 6, *Mbailundu Remembered: Politics and Historical Memory in 2013*, discusses memory, oral tradition, and ongoing conflicts of authority in the central highlands of Angola in 2013. It shows how retellings of historical events like the Mbailundu Revolt are inflected with regional and ethnic factionalism and refracted through the dark lens of Angola’s long twentieth century. Divisions between Ovimbundu, who are associated with the UNITA opposition party which fought against the ruling MPLA in a bloody civil war from 1976-2002, are starker than ever. This chapter shows how the boundary making processes that were just beginning at the turn

of the 20th century have persisted into the 21st, with devastating consequences. Just as the debris from the Mbailundu Revolt haunted the central highlands for years after 1902, debris from the civil war cluttered the physical and social landscape in 2013.

The continuing existence, interaction, and proliferation of intermediary social positions into the 20th century complicates the simplistic assumption that Portuguese colonial power was weak and scattered. While this colonial weakness was reflected in the disproportionate strength maintained by *sobas* and *sekulus*, these leaders nonetheless made strategic alliances with colonial representatives, showing the symbolic weight of Portuguese power, even if only as a complement to local power. From a historiographical perspective, careful consideration of these social and demographic realities broadens the range of sources that might be considered “locally produced” or “African.” This broadening is especially productive in the case of Portuguese Africa, given what we know about the fluidity of identities and the fact that race or color are not consistently indicated in colonial documents.⁹¹ Many Angolans of color, including those classified as *gentio*, were literate and held positions of power, likely producing documents at a greater rate than metropolitan Portuguese because of their demographic dominance. This work digs beneath the accumulated layers of distinction, exclusion, and boundary making that characterized the twentieth-century colonial administration of Angola, reanimating the remarkable context of fluidity and mobility that came before it.

⁹¹ See Jill Dias, ‘Estereótipos e Realidades Sociais,’ pp. 251-252, n. 23.

Chapter One Vagabond States

This chapter interrogates the degree to which a colonial “state” existed in the interior of Angola at the dawn of the twentieth century. Relationships between sobas, their subjects, state officials, missionaries, were shaky and uneven, and that much political power was still concentrated in the *ombalas* rather than in the scattered outposts of the colonial administration. This context meant that conflicts over authority were frequent, and people tried to secure power and influence through a variety of affective strategies and shifting alliances. People in power worked to redraw social boundaries in ways that reinforced their claims to legitimacy.

The central chapters of this work offer a new history of the Mbailundu War,⁹² in which Ovimbundu nobility led tens of thousands of subjects of the Mbailundu kingdom and its allies in attacking mostly white, *mestiço*, and Luso-African traders and colonial officials. Beginning in April 1902, *gentio* continued a long tradition of resistance by Umbundu-speakers (and other Angolans) to the growing interference of “strangers”⁹³ in their commercial and political affairs by staging an uprising that paralyzed commerce and communication between the coast and the central highlands for 6 months. Mbailundu people and their allies sacked and burned commercial houses, chained captive traders together and forced them to march and carry heavy loads like caravan porters. Several traders were murdered, and the warriors laid siege to the Portuguese fort

⁹² The events of 1902 are variously referred to in primary and secondary sources as: the Bailundo War, Luso-Ovimbundu War, Mbailundu Revolt, and the Bailundo Rebellion. I prefer “war” or “revolt,” though each of these designations will be used where context is appropriate. “Revolt” preserves the affective sense of being “*revoltado*” (revolted) in Portuguese, which is how the Mbailundu warriors who staged the war are often described in Portuguese sources. People participating in revolts were also called *revoltosos*, a noun that has no good translation in English.

⁹³ Georg Simmel, “The Sociological Significance of the ‘Stranger,’” in eds. Park, Robert E., and E. W. Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1921), 322–327.

where the Captain Major, a few soldiers, and several traders and their families cowered behind the fort's walls.

Even the physical landscape of the main battlefield, the Portuguese fort at Bailundo, reflected the disadvantaged position of colonial authorities relative to the *sobas*. The Bailundo fort was constructed in 1895, below the Mbailundu *ombala* which towered above it on Halavala Mountain.⁹⁴ The *ombala* was high on a steep rocky hilltop that towers over the surrounding plains. Lieutenant Pais Brandão, whose troops killed rebel leader Mutu-ya-Kavela, wrote that the fort was “in the worst possible defensive conditions.”⁹⁵ An official passing through in 1901 described it as a collection of “small buildings,” and remarked: “The situation of this fort is terrible, perfectly dominated by the neighboring *embala*.”⁹⁶ In 1901, Major Joaquim Luna de Carvalho described it as a “fort that looks more like a hut [*cubata*].”⁹⁷ Of the neighboring kingdom of Wambu (Huambo), less powerful but even more resistant and elusive than Mbailundu, a 1902 Lisbon newspaper gave the following description: “The region is mountainous and the ruggedness of the terrain contributes to the difficulty of a definitive occupation. It is, without a doubt, the cause of the arrogance of its natives.”⁹⁸ Even the physical landscape and the built environment of the highlands reflected the imbalance of power that continued to impede Portuguese control.

By September 1902 colonial troops had put down the Mbailundu Revolt, killing Mutu-ya-Kavela in battle, and with his death Mbailundu's relative sovereignty came to a close.

Samakaka of Wambu was another prominent rebel leader who escaped Portuguese capture and

⁹⁴ *Portugal em Africa* (1902): p. 362.

⁹⁵ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 35.

⁹⁶ Alexandre Malheiro (1901), quoted in: Ralph Delgado, *Ao Sul da Cuanza: ocupação e aproveitamento do antigo reino de Benguela, Vol. I* (Lisboa: Imprensa Bezeza, 1941).

⁹⁷ AHM 2/2/7/3. 8 May 1901. Joaquim Luna de Carvalho to Governor of Benguela.

⁹⁸ Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP), Lisboa, F.5701 (microfilm). *Diário de Notícias*, 8 Julho 1902, no. 13:147, ano 38.

evaded arrest until 1904, securing a mythical reputation for himself as a great sorcerer and fierce opponent of the Portuguese occupation. Despite the fierce resistance mounted by these and other Ovimbundu leaders, the definitive 1902 defeat of Mbailundu opened the way for more traders, administrators and settlers to gradually flow into the Angolan highlands, and for the construction of the Benguela Railway beginning in 1903.⁹⁹ The railroad reached the city of Huambo (then called Nova Lisboa) by 1911, when the European population in the highlands was still only around 2,000. This chapter will describe the conditions that prevailed in the years that led up to this important conflict.

Vassalage

The peculiarly medieval Portuguese concept of “vassalage” is an essential part of this story. Beginning with their first contacts with Kongo rulers in the 1480s, Portuguese authorities in Angola used a system of written treaties to secure the loyalty of major and minor rulers, called *sobas* and *sekulus* respectively. The treaties offered protection from the King of Portugal in exchange for several basic promises. The concept of vassalage has deep roots in Western Europe, and its usage by Portuguese officials in Angola retained some of the original characteristics but displayed important differences as well.¹⁰⁰ Vassalage treaties were first mentioned in the Angolan records in 1582.¹⁰¹ Although the system of vassalage had all but disappeared in Portugal by the nineteenth century, Portuguese agents in Angola pursued it with undiminished vigor. In its medieval European configuration, “vassalage was a relationship of dependence entered upon voluntarily.”¹⁰² While this was sometimes the case with *sobas* in Angola who sought protection or trading privileges by allying with the colonial state, Heintze points to the

⁹⁹ Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola*, 47.

¹⁰⁰ Beatrix Heintze, “Luso-African Feudalism in Angola? The Vassal Treaties of the 16th to the 18th Century,” *Revista Portuguesa de História* 18 (1980): 111-131.

¹⁰¹ Heintze, “Luso-African Feudalism,” 121.

¹⁰² Heintze, “Luso-African Feudalism,” 117.

one-sided nature of the agreements and benefits, noting that vassalage was “almost always forced upon the Angolan chiefs.”¹⁰³ Candido, on the other hand, calls vassals “colonial intermediaries, in search of new opportunities that could preserve their position in the context of colonial conquest.”¹⁰⁴

The ceremony associated with the signing of a vassalage treaty was called *undamento*, and involved a fascinating fusion of ceremonial practices. When an agreement was reached between representatives of Portugal and a *soba*, the conditions of the agreement were solemnly presented orally in the language of the *soba*. Then followed a ritualized embrace between the new vassal and the Portuguese representative, as well as a shared meal. This portion of the ceremony closely resembled its medieval European counterpart.¹⁰⁵ Next, the colonial agent threw white clay or flour onto the shoulders of the new vassal—a practice derived from the Ndongo kingdom, where rulers were invested with supernatural power and adorned with white clay in ritual contexts.¹⁰⁶

The *undamento* ceremony concluded with “investiture” of the new vassal, in which the colonial agent would present a gift of new clothing and a Portuguese flag to the *soba*.¹⁰⁷ Some vassals in the eighteenth century were even branded with the royal Portuguese insignia on their chest, much like the slaves taken to the Americas who were painfully and permanently marked as property of the crown.¹⁰⁸ The fascinating mixture of elements included in the *undamento* ceremony reveals the historical depth of the vassal relationship. The fact that it culminated with a

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Candido, *An African Slaving Port*, 53.

¹⁰⁵ Heintze, “Luso-African Feudalism,” 119.

¹⁰⁶ Heintze, “Luso-African Feudalism,” 119. See also: Candido, *An African Slaving Port*, 51.

¹⁰⁷ Heintze, “Luso-African Feudalism,” 120.

¹⁰⁸ Candido, *An African Slaving Port*, 52.

gift of clothing and a flag speaks to the importance of material objects, especially things that could be worn or displayed prominently, in establishing a relationship to colonial power.

Mbailundu's History of Vassalage

As early as 1610, a Portuguese Captain General reported trading with the kingdom of Mbailundu on an appreciable scale. Little is known about Portuguese-Mbailundu relations in the intervening century and half, but in 1767 authorities in Benguela were already requesting assistance from the Captain General in Luanda to make war on Mbailundu. The central government refused, citing “material inability” to wage war.¹⁰⁹ This pattern, where officials in remote areas of Angola pleaded unsuccessfully with officials at the coast for military assistance, persisted for more than a century beyond these events. Indeed, as has already been discussed, withdrawal from the interior was an official policy of the Portuguese crown in Angola after 1860. It enabled a pattern whereby leaders of kingdoms, such as the widely celebrated Queen Njinga of Ndongo-Matamba, managed to keep Portuguese invaders at bay and secure long years of autonomy for their subjects.¹¹⁰

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Mbailundu had grown rich and powerful by leveraging its strategic position along slave caravan routes between Benguela and the interior of the continent. General prosperity depended to some degree on good relations between the nobility of Mbailundu and slave traders, usually black or *mestiço* men called *pombeiros* or *negros calçados* (shod blacks) who represented trading firms or worked for individual traders at the coast.¹¹¹ But the balance of power in this economic system remained with Mbailundu until the 1890s. Its large, militarized population and organized political structure, coupled with the

¹⁰⁹ Ralph Delgado, *Ao Sul da Cuanza: ocupação e aproveitamento do antigo reino de Benguela, Vol. I* (Lisboa: Imprensa Bezeza, 1941), 378.

¹¹⁰ Linda Heywood, *Njinga of Angola: Africa's Warrior Queen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).

¹¹¹ Willy Bal, “Portugais Pombeiro Commerçant Ambulant du Sertão” *Annali*, 7, 2 (1965): 128-161.

difficulty of the terrain in the highlands, meant that Portuguese authorities found it exceptionally difficult to penetrate the area, let alone establish a permanent presence. Strong *sobas* and *sekulus* could prevent trade caravans from passing or demand tribute, and they knew they had little to fear from Portuguese authorities. Mbailundu's "repeated insults to people belonging to Portugal" earned the kingdom a fearsome reputation at the coast.¹¹²

In 1774 Portuguese troops invaded Mbailundu and destroyed its villages, arresting the *soba* and installing one of his brothers as the new *soba* and a vassal of the Portuguese crown. By 1776, this new Mbailundu regime was once again waging war on Portugal, stirring the entire region into revolt. Mbailundu insurgents "dared to besiege the fort of Novo Redondo [160km north of Benguela], killing the Captain Major and some soldiers, and threatening to attack the fort in Benguela."¹¹³ After two years of war, Portuguese agents finally arrested this *soba* and imprisoned him, just as they had arrested his brother before him. In a bizarre repetition, colonial authorities installed yet another brother from the same elite family as the new *soba* of Mbailundu. On this occasion, Portuguese officials optimistically described the new Soba, named Capinganna, as "a valiant soldier and faithful vassal of the Portuguese crown."¹¹⁴

By 1837, the reigning Mbailundu *soba* was Quiongue-Vuque, a man of "gigantic stature" who had won the position in combat with his predecessor. The vanquished former *soba* then committed suicide rather than suffer the humiliation of defeat.¹¹⁵ The victorious *soba* requested that a Captain Major be stationed near his *ombala*. A Portuguese official noted that *soba* Quiongue-Vuque "wished to obey Portugal," and he suggested an authority be sent to

¹¹² Sociedade Geográfica de Lisboa (SGL), "Notícia do Sertão do Balundo, por Candido de Almeida Sandoval, 1837." *Annaes do Concelho Ultramarino*, Serié I: (Fev. 1854-Dez. 1858), 519.

¹¹³ Dom Antonio de Lancástre, Capitão General de Angola. *Officio de 1 de junho de 1776*. Quoted in: Sandoval, 1837, 520.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 521.

¹¹⁵ Dom Antonio de Lancástre, Capitão General de Angola. *Officio de 1 de junho de 1776*. Quoted in: Sandoval, 1837, 519.

Mbailundu “with an olive branch in hand” to secure the *soba*’s vassalage.¹¹⁶ This is another pattern that prevailed in the following century—*sobas* clearly recognized the potential advantages of cooperating with agents of the Portuguese king, and often requested closer cooperation in the form of a resident Portuguese authority in their lands.

Despite the request of *Soba* Quiongue-Vuque and many of his successors, it was not until 1891 that a Captain Major would be permanently stationed with colonial soldiers at Mbailundu. On January 1st of that year, Captain Major Justino Teixeira da Silva wrote to Luanda asking for resources to build a permanent residence in Bailundo. He justified this request by complaining about the “very well-heeled” American mission station nearby at Chilume, which was “of great inconvenience for various reasons.”¹¹⁷ In addition to their irritating affluence, which outshined the humble Portuguese presence in the area, the missionaries had been running the mail service. Teixeira da Silva found this extremely prejudicial to Portuguese authority, and pleaded with the governor to provide resources and instructions to remedy the situation at once and bring the mail service under the control of the proper “state.” This dynamic of competition between missionaries and colonial agents is explored further in Chapter Five, but this anecdote exemplifies the ways in which missionary stations often functioned as independent states within the Portuguese territory.¹¹⁸

The Prosperous Reign of Ekuikui II (1879-1893)

The most fondly remembered and celebrated of all the Bailundo *sobas* (kings), and the only one memorialized in public art in 21st century Angola is Ekuikui II. During this *soba*’s reign (1876-1893), the numbers of whites in the Bailundo region increased at an unprecedented rate. It

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 520.

¹¹⁷ AHA, Caixa 3831, Maço 5. Capitania-mór do Bailundo – Serie de 1891, Oficio no. 2. Justino Teixeira da Silva to the Governor General in Luanda, 1 January 1891.

¹¹⁸ Allen F. Isaacman, *Mozambique: The Africanization of European Institution: The Zambezi Prazos, 1750-1902*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972).

was Ekuikui II who welcomed the North American missionaries and encouraged them to build a school near his *ombala* instead of continuing inland to the rival Viye kingdom; it was he who allowed Portuguese traders to settle there; who requested that a Portuguese Captain Major be stationed permanently in Bailundo; he who sustained wars of brutal competition with neighboring Ovimbundu kingdoms, helping to facilitate their conquest by Portuguese troops.

A faithful vassal of the Portuguese King, Ekuikui II wrote many letters to colonial authorities in Luanda, which provide a fascinating window into this powerful leader's relationship with the colonial state. In 1884, Ekuikui wrote the Governor of Benguela, asking him to send "a representative of the nation [Portugal] with whom I can communicate in order to deliberate about what is most convenient for this country [Angola], and also at least a good priest to teach my children to read and write."¹¹⁹ In 1886, Ekuikui requested permission from the chief administrator of Catumbela (a coastal port neighboring Benguela) to take military action against some groups in Quibula and Quissama who were attacking caravans. He told the official he wanted to "civilize" these groups.¹²⁰ He also asked for envelopes, pens, and ink, and repeated his request for a priest to come to Mbailundo and baptize his people and open a school.

As Angolan historian Maria da Conceição Neto has shown, *sobas* like Ekuikui II saw the potential benefits of becoming vassals of the Portuguese crown, and considered themselves independent rulers even if their vassalage technically made them subordinate to colonial interests. Neto writes:

Where Africans thought alliance, Europeans understood subjugation; while the [*soba*] of Bailundo wanted a representative of Portuguese authority to serve as an 'ambassador' and to settle matters related to the growing number of subjects of the King of Portugal in his territory, without any other power of intervention, the governor pretended to place an administrative authority as if he were dealing with a subjugated territory. I say

¹¹⁹ AHA, Luanda. 16/5/1884. Dom Equiqui Sobba do Bailundo ao Governador de Benguela, 12 March 1884.

¹²⁰ AHA, Luanda. 16/5/1884. Dom Equiqui Sobba do Bailundo ao Chefe d'Concelho de Catumbela, 18 September 1886.

“pretended” because in the internal correspondence it is clear that the governing officials of the colony knew the reality.¹²¹

I quote Neto at length because she so clearly summarizes both the conflicting “official” readings of vassalage agreements *and* the very important reality of authority in the interior of Angola—both *sobas* like Ekuikui II and colonial officials knew that real power and authority continued to reside in the *ombalas* and not in the scattered, understaffed Portuguese forts.

Mbailundu Vassalage Treaty (1893)

A vassalage treaty from Mbailundu, signed 3 July 1893, when Soba Kátcháballa took power after the death of Ekuikui II, contains several conditions of vassalage that illustrate the nature of relations between *sobas* and the Portuguese state.

Soba Kátcháballa, from Bailundo, whose *emballa* [court] is situated around 300 meters from the captaincy, presented himself with his *macotas* [advisors]. [...] He declared that he had come to give an oath of fidelity to His Majesty El-Rei of Portugal, which was accepted by the Captain Major under the following conditions:

- 1st Obey in every instance the orders of the Portuguese Government
- 2nd Do not take up arms, and prevent your people from taking up arms against the Portuguese Government
- 3rd Provide carriers as soon as they are requested by legally constituted authorities
- 4th Turn over any criminal or deserter found in your territories to the closest authority, as soon as it is demanded
- 5th Not allow any flag other than the Portuguese flag to be displayed in your territories

These conditions were accepted by [the *soba*], being promised to him by the Captain Major all the protection that the Government ordinarily gives to its subjects, and in this ceremony [the *soba*] was also given a Portuguese flag.¹²²

Several items on this vassalage treaty are key to this work’s larger investigation of the relations between *sobas*, their subjects, and the Portuguese state. Chapter Four on the Mbailundu War will

¹²¹ Maria da Conceição Neto, ‘Hóspedes Incómodos: Portugueses e Americanos no Bailundo no Último Quartel do Século XIX,’ *Actas do Seminário Encontro de Povos e Culturas em Angola – Luanda, 3 a 6 de Abril de 1995* (Luanda, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1995), 378.

¹²² Biblioteca Municipal do Huambo (BMH). Bailundo, Folder 1, 1893-1905. Document 13.941: Vassalage treaty of soba Kátcháballa, 3 July 1893.

show a flagrant rejection of the first two items during a time when the *soba* Kalandula was ostensibly a Portuguese vassal. The third item, the pledge to provide carriers, is absolutely fundamental. As Chapter Two will show, long-distance trade and caravan labor were the backbone of social and economic life in the central highlands, but increasingly harsh demands for carriers by colonial authorities caused near constant conflicts over caravan labor by the end of the nineteenth century.¹²³

The fourth item speaks to the exceptional mobility of Angola's population, due largely to the precariousness of rights and freedom. Not only were a large proportion of people vulnerable to enslavement even into the twentieth century, but around two thirds of the European population in Luanda in 1879 were *degradados*—murderers, rapists, thieves, political dissidents, Gypsies, Jews¹²⁴—criminal exiles and “undesirables” from Portugal who frequently fled from penal colonies or were left alone to live by their wits after they had served their sentences.¹²⁵ *Degradados* sometimes found homes among the populations in the interior, evading recapture by seeking protection from *sobas*. Among these communities of runaways were also soldiers, some Portuguese, some recruited in Mozambique or other parts of Angola. Part of becoming a vassal was the pledge not to shelter such persons—the presence of the promise indicates it was an existing problem that Portuguese authorities wished to eliminate.

The last item on the vassalage treaty is a promise to display no other flag than the Portuguese flag in a vassal *soba*'s territory, combined with the presentation of a flag upon the signing of the treaty, speaks to two important concerns of this work. The years between 1880 and

¹²³ Note the treaty's language on who can demand carriers from vassal *sobas*: “legally constituted authorities.” That it was necessary to state this seems to reinforce the fact that there were multiple kinds of people claiming authority, only some of which were considered “legally constituted” by colonial agents. Questions of the legality and legitimacy of different types of authority will be discussed at much greater length below.

¹²⁴ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 61.

¹²⁵ Hermenegildo Capello & Roberto Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca: Description of a Journey into Central and West Africa: Vol. II* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1882), 227 note 2.

1910 encompassed a frantic push by Portugal to “effectively occupy” the Angolan territory it had claimed since the fifteenth century. Material emblems of Portuguese power like flags, and less obviously nationalistic symbols like hats and shoes, performed important work in mediating relations between Portuguese and Angolan authorities. Gift exchanges and tribute continued to inflect political relationships against a background of intensifying trade, and such exchanges, along with differing attitudes towards debt, provoked many conflicts.

Soba Numa’s Revolt, 1896

After the stable period of relatively peaceful relations between Mbailundu and Portuguese authorities under Ekuikui, relations between the two states began to deteriorate rapidly. In 1896, six years before the Mbailundu Revolt, *Soba* Numa of Mbailundu got into a conflict with authorities at the Portuguese fort “in consequence of a ‘disgrace committed by a miserable petty trader passing through the region.’”¹²⁶ A Canadian missionary reported that a local trader had been “making too free” with one of Numa’s wives, prompting the *soba* to burn the trader’s house.¹²⁷ Another source claims the trader in question was a *degredado* who had “illicit relations” with one of the Numa’s wives.¹²⁸ This may be the same incident described to me in oral history interviews, wherein one of the *soba*’s wives engaged in “forced adultery” with a white trader when she visited his shop on an errand.¹²⁹ This incident was recounted in 2013 by an elderly man from the Bailundo area as one of the causes of the 1902 Mbailundu Revolt—rather unsurprisingly the insults to Ovimbundu and their manifestations of discontent during this

¹²⁶ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas de Angola*, 75.

¹²⁷ Linda Heywood, *Production, Trade and Power in the Political Economy of Central Angola, 1850–1930*, (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1984), 308.

¹²⁸ *Portugal em Africa* Vol. 3. (1896), 283.

¹²⁹ Daniel Cassoma in interview, 2013, 14:04.

period are melded together in collective memory, and abuses of women were a common cause for collective discontent among *gentio*.¹³⁰

Numa, either less trusting or more risk-averse than Ekuikui II had been, was not inclined to allow Portuguese troops to pass freely through his territory. In 1896 a group of ten soldiers was transporting “some *degradados* and many vagrants” to the penal colony at Moxico, and they camped near the Mbailundu *ombala* along the way. Their presence so infuriated *Soba* Numa that he had some of his assistants set the camp on fire in the middle of the night.¹³¹ In retaliation for these attacks, Portuguese forces raided and destroyed Numa’s hilltop *ombala*.¹³² Henceforth Mbailundu *sobas* would be forced to hold court in an area that did not “dominate” the fort. Within a few months, Numa’s supporters were reportedly plotting to reoccupy the *ombala*, while yet another new Captain Major, Simpliciano de Almeida, argued that Portuguese agents should occupy the location themselves and fortify it.¹³³ During the confusion, *Soba* Numa fled to the mountain stronghold of Bimbe and escaped capture by the Portuguese.

In the years between Numa’s 1896 revolt and the large uprising that began in 1902, there were many moments of insubordination and unrest. Never again would relations between Portuguese officials and Mbailundu *sobas* be as cordial as they had been under Ekuikui II. The old ways of doing business, which allowed Ovimbundu kingdoms to effectively control the caravan trade, became increasingly undesirable to those in the upper echelons of Portuguese power. As the value of rubber grew on the international market and the pressure to “effectively occupy” Angola and solidify Portuguese claims to the territory meant that major changes had to

¹³⁰ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas*, 75 note 58.

¹³¹ *Portugal em Africa*, vol. 3. (1896): p. 282.

¹³² *Ibid*, p. 283.

¹³³ Heywood, *Production, Trade, and Power*, 311.

come. Mbailundu *sobas* knew this, and they also had to respond to the threats against their subjects posed by the growing numbers of traders settling in their kingdoms.

Fluidity and Boundary Making

At the turn of the 20th century as more new arrivals from Portugal began settling in the interior of Angola, they tended to displace established *mestiço* and Luso-African traders from their relatively privileged positions.¹³⁴ Havik describes a similar process of disenfranchisement experienced by the *Kristons* in Portuguese Guinea. Using Austen's concept of "ethnic relays," Havik focuses on intermediary groups' "unique position between 'ethnic' African and 'colonial' European worlds and on the opportunism and creativity with which [they] ... adapted to changing circumstances during the 19th and early 20th centuries."¹³⁵ But while people in Angola continued to fashion malleable identities in response to social change, colonial agents tried to cement racial and social boundaries in order to open the way for more white settlement and a more aggressive phase of colonial occupation.

By studying conflict, we can observe the fragmentation and reshuffling of social and political identities as people responded to these pressures. As Stoler argues, in diverse colonial situations throughout history, "increasing knowledge, contact, and familiarity lead not to a diminution of racial discrimination but to an intensification of it over time, and to a *rigidifying of boundaries*."¹³⁶ The years leading up to and following the Mbailundu Revolt saw intense and violent attempts at boundary making by variously defined actors—colonial agents, Protestant and Catholic missionaries, and leaders from Mbailundu, Wambu, and other highland polities. Such

¹³⁴ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 53-54; see also Jill Dias, "Black Chiefs, White Traders and Colonial Policy near the Kwanza: Kabuku Kambilo and the Portuguese, 1873-1896." *The Journal of African History* 17(2), 1976, 251.

¹³⁵ Philip Havik, "Traders, Planters and Go-betweens: the Kriston in Portuguese Guinea," *Portuguese Studies Review* 19 (1-2) (2011), 197.

¹³⁶ Stoler, "Rethinking Colonial Categories," 137, emphasis added.

boundary making comes into sharp relief when we consider the existing social, racial, and class fluidity, which prompted power-seeking groups and individuals to draw stricter boundaries.

Colonial Power and Legibility

An anecdote from 1897 brings together many of the themes of this dissertation. Contortions of colonial and customary authority rendered agreements and alliances null or meaningless with great regularity. The authority of traders to impose punishments and collect debts from *gentio* was poorly defined and hotly contested. *Sobas* turned to colonial authorities or sympathetic traders, pitting them against one another when it served their own best interests. People used clothing, particularly European military uniforms, to claim authority by putting on the guise of the colonial state. This chaotic system bred violence and anarchy, and Portuguese officials knew that it could not continue if they were to achieve real control of Angola. It was an accumulation of grievances like these that built into the mood for revolt in 1902.

In June 1897, Soba Gumbe of Galanga called upon traders from the coastal firm Teixeira & Amaro to protect him from the predations of two Luso-Africans attempting to collect an illegitimate debt.¹³⁷ Trader and property-owner Luiz Moreira dos Reis, based in Novo Redondo, heard Gumbe's story and filed a formal complaint against the ex-Captain Major of Bailundo, Evaristo Simpliciano de Almeida. Reis criticized the manner in which Captain Almeida had inserted himself into the conflict between Soba Gumbe and the Luso-African traders by providing an official summons and several men disguised as soldiers.

Reis asked to speak to these "soldiers," and a "a dark-skinned man with a bushy mustache, wearing braided sandals, pants, and a cotton jacket" presented himself as Luiz

¹³⁷ AHA Cx. 2446, Mç. 1, Luiz Moreira dos Reis to Captain Major of Bailundo: Report on occurrences in Galanga, 15 June 1897.

Cangaheta.¹³⁸ Based on his appearance, Reis supposed the man was “an *Ambaquista* or *Pungo Andongo*.”¹³⁹ The “improvised soldiers” came to Galanga accompanied by a sheriff (*Official de diligencias*) with a summons calling for the detainment of Soba Gumbe’s son. This sheriff was “a black guy, shod, wearing a short jacket, pants, and a hat,” and his name was João Garrido Fragoso.¹⁴⁰ Reis recognized the surname Fragoso as belonging to a well-established Luso-African family in the region. Reis looked at the summons, signed by Captain Major Almeida, and judged it to be legitimate. But still he admonished the men, they had no right to demand that the soba kill chickens and pigs for them to eat.

Cangaheta had been engaged in an ongoing attempt to collect a debt on behalf of a deceased Portuguese trader who had been his tenant when he died.¹⁴¹ He continued harassing Soba Gumbe for payment, and took advantage of a transfer of power at the Bailundo fort to try to get the state to back his claim. Knowing that the new Captain Major, Simpliciano de Almeida, was unaware of the conflict, Cangaheta pleaded his case and received the official summons, which he produced when the trader Reis questioned his legitimacy. Reis did his best to “read” these men who claimed colonial authority. Their clothing, speech, and facial hair were pieces of the puzzle, as were the documents they presented in order to prove their right to be there. The men they brought along to enforce their demands were, according to Reis, “fake soldiers” who did not have any legitimate claim to enforce the financial interests of Cangaheta. Reis perhaps

¹³⁸ AHA Cx. 2446 Mç. 1, Luiz Moreira dos Reis to Captain Major of Bailundo: Report on occurrences in Galanga, 15 June 1897.

¹³⁹ Pungo Andongo is another place-based category similar to Ambaquista. Pungo Andongo was located along the same east-west trade route from Luanda, and had been the site of an early Portuguese fort in 1671 (Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, 456). As in Ambaca, the legacy of this early fort was a community of people associated with trade, literacy, and the affectations of Portuguese culture.

¹⁴⁰ AHA Cx. 2446, Mç. 1, Report on occurrences in Galanga, 15 June 1897.

¹⁴¹ Beatrix Heintze notes that it was common for traders to try to collect the debts of their deceased colleagues. Beatrix Heintze, *Pioneiros Africanos: Caravanas de carregadores na África Centro-Occidental (entre 1850 e 1890)*, trans. Marina Santos (Luanda: Editorial Nzila, 2004), 665.

represented the new wave of colonialism that was encroaching on the Angolan hinterlands. The chaotic state of affairs that allowed intermediaries like Luiz Cangaheta take advantage of contortions of colonial authority to enforce debts would be replaced by a more tightly regulated system; a system which would shift control of commerce gradually into the hands of whites of Portuguese origin as the 20th century unfolded.

Soba Gumbe went on to take part in the 1902 Mbailundu War five years after the events described above, and he either died in the fighting or went into hiding.¹⁴² Much evidence suggests that personal grudges, like the one between Gumbe and Cangaheta, motivated violence during the 1902 Mbailundu Revolt. The *soba*'s conflict with Cangaheta and Frago is exemplary of many of the issues discussed in this dissertation. Only Frago had an "official" affiliation with the Portuguese state in his role as sheriff. Cangaheta was a trader who sought to reap material benefits from the death of his European tenant, and who took advantage of a shift in colonial authority, exploiting the ignorance of the newly appointed Captain Almeida in order to enforce his demands on *Soba* Gumbe. The Luso-Africans brought a troupe of "fake soldiers" to add the specter of legitimate colonial force to their mission. Reis, a trader from a coastal firm, tried to "read" the men in Cangaheta's party through their dress and appearance, the documents they carried, and the stories they told.

A Vulnerable, Vagabond State

Sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos has characterized Portuguese colonialism as "subaltern," and its colonial power in Africa as "apparitional."¹⁴³ Portugal's position as "peripheral" in relation to other European colonizers; the country lagged behind the rest of Western Europe by most indicators at the start of the 20th century; its economy stagnated and

¹⁴² Heywood, *Production, Trade and Power*, 326.

¹⁴³ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39(2) (2002), 9 & 26.

literacy rates remained extremely low.¹⁴⁴ Efforts to recruit voluntary migrants were hindered by Angola's reputation as a disease-ridden, lawless land filled with hostile and savage inhabitants.¹⁴⁵

Portugal was the first European nation to expand its frontiers into the Atlantic and beyond, raiding for slaves in Senegal as early as 1441, and making contact with the Kongo Kingdom in 1483.¹⁴⁶ It was also the very last to grant independence to its African colonies in 1975. As a result, Portugal's Iberian Catholic form of colonialism persisted far beyond the decline and death of Spanish colonialism in the Americas, and was forced to compete with the generally Protestant, northern European colonialism that achieved global dominance by the 20th century. The "scramble for Africa" at the end of the nineteenth century aroused anxiety and frantic competition for control over African resources, territory, and populations. For many Portuguese, Angola was something of a national birthright. After over four centuries of largely unchallenged economic primacy in the region, many Portuguese statesmen and citizens considered their country's claim to Angola indisputable. But with the Berlin Conference of 1885, this once great conquering power was now effectively pushed to the periphery of European colonizing powers, and faced immense diplomatic and economic pressure from wealthier nations like Britain, France, and Germany. And beyond any practical concerns, many Portuguese politicians simply felt humiliated by their nation's low standing among the other colonizing powers.¹⁴⁷

Resource-poor Portugal, with a largely illiterate and agrarian population, now faced the monumental challenge of populating, physically occupying, and effectively administering its

¹⁴⁴ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 69-70.

¹⁴⁵ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 97-98.

¹⁴⁶ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 13-14.

¹⁴⁷ Fola Soremekun, "The Bailundu Revolt, 1902," *African Social Research* 16 (1973), 447-73.

African colonies, as opposed to simply controlling them informally and economically. Political turmoil and economic volatility in the metropole during the first decades of the twentieth century rubbed salt in Portugal's wound.¹⁴⁸ Only scattered pockets of imperial administrative power existed in the Angolan hinterland. Very often traders would be appointed to positions of colonial authority; those living far afield of Portuguese centers of authority often seized control over the subjects of local *sobas* through violence and extortion. Their exploits were the most visible face of Portuguese colonial power for *gentio* in the hinterlands, which left higher officials constantly vexed.¹⁴⁹ Wheeler and Christensen describe the Portuguese administrative system in turn of the century Angola as "amorphous, informal, and at times chaotic."¹⁵⁰

In many parts of the Angolan hinterland, the only representatives of Portuguese authority were men known as "residents" (*moradores*). This loose term seems to have encompassed anyone who lived and traded among *gentio* but spoke Portuguese and displayed at least nominal loyalty to the colonial apparatus. In practice, these residents exhibited varying degrees of commitment to enforcing colonial authority. Wheeler and Christensen describe *moradores* as "resident traders who could muster their own private armies."¹⁵¹ While sometimes welcomed by *sobas* and allowed to marry into elite lineages, sometimes "they were merely tolerated or even abused, robbed, expelled or murdered. Their ranks were continually swelled by army deserters," exiles from Portugal, "and other vagabonds."¹⁵²

In 1846 in Viye, the Ovimbundu kingdom east of Mbailundu, there were 100 *moradores* or "civilized" residents. Many had been established there for at least a generation by that time.

¹⁴⁸ Douglas Wheeler, *Republican Portugal: A Political History 1910-1926* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 1-46.

¹⁴⁹ Soremekun, "The Bailundu Revolt," 454.

¹⁵⁰ Wheeler & Christensen, "To Rise With One Mind," 61.

¹⁵¹ Wheeler & Christensen, "To Rise With One Mind," 55.

¹⁵² Wheeler & Christensen, "To Rise With One Mind," 55.

Their places of origin and skin colors were recorded in a census, providing rare insight into the composition of a colonial population. Only six of Viye's *moradores* had been born in Portugal (including the island of Madeira) and were recorded in the census as "white." Sixteen came from Ambaca, the old Portuguese outpost in the Luanda hinterland that was home to the famed *Ambaquistas*. Fifty-four of the one hundred were designated "black," thirty-six were "*mestiços pardos*" (brown or light-skinned). Mysteriously, four residents were recorded as "*mestiços cabodos*," which Jean-Luc Vellut suggests may be a corruption of the Brazilian word "*caboclo*" used to describe people of mixed European and Amerindian descent.¹⁵³

Joaquim Graça, the administrator who collected this 1846 census data from Viye, noted that the *moradores* lived "intertwined" with Ovimbundu people in the region.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, Heintze has shown the degree to which intermarriage between *Ambaquista* men and daughters of elites in the kingdoms where they traded were common and served to strengthen political and commercial ties.¹⁵⁵ Fluid understandings of kinship were common in Angola, and much evidence indicates that, "sharp ethnic classifications and divisions were more a result of European obsessions than of Central African realities."¹⁵⁶

Penal States

Well into the 20th century, Portugal continued its practice of exiling criminal convicts known as *degradados* from the metropole to populate the colonies. Angola was the preferred location for exile over the other Portuguese territories; it was the most lucrative and resource-rich colony, but exile there also amounted to a slow death sentence from the perspective of most

¹⁵³ Vellut, "Notes sur de Lunda," 125.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 124.

¹⁵⁵ Beatrix Heintze, *Angola em Movimento: Vias de Transporte, Comunicação e História* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2008), 156-7.

¹⁵⁶ Beatrix Heintze. "Translocal 'Kinship' Relations in Central African Politics of the 19th Century," in *Translocality: the study of globalizing processes from a Southern perspective*. ed. Ulrike Freitag. (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010), 192.

Portuguese.¹⁵⁷ After 1885 Angola became the sole recipient of *degradados* after they were barred from Mozambique and São Tomé.¹⁵⁸ Convincing Portuguese citizens to migrate voluntarily to Angola was notoriously difficult. So the exiled *degradados*, to the chagrin of bourgeois Portuguese residents of Luanda, often dominated the settler scene throughout the interior of the colony and served as the face of Portuguese authority. According to the Lisbon Geographical Society, *degradados* comprised just under *two thirds* of the white population in Angola from 1883 to 1898.¹⁵⁹ The period from 1902 to 1914 saw a worsening of the “quality” of *degradados* arriving in Angola: 57% had been convicted of “crimes against persons,” including murder, assault causing bodily injury, and rape.¹⁶⁰

Colonial correspondence contains many examples of angst from officials, desperately appealing to Lisbon to do something about the sorry state of these indigent white settlers—in some cases asking for their removal from Angola altogether. Officials voiced special anxiety over the lack of prestige Portuguese people enjoyed in the eyes of Africans because of the poverty and social deviance of most of the white settlers. Embarrassment and shame seem to have been widespread emotions common enough to color the archival record. In 1897, Major Ferreira, a military commander in Benguela, complained to the governor about the abject poverty of the *degradado*-soldiers dispersed throughout Benguela district in “military agrarian penal settlements.”¹⁶¹ The most notorious of these penal colonies was Moxico, on the far eastern reaches of the Portuguese territory. Major Ferreira described how a particular detachment of soldiers near the Zambezi River lacked uniforms: “the only military accouterment which the majority have are hats which are already worn and ragged. This state of nudity, which gives the

¹⁵⁷ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 87.

¹⁵⁸ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 74.

¹⁵⁹ Silva Telles, cited in Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 86.

¹⁶⁰ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 87.

¹⁶¹ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 81.

military force the appearance of common heathens, is very prejudicial to our prestige among these peoples.”¹⁶²

In addition to the embarrassingly destitute appearance of soldiers and convicts, the colonial state barely managed to feed them. Food scarcity posed a constant threat to the stability of penal colonies, and convicts regularly escaped into the countryside. Officials frequently debated the possibility of “distributing” soldiers and convicts from the penal colonies among local villages, which were better equipped to feed them, ignoring the question of whether village residents would accept such an arrangement without a fight. Most officials acknowledged, “the Africans would certainly not regret their [the *degradados*] absence.”¹⁶³

Legion of Vagabonds

In 1907, a colonial administrator from Luanda wrote to the Governor General, asking him to remove the “legion of vagabonds” residing there.¹⁶⁴ By his count, in the past five years Luanda had received five hundred and six convicts from Portugal, of both sexes. Excluding those who had since died, been repatriated, or taken up new occupations, he estimated that there were around two hundred ex-convicts who had completed their sentences—the majority living in Luanda—who lived “miserably, some by alms, even begging from the natives.”¹⁶⁵ To this number, he added around a hundred and sixty “vagrants,” who had come to Angola voluntarily but had no means of returning home, “a great quantity of poor Europeans, who came to Africa voluntarily to seek fortunes and who live here unemployed and destitute,” and “a relatively large

¹⁶² Ferreira (17 July 1897), cited in Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 82.

¹⁶³ Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*, 85.

¹⁶⁴ AHU, 806 1L 1905-1918 ANG (Correspondência). António Julio Bello d’Almeida to General Secretary of Luanda. 6 April 1907.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

number of women and children belonging to families of ex-convicts and who like their patriarchs live in the most abject and sordid misery.”¹⁶⁶

The Governor General took up the cause, sharing his concerns in a letter to Lisbon on April 12, 1907 in which he called for the complete cessation of the practice of sending convicted criminals to Angola. “We are proceeding in the opposite direction to all other colonizing peoples,” who prohibit “criminals, vagabonds, indigents and illiterates” from settling in their colonies.¹⁶⁷ Instead, “we [Portuguese] are dumping, with crazy prodigality, the dung heap and the social scum of the metropole upon only one of our colonies, the most Portuguese, the largest and the richest.”¹⁶⁸

Historian Ricardo Roque describes “Portuguese imperial vulnerability” in the case of Angola.¹⁶⁹ Acknowledging “the narrow bounds of Portuguese authority” in outlying regions of Angola, Roque stresses that vulnerability and weakness were by no means unique to the Portuguese colonial project, but rather were characteristic of *all* colonial situations.¹⁷⁰ If the Mbailundu Revolt represented an opportunistic attack on a colonizing power perceived to be weak—and there is much evidence that it did—it must only have confirmed official Portuguese anxiety over how little the *gentio* respected colonial authority.

While the real power of the colonial state to recruit labor, collect taxes, or enforce laws was undeniably thin, the subtler forms of power and influence which permeated everyday relationships and interactions reveal how “the colonial” made itself felt and maintained semiotic currency. Anxieties like those expressed by Luanda officials in 1907 reveal the extent to which

¹⁶⁶ AHU, 806 1L 1905-1918 ANG (Correspondência). António Julio Bello d’Almeida to General Secretary of Luanda. 6 April 1907.

¹⁶⁷ AHU, 806 1L 1905-1918 ANG (Correspondência). Governor General of Luanda to Minister and Secretary of State for the Navy and Overseas Affairs. 12 April 1907.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ricardo Roque, “The Razor’s Edge: Portuguese Imperial Vulnerability in Colonial Moxico, Angola,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 36(1) (2003), 105-124.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

state control of Portuguese settlers was largely a fiction. As Miller's definition of Luso-Africans suggests, even white traders who put down roots in Angola in the mid-19th century could be considered intermediaries, because their livelihood and survival depended upon a significant level of integration to local African sociopolitical networks. Many who settled in the interior married into elite African families and learned local languages. There was even a term in Portuguese to describe the "adoption of an African mode of life by a white [person]": *cafrealização*.¹⁷¹

Performing Portugueseness

From February to September of 1907, a trader named Augusto dos Santos Cardozo sent a series of letters to his colleagues in the area of Novo Redondo, asking them to verify his character as a "good Portuguese."¹⁷² Cardozo wrote these letters because he faced an accusation by state officials that he had incited a small revolt by *gentio* in the area. Many "Portuguese Africans" at this moment of transition came under increasing pressure to defend that status as white settlement increased and colonial agents sought greater control over the territory. Cardozo's letters asked several questions designed to verify that he could be trusted as a true Portuguese.

- 1) Is it true or do you know that I can speak the gentile language?
- 2) In my quality as a Portuguese, you who know my heart, can you see in me a traitor to my or our dear fatherland?
- 3) And finally am I or am I not an honest republican who lives by my legitimate commerce?"¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas*, p. 354. The word "*cafrealização*" is not found in contemporary Portuguese dictionaries, but obviously originates from the pejorative term for black Africans, "*cafre*" (or kaffir, in South Africa and other parts of Anglophone and Swahili-speaking Africa). In one of my interviews in 2013, a Mbailundu elder proudly and repeatedly referred to Mbailundu people as "*cafreal*," emphasizing their fierce warrior heritage and dedicated resistance to colonial rule.

¹⁷² AHA, Caixa 4881. Cardozo to Martins, 12 February 1907.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

The recipient of one letter, Carlos Martins, had known Cardozo since he had lived in the area during which time he claimed Cardozo had always traded legitimately and honestly. He claimed to “truly” know that Cardozo neither understood nor spoke a “gentile language.”¹⁷⁴ He confirmed Cardozo was, “incapable of committing any traitorous action against our fatherland.” In his letter to Ernesto d’Amorim, Cardozo left out the question about “gentile” language. Amorim called Cardozo “incapable” of betraying the dear fatherland (Portugal). Much to the contrary, he believed that Cardozo, whom he called “a true republican,” was willing to shed his own blood for a cause that was just and beneficial to Portugal.¹⁷⁵ This is indicative of yet another layer of conflict in this context, between monarchists and a growing number of Portuguese republicans who were gaining influence in commerce and fiercely opposed the Portuguese monarchy.

Cardozo’s letter to Bastos, of the trading firm Bastos e Velozo, also omitted the question of “gentile language,” asking instead for confirmation of Cardozo’s quality as a Portuguese citizen, his status as “an honest republican,” and the legitimacy of his trade. “Is it not true that I esteem my education above all else?” Cardozo asked.¹⁷⁶ Bastos responded that Cardozo was “a serious and honest man” who was incapable of committing hostile acts against the state.¹⁷⁷ The suite of characteristics emphasized in these forgotten letters, from the *Arquivo Histórico de Angola* in Luanda, reveals much about the ways in which people performed “Portuguese” identity in Angola. Cardozo’s predicament represents an inherent conflict between a “state,” which although still under the Portuguese monarchy in 1907, was hurtling towards a republican takeover in 1910.

¹⁷⁴ AHA, Caixa 4881, Martins to Cardozo, 27 February 1907.

¹⁷⁵ AHA, Caixa 4881, Bastos to Cardozo, 14 February 1907.

¹⁷⁶ AHA, Caixa 4881 Cardozo to Bastos, 16 February 1907.

¹⁷⁷ AHA, Caixa 4881, Bastos to Cardozo, 16 February 1907.

To Antonio Gonçalves, Cardozo wrote: “As you are a very respected trader in Tunda, I beg you to tell me to what we should attribute the war [revolt] in that region and in Amboim.”¹⁷⁸ Gonçalves responded that the war in Amboim could be attributed to “the great scandals that the authorities of that region have created with the *revoltozos*.” The two traders exchanging these letters, which were written with the express purpose of clearing the accusation of treachery against Cardozo, nonetheless pointed to the colonial authorities as instigators of the revolt because of the “scandals” they provoked among the *gentio*.

Although traders like Cardozo often acted as representatives and clients of the Portuguese administration, whom they generally understood to be the reigning authority across a broad swath of land that became Angola, they positioned themselves firmly against it just as frequently. Whereas one scenario might require a trader to plead with coastal authorities to send troops to control unruly *gentio*, a different conflict could find the same trader at the center of a dangerous controversy that questioned his loyalty to the Governor General of Angola and by extension the King of Portugal. To Manoel Patrício Alvares, Cardozo wrote on 9 September 1907:

You who know my character, my heart, can you see in me one of the indicated [instigators] of the revolt of Amboim and Tunda? Do you know that I have always been an enemy of the soba [...] and that living in Gonga apart from that population, but yes its neighbor, you as a man of sound mind, do you see in me one of these individuals of low sentiments capable of joining with the *gentio* or provoking them to revolt against the authority of the region of Amboim and Tunda? Finally tell me from the bottom of your heart if my conduct is disloyal to the public tranquility in Amboim.¹⁷⁹

The stakes of being sufficiently “Portuguese” and proving one’s colonial loyalty were high in Cardozo’s case. In order to deflect the serious accusations against him, he appealed to friends who might bear witness to his “character,” his “heart,” and his soundness of mind.

¹⁷⁸ AHA, Caixa 4881, Cardozo to Gonçalves, 21 September 1907.

¹⁷⁹ AHA, Caixa 4881, Cardozo to Alvares, 9 September 1907.

The trader Cardozo's letters imply that his identity as a "good Portuguese" could be bolstered by proof he did not speak a "gentile language." The appeals to Portuguese patriotism in these letters define national loyalty as a matter of integrity and character residing in the *heart*. The ties to which Cardozo and his cohort allude are *affective*—only "individuals of low sentiment" have the audacity to join forces with such inferior people as the rebellious *gentio*. The next chapter explores some of the social categories based on dress, occupation, linguistic ability and variety of other characteristics that defined a person's status. It emphasizes the mutable nature of identity and status, and the ways in which racialized valuations of persons and groups unevenly affected economic and political opportunities for people in the late-nineteenth-century Angolan hinterland.

Conclusion

This closing anecdote about Cardozo's quest to prove his "Portugueseness" illustrates the overlapping systems in place by 1907. A world of ambiguous categories and malleable, shifting identities was being gradually replaced by a more rigid colonial system that required people to be *legible* to agents of the state. The older system remained in place into the 20th century. The relative absence of metropolitan Portuguese agents had meant that a variety of intermediary figures served as colonial agents, traders, and even sobas and sekulus, which contributed to the scattered nature of colonial power. Vassalage created a loose network of African polities that were nominally loyal to the state, but in practice, both sides violated vassalage agreements regularly. Sobas used their leverage to refuse to provide carriers when it did not suit their own interests or those of their subjects. Colonial officials attacked sobas on the slightest suspicion of insubordination, and struggled to maintain intellectual control of a shifting landscape of power and authority.

As the next chapter shows, the turn of the 20th century saw a shift towards a reduction in the variety of social categories with which people could effectively identify. The configuration that functioned without the sustained involvement of colonial agents, and rested on the foundation of the caravan trade, had allowed officials in Lisbon to avoid many of the expensive interventions that building a colonial presence required. But internal and external pressures began to build by the 1890s. Uprisings and violence were common across the territory of Angola, and the dictates of the Berlin Conference put pressure on Portugal to effectively occupy and “pacify” the vast space. The Mbailundu Revolt that erupted in 1902, the subject of Chapters 4 & 5, was one of the largest uprisings in Angolan history and represents a turning point in this shift to a more rigid, controlled colonial system.

Chapter Two

Caravan Trade and Fluid Categories

This chapter discusses the caravan trade in the central highlands in the late 19th century and the racial fluidity and social mobility it engendered. Contemporary observers—missionaries, explorers, and colonial agents—noted that Ovimbundu in the central highlands, especially from the kingdoms of Mbailundu and Viye, were the masters of long-distance trade during the late 19th century. Through their long distance travels in caravans, they acquired novel material goods, especially clothing and guns. While European accessories such as hats and shoes helped people claim positions of authority over others, some groups forged their own aesthetic practices, borrowing hairstyles and tattoos from other communities they encountered in their travels, and decorating their bodies with beads that Europeans brought. People defined their own relationships to “the colonial” by using clothing, literacy, and literacy to fashion unique identities that did not fit into the racial, ethnic, or national boxes were becoming increasingly important to Europeans. The chapter explores emic categories related to dress, trade, military service, and proximity to European settlements that developed in Angola by the end of the 19th century. This diversity of identities underscores the instability of categories like “Ovimbundu” or “*gentio*,” suggesting that fixed social categories do not adequately represent the various ways in which people forged alliances and drew boundaries in this context.

When missionaries, explorers, traders, and Portuguese administrators began arriving in ever-greater numbers from about 1880, they demanded carriers from local authorities for their own purposes with increasing intensity, and this exploitative economic relationship was the

source of considerable tension between Portuguese administrators and Ovimbundu authorities by 1902. The scarcity of carriers is a constant theme in both missionary and colonial sources. The Benguela Railway had yet to be constructed, pack animals were scarce due to sleeping sickness, and there was no alternative to foot travel for those hoping to reach the highlands from the coast, let alone to transport goods.

All European and American visitors to Angola relied on carriers, and *all* complained in writing about the difficulty and long delays associated with obtaining carriers. The ability of *sobas* and *sekulus* to refuse or acquiesce to Portuguese demands for carriers was an important location of political leverage at the end of the 19th century. In 1890, when Portuguese forces were marching to the kingdom of Viye to oust the “rebel” *soba* Ndunduma, they sought carriers along the way. The king of Mbailundu, Ekuikui II, readily provided the forces with the caravan labor, since Viye was a rival economic and political force on the *planalto*. Ironically, such instances of competition among local authorities gradually facilitated the colonial takeover of the *planalto*.¹⁸⁰

The ambivalence with which Europeans regarded Africans who replicated European sartorial styles is also highlighted in this chapter. Colonial administrators needed a compliant mass of willing caravan workers, but they also recognized that they were entering an established system with its own logics and limitations. Caravans and the people that comprised them were essential to the transport of slaves, raw materials, European trade goods, and written correspondence between the interior of Angola and the coastal ports. Before they were finally displaced by the advent of railroads in the early 20th century, these human cargo trains marched slaves and contract laborers to ships at the Atlantic coast of Angola for much of the previous

¹⁸⁰ Henrique de Paiva Couceiro, *Relatório de Viagem entre Bailundo e as Terras do Mucusso* (Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1892), 8.

three centuries. They moved labor and they *were* labor. They transported information on behalf of others, but they also exchanged knowledge on their own terms. Beatrix Heintze, in her excellent study of caravans and carriers in 19th century Angola, notes that caravan trade moved not only trade goods, but also:

Quotidian objects, practices and knowledge, as well as news, information and rumors, which until now have not even been theorized. Long-distance commercial caravans created, as such, new spaces of communication or expanded those already existing, relating local spaces with trans-regional ones.”¹⁸¹

Ovimbundu people from the central highlands were at the center of these shifting spaces, and their labor and knowledge were indispensable to Portuguese penetration of Angola. The intermediary nature of the groups and individuals involved in trade caravans was widespread and had deep roots, but the fluid identities of these Luso-Africans were actively obscured as narratives of Portuguese “conquest” were written. Although Portugal tried to reclaim this supposedly unique “hybrid” feature of its colonial legacy a few decades later in defense of its brutal regimes in Africa, at the turn of the 20th century the lack of clear cultural and racial boundaries was a colonial liability. A population that was difficult to define or divide into discrete groups was also difficult to control.

¹⁸¹ Heintze, *Pioneiros Africanos*, 17.

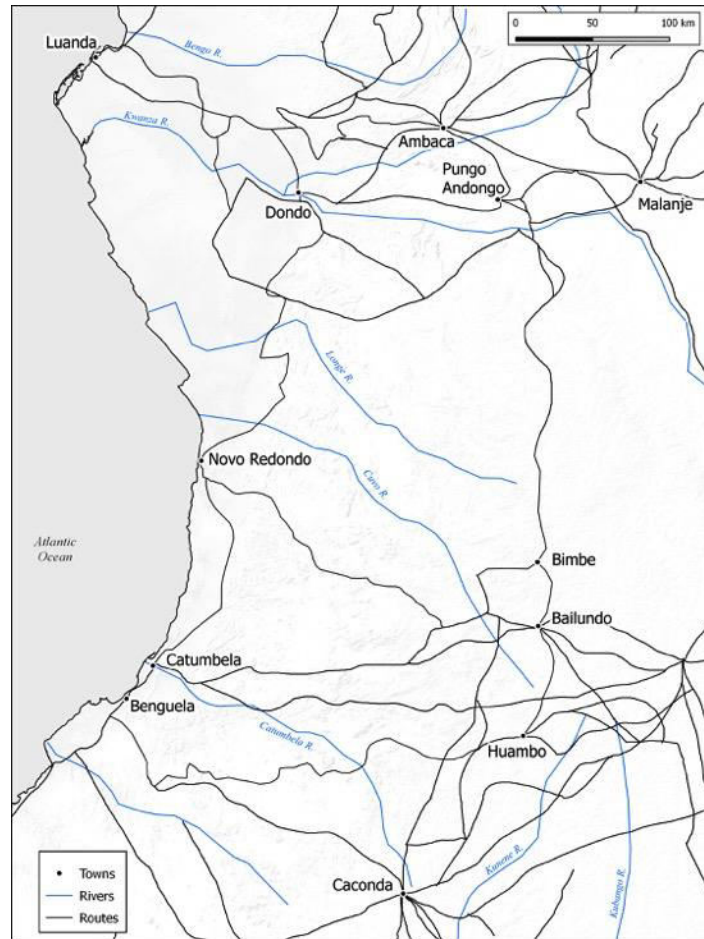


Figure 2:
*Map of Central Highlands*¹⁸²

Ovimbundu: “Ethnicity” or trade-based identity?

Throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, “Ovimbundu” was generally treated as an “ethnicity” by academics and in local colloquial terms, but this is accurate only to a limited extent. As Candido has noted, “no study has yet historicized the construction of the Ovimbundu ethnicity. Thus ‘Ovimbundu,’ ‘Nyaneca,’ and other ethnic labels familiar to any Angolan or Angolan specialist were the result of historical processes subsequent to the end of the trans-

¹⁸² Showing rivers, trade routes, and towns. By Aharon de Grassi.

Atlantic slave trade and were absent from the documents consulted in this study.”¹⁸³ While it is not the objective of this work to attempt such a systematic historicization of Ovimbundu as an ethnic category, it does move towards a more complete picture of the variety of identities that coexisted in the central highlands into the 20th century. Like Candido, I found that “Ovimbundu” and “Umbundu” were virtually absent from the colonial records I consulted. Rather, colonial officials used more generic terms like “Quimbundos” (which could refer to both Kimbundu- and Umbundu-speakers) or “gentio” (a Portuguese term that served a similar purpose as “natives” in English-speaking colonial contexts). North American missionaries, on the other hand, were much more likely to refer to all Umbundu-speaking subjects of sobas in the central highlands collectively as Ovimbundu.

The Umbundu-speaking population in the central highlands was by the late 18th century divided into several kingdoms—the largest being Viye (Bihé), Mbailundu (Bailundo), and Wambu (Huambo)—whose wealth and influence derived directly from control over long-distance trade, which traded European goods in the interior of the continent for raw materials, most importantly rubber. Candido suggests that the rise of these kingdoms was “part of the same process” as the formation of new social groups like ones discussed in this chapter, “and was “directly linked to the expansion of violence and the trans-Atlantic slave trade.”¹⁸⁴ Ethnographic evidence from the first half of the twentieth century suggests that caravans were a key feature of Ovimbundu life in the nineteenth century and that those who had lived it remembered the era of long-distance trade fondly. Participation in long caravan journeys was an important part of sociality and coming of age (especially for boys and men).¹⁸⁵ In 1879, Portuguese explorer Serpa

¹⁸³ Candido, *An African Slaving Port*, 19.

¹⁸⁴ Candido, *An African Slaving Port*, 314.

¹⁸⁵ Gladwyn M. Childs, *Umbundu Kinship and Character* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949); Wilfred Hambly, “The Ovimbundu of Angola,” *Publications of the Field Museum of Natural History: Anthropological*

Pinto noted that Bihenos were “the finest travelers in Africa,” while Bailundos simply hired out their services as carriers between Bihe and the coast.¹⁸⁶ Caravan workers from Mbailundu ferried products that counterparts in Viye had gathered from further inland to Benguela and Catumbela, returning with imported goods they dropped off in Viye.

Ethnographers argue that the crystallization of the Ovimbundu as an ethnic group (around the sixteenth century) was deeply intertwined with Atlantic networks that depended on caravan trade between the interior and the coast at Benguela and Luanda. Umbundu-speakers developed a reputation during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as masters of the caravan trade, capable of organizing carriers by the hundreds on months-long expeditions into the interior of the continent. While there were slaves and other lower status men among the carriers who did not stand to gain personal wealth from the journey, caravans could also provide Ovimbundu people with material wealth and opportunities for forms of individual accumulation and autonomy.¹⁸⁷

Henrique de Paiva Couceiro, who led a military expedition from Bailundo to Macusso in 1890, wrote at length about the difficulty of securing carriers, the composition of his caravan, and the process of recruiting caravan labor through negotiations with African authorities. Couceiro described how in regions such as Bihé and Bailundo, “where contact with the white *sertanejo* instilled the ethos of trade, *all men are carriers*; from the age of nine or ten, they begin to do marches with successively larger cargos.”¹⁸⁸ By the time they reached maturity, they were strong enough to transport weights of 60 to 80 lbs. Couceiro also claimed that by adulthood, Ovimbundu men had developed the “indifference”¹⁸⁹ or “nonchalance necessary to abandon their

Series Vol. 21, No. 2, (1934): 89-362. Adrian C. Edwards, *The Ovimbundu under two sovereignties: a study of social control and social change among a people of Angola*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

¹⁸⁶ Alexandre Serpa Pinto, *How I Crossed Africa: from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, through unknown countries, discovery of the great Zambesi affluents, &c.* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & co., 1881), 40-41.

¹⁸⁷ Vellut, “Notes sur le Lunda;” Ball, “A Time of Clothes.”

¹⁸⁸ Couceiro, *Relatório de Viagem*, 9. My translation, emphasis added.

¹⁸⁹ *Desprendimento*.

homes and families.” He also claimed that “they never make these journeys without reluctance, and it is this reluctance that results in one generally facing huge delays to compose and put to march a committee, delays that are longer depending on the distance of the destination.”¹⁹⁰ If lengthy trips for caravan trade were a feature of Ovimbundu life, they were also enormous undertakings that were not embarked upon without careful preparation and with carriers deciding, at least in part, upon the terms of their departure.

Couceiro appears to express admiration of the remarkable penchant for long distance trade among Ovimbundu, as well as frustration about the difficulty of organizing such a journey. This ambivalent attitude towards Ovimbundu caravan practices emerges in other sources of colonial commentary from the time. On the one hand, Ovimbundu were admirable because of their powerful role as traders and intermediaries between Europeans and other groups of Africans. On the other, they inspired fear and resentment because of their failure to conform to colonial expectations of settled, agriculturally oriented, easily controllable Africans. Their continued domination of the caravan posed a threat to Portuguese plans for occupation and control of the Angolan interior. The necessity of using carriers for almost all colonial enterprises put colonial agents at a considerable disadvantage, because they were always at the mercy of *sobas* or *sekulus* who controlled their dependents’ labor, or even the carriers themselves who had the power to drag their feet and delay departure, or flee at any time during a long journey.

According to a 1908 report on the *planalto colonizavel* (“colonizable plateau”) by the Government of the Province of Angola, male inhabitants of that region (the Benguela plateau or central highlands) dedicated themselves *above all* to the occupations of traders and carriers, while women shouldered the burden of agricultural work. The Ovimbundu were “intermediaries between the European traders and the Ganguellas, Ambuellas, and Quiocos people, with whom

¹⁹⁰ Paiva Couceiro, *Relatório de Viagem*, 9.

they trade rubber and wax on their own account, in long and frequent voyages.”¹⁹¹ It was only when during years when rubber prices fell that people in the *planalto* planted crops in greater quantities for sale to Europeans. It is quite remarkable that Ovimbundu people still enjoyed enough autonomy in 1908—well after the *planalto* had been “pacified” with the defeats of the Mbailundu Revolt in 1902 and the capture of the last holdouts in Bimbe in 1904—to trade on their own account, and to modify their work patterns in response to market fluctuations to suit their own needs. But the report ominously laid out the goals of the colonial administration and the changes that were to come. The author summarized his chapter on the “Indigenous Population” by noting that as the railway would eventually remove the need for carriers, “little by little we [Portuguese] will manage to adapt them [the indigenous population] to the regime of agricultural work.”¹⁹²

In 1896, Portuguese Catholic priest Ernesto Lecomte wrote about the promising potential for “civilizing” the people of the *planalto*, noting their general success in the mission schools. According to Lecomte, this academic success had been achieved, “in spite of the difficulty presented by the *bihenos*’ [inhabitants of Bihé or Viye] passion for entertaining themselves with their parents on long-distance voyages.”¹⁹³ Lecomte’s description suggested that Ovimbundu people not only derived pleasure from caravan travel—they even showed a *passion* for it. The priest’s commentary shows how caravan travel was antithetical to the civilizer’s dream of a settled, docile, easily monitored agrarian population.

¹⁹¹ Governo Geral da Provincia de Angola – Repartição do Gabinete. *Breve Notícia sobre O Planalto Colonisavel de Benguella* (Loanda: Imprensa Nacional, 1908).

¹⁹² Governo Geral da Provincia de Angola – Repartição do Gabinete. *Breve Notícia sobre O Planalto Colonisavel de Benguella* (Loanda: Imprensa Nacional, 1908).

¹⁹³ Padre Ernesto Lecomte, *Planalto do Sul de Angola – Missões Portuguezas: Caconda, Catoco, Bihé e Bailundo; comunicação feita à Sociedade Geográfica de Lisboa, Sessão de 22 de dezembro de 1896* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1897), 15.

Ovimbundu as “Mambari”

Given their prominent role as intermediaries in long distance trade, connecting the coast and the far interior of the continent, Ovimbundu people whom colonial agents called *gentio* overlapped with other categories that were not ethnic but were explicitly “intermediary.” The term “Mambari” (also *Quimbare*, *Vimbali*, *Mbali*) in the late nineteenth century was associated with black trading agents from the Umbundu-speaking kingdom of Viye employed by white traders and traveling in caravans to the east.¹⁹⁴ The Human Relations Area Files list *Mbali* and *Mbari* as synonyms for Ovimbundu.¹⁹⁵ Some linguistic evidence suggests that the cognate term “*Mbali*” originally referred to traders from royal courts of tributaries to the Kongo Kingdom who traveled deep into the interior with foreign goods to exchange for slaves or ivory; other sources indicate that *Vimbali* suggests a “double allegiance” in Umbundu. In the Chokwe language, *Mambari* is “a person who speaks Portuguese.”¹⁹⁶ The Chokwe definition recalls the spiritual affliction “Chimbundu,” described in the introduction, which associated Ovimbundu travelers with European material culture and the Portuguese language.

While colonial agents generally called Ovimbundu people who were the subjects of *sobas* “*gentio*,” a look at some of the emic categories for people associated with trade shows the murkiness of names and identities and the clear association between *Mambari* and Ovimbundu traders and even the Portuguese language. Wheeler and Christensen claim that Angola’s central highlands were “a cultural and racial melting pot for at least three centuries” because of trade.¹⁹⁷ This poverty of the term “Luso-African” emerges here, where many straddled colonial and

¹⁹⁴ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1859), 238.

¹⁹⁵ Human Relations Area Files (eHRAF) <http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/ehrafe/browseCultures.do?owc=FP13#owc>, accessed 3 October 2014.

¹⁹⁶ F. Bontinck, ‘Les Quimbares: Note Sémantique’, *Africa: Rivista trimestale di studi e documentazione dell’Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente*, 3(1) (1976), 44-55.

¹⁹⁷ Wheeler and Christensen, “To Rise With One Mind,” 55.

“native” spaces at different moments and in different contexts. It is possible that the same person could have been called by a variety of names depending on where they went.

In 1853, the famous Scottish missionary-explorer David Livingstone was exploring the upper Zambezi River region, near where the modern day western borders of Zimbabwe and Zambia meet Angola’s eastern edge.¹⁹⁸ He encountered a group of “Mambari” slave traders, describing them as a “tribe” from the area around Bié. Livingstone said these Mambari had among them “a number of half-castes, with their peculiar sickly hue,”¹⁹⁹ and one of them even “closely resembled a real Portuguese.”²⁰⁰ Livingstone could not seem to decide in what racial box to put these Mambari. He noted that the “half-castes, or native Portuguese,” could all read and write—bizarrely lumping together *mestiços* and “native” Portuguese people. Their caravan traveled with armed slaves, and their leader, Livingstone commented, “if not a real Portuguese, had European hair.”²⁰¹

The leader with the “European hair” that Livingstone had met was António da Silva Porto, the legendary Portuguese *sertanejo* [hinterlandsman]. A “real Portuguese” indeed, he was born the city of Porto in 1817 and later added his birthplace as a second surname. Silva Porto lived in Brazil as a teenager and ventured to Angola around 1838. Livingstone’s British-funded expedition in 1853 was meant to suppress the slave trade and claim new African “discoveries” for the British crown. Labeling all the Portuguese he met as “half-castes” not only revealed the missionary’s racism—it was also a strategic way of protecting his claims of being the first white man to see a number of natural features and remote locations in the African interior. He remarked on the Mambari only to sneer at their racial ambiguity, which affirmed the widespread

¹⁹⁸ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*.

¹⁹⁹ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, 238.

²⁰⁰ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, 198.

²⁰¹ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, 238.

sentiment that southern Europeans like the Portuguese were racially inferior to the British and other northerners, and to condemn them as slavers.²⁰²

Livingstone inadvertently left a clue for historians as to the variety of people and forms of collective identity involved in long-distance trade in 19th century Africa. Categories of people were malleable and status and social position shifted with location, which was especially frequent given the primacy of trade as an occupation. People were in constant motion. Mambaris were associated with Bihé and the highlands more generally. Silva Porto himself had settled in Viye (Bihé) by the mid-19th century, became a close friend of the Viye *soba*, married into the royal family, and served as the first Captain Major of Bihé.²⁰³ Silva Porto defined *Quimbares* as the slaves of *sertanejos* like himself. But he noted that the name was also applied to free black traders who went further into the interior with Europeans to trade, since as he explained it the people in those remote regions assumed that “any blacks working for Europeans were their slaves.”²⁰⁴ Portuguese adventurer Serpa Pinto in 1878 called *Quimbares* “half-civilized,” noting they could be either enslaved or free.

Missionary-ethnographer Gladwyn Childs discussed an Ovimbundu diaspora in southern Angola in his 1949 ethnography: “the term ‘Mbali’ (va Mbali, Mambari, Ovimbali) is an Umbundu term used for nearly one hundred years to designate those who imitate the Europeans or who live at or near the European towns which are collectively designated by the cognate term—*Lupali*.”²⁰⁵ This enduring social category still had currency in the mid-20th century, and had retained some of its original meaning suggesting proximity to Europeans. Although the category of the Mambari/*Vimbali* seems to have been associated with Ovimbundu by the mid to

²⁰² Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, 199.

²⁰³ Wheeler and Pélissier, *Angola*, 65.

²⁰⁴ Antonio da Silva Porto, *Silva Porto e Livingstone. Manuscrito de Silva Porto, Econtrado no seu Espólio*, (Lisboa: Typographia da Academia Real das Sciencias, 1891), 24.

²⁰⁵ Childs, *Umbundu Kinship*, 19 note 1.

late 19th century, an exploration of the deeper history of the word reveals a complicated trajectory that opens up rich questions for an historical understanding of social categories in colonial Angola.

In a 1976 article, historian F. Bontinck traced the use of different versions of the name for people who eventually came to be called *Quimbares* in Portuguese sources.²⁰⁶ He tracked the first mention of the word *Mombalas* to 1591, in descriptions of the Congo River region by the Kongo Kingdom's ambassador to Rome and Madrid. This source associated *Mombalas* with the king and the court (*embala*) of the coastal kingdom of Soyo, south of the mouth of the Congo, and named them as armed protectors of the king, while a 1595 source listed *Embalae* among the Christian kingdoms subject to the King of Kongo. Bontinck noted a rather intriguing confusion generated by the similarity of the Kikongo word for "royal court" (*embala, ombala, umbala, kombala*) and "coast": *mbala*.²⁰⁷ Either etymological root for *Mombalas/Mambaris* suggests association with the front lines of colonial contact—the Atlantic coast and the spaces of African elites.

Andrew Battell, an English sailor who was kidnapped in Angola and spent many years there in the early 17th century, described great ivory traders called *Mombales*. In the 17th century *Sovas*²⁰⁸ *Quinbares* were listed among the African mercenaries backing Portuguese forces in wars against other African groups. From a relatively early date after the initial Portuguese arrival in Angola, the category that evolved into Mambari or *Quimbares* designated people who were allied with Europeans, involved in trade, and were often armed. By the 17th and 18th century, they were often described as armed escorts accompanying caravans. In 1798, a letter by the Governor General of Angola defined *Quimbares* as "free or freed blacks who live close together

²⁰⁶ Bontinck, "Les Quimbares."

²⁰⁷ Bontinck, "Les Quimbares," 43.

²⁰⁸ *Sovas* is another spelling of *sobas*.

with whites.” Further south in Humbe the term also referred to white people; in the hinterland of Luanda, *Quimbares* were the black stewards on plantations.²⁰⁹ The enormous range of meanings for this social designation show how status read differently across time and space. Nonetheless, there seems to have been enduring significance to the association with foreigners and trade, and with colonial repression in the case of the black plantation stewards.

In the mid-19th century Silva Porto wrote that *Quimbares* were technically the slaves of *sertanejos* like him, but claimed that communities further into the interior called even free black traders *Quimbares* because they assumed any blacks working for Europeans were slaves.²¹⁰ By 1878, crown-sponsored Portuguese explorer Serpa Pinto wrote of *Quimbares* he encountered as far east as Barotseland (in modern-day Zambia). He called them “semi-civilized blacks from Benguela, [...] free or slave, but half-civilized.”²¹¹ Again, the category referred to association with Europeans, as well as connection to a coastal area. In 1881, a police officer patrolling interior of Benguela reported that the principal occupation of *Quimbares* was portering. “The porters, called *Quimbares* or blacks who are more civilized by whites and who serve us in the largest population centers, are not suitable for transporting loads and *tipoias* [hammocks] to the most distant points.”²¹² In this case, the designation of this group as “more civilized” also made them unsuitable for the type of extreme forced labor that colonists increasingly demanded.

²⁰⁹ Bontinck, “Les Quimbares,” 48.

²¹⁰ Bontinck, “Les Quimbares,” 50.

²¹¹ Bontinck, “Les Quimbares,” 51.

²¹² Ibid.



Illustration 2:
*Carriers with Tipoias, Benguela*²¹³

Ambaquistas

Historian Beatrix Heintze suggests that *Quimbares* may have been imitators of the *Ambaquistas*, referring to themselves as “sons of the *Ambaquistas*.”²¹⁴ These intermediary figures have received considerable attention from historians.²¹⁵ Like their imitators the *Quimbares*, *Ambaquistas* were set apart by their association with Portuguese language and

²¹³ UCCA, Foreign Missions Photograph Collection, 1999.001P1266, “Starting inland from the coast” (Benguela), n.d.

²¹⁴ Beatrix Heintze. “A Lusofonia no interior da África Central na era pré-colonial. Um contributo para a sua história e compreensão na actualidade.” *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 7/8 (2005), 186.

²¹⁵ Heintze, “A Lusofonia.” See also: Beatrix Heintze, “Hidden Transfers: Luso-Africans as European Explorers’ Experts in Nineteenth-Century West Central Africa,” in *The Power Doubt: Essays in Honor of David Henige*. (Madison: Parallel Press, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, 2011), 19-40. Jill Dias, “Estereótipos e Realidades Sociais: Quem Eram os ‘Ambaquistas?’” *Actas do II Seminário Internacional sobre a História de Angola: construindo o passado angolano, as fontes e a sua interpretação* (Luanda, 1997), 500-623. Jan Vansina, “Ambaca Society and the Slave Trade c. 1760-1845.” *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (2005), 1-27.

culture, and even enjoyed some privileges such as exemption from serving as carriers.²¹⁶ Heintze calls them “trans-cultural ‘translators’” who “conducted negotiations” and “recommended appropriate courses of action according to their assessment of given situations.”²¹⁷ European explorers and Portuguese colonial authorities could not have passed through the Angolan countryside without their help. Indeed, since *Ambaquistas* frequently served as commanders at Portuguese forts throughout the interior, the entire colonial apparatus depended upon their cooperation until larger numbers of settlers began to arrive from Portugal in the first few decades of the 20th century.²¹⁸

One of the most interesting things about the *Ambaquistas* is their long tradition of literacy. Continuing the legacy of Catholic missionaries who had worked in the area of Ambaca in the 18th century, *Ambaquistas* passed down literacy skills through the generations, and they traveled the Angolan countryside with feather pens and ink-filled animal horns tied around their necks, offering their services as secretaries to anyone who could pay.²¹⁹ *Ambaquistas* thus helped to generate a remarkable archive of correspondence between Portuguese authorities and independent Angolan authorities like the Dembos (Ndembus), whose extensive employment of written communication has been elegantly exposed in a compilation of eighteenth and nineteenth century letters by historians Tavares and Santos.²²⁰

It was this set of skills and practices that set *Ambaquistas* apart and defined their niche in Angolan society. Portuguese explorers Capello and Ivens, who traveled in Angola in 1879, called

²¹⁶ Heintze, “Hidden Transfers,” 24.

²¹⁷ Heintze, “Hidden Transfers,” 20.

²¹⁸ Heintze, “Hidden Transfers,” 24.

²¹⁹ Capello & Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca*, 40. It is interesting to note that the same small horns of game animals that *Ambaquistas* used for ink were ubiquitous in basket divination, and were used as containers for “medicines” related to divination. See: Leona Stukeley Tucker, “The Divining Basket of the Ovimbundu.” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 70(2) (1940), 171-201.

²²⁰ Ana P. Tavares and Catarina M. Santos, *Africae Monumenta: A Apropriação da Escrita pelos Africanos. Vol. I, Arquivo Caculo Cahenda* (Lisboa, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 2002).

Ambaquistas “African Bohemians.”²²¹ Vidal, a former Bishop of Congo and Angola, wrote: “You can find them everywhere, re-reading pieces of old newspapers or loose pages of some book, issuing sentences, writing things, serving as secretaries for sobas...”²²² *Ambaquistas*’ role as secretaries and scribes was crucial to the integration of *sobas* into colonial bureaucratic structures but Europeans observing these remarkable colonial agents could not resist mocking them.

Bishop Vidal caricatured the *Ambaquistas*’ affinity for paperwork and bureaucracy. “Their pleasure, or rather their vice, is to lay their hands on a pen and write petitions on stamped [sealed] paper, with fantastic citations from [Portuguese law]. If there is an official envelope to enclose their prodigious literature, and especially if it has a wax seal to consecrate and lend stateliness to it, ah, how happy he is!”²²³ Vidal’s characterization suggests almost a “fetishization” of paper, ink, and official stamps. This does not seem very different from the colonial obsession with treaties of vassalage and other written agreements with sobas, even if colonial agents *and* vassals frequently ignored or even violently annulled the content of these documents. Capello and Ivens noted that *sobas* were always “surrounded by a horde of useless characters, and invariably attended by a sort of secretary or bully, always a finished knave, selected from among the *Ambaquistas*.”²²⁴ Using the authority invested in them by virtue of their literacy, *Ambaquistas* became the trusted councilors of *sobas*, in some cases even deciding disputes among the *sobas*’ subjects.

²²¹ Capello & Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca*, 39.

²²² J. Evangelista de Lima Vidal, *Por Terras d’Angola* (Coimbra: Franca Amado, 1916), 20.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Capello & Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca*, 39.



AN AMBACA GENTLEMAN.

Illustration 3:
*An Ambaca Gentleman*²²⁵

An 1891 “Guide for the Colonizer”, published in Portugal, looked more kindly upon “creoles” like the *Ambaquistas*. The guide claimed that Portuguese had certain advantages over other Europeans when colonizing Africa. They were better able to resist the climate, and capable of “propagating, with relative facility, a *mestiço* race [amenable to] assimilation.”²²⁶ This was not the first time that the notion of Portuguese fondness of “mixture” was celebrated as a unique part of the Portuguese colonial legacy, nor would it be the last, as the mythology of “racial

²²⁵ Capello & Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca*, 41.

²²⁶ J. Castel-Branco, *Guia do Colono para a Africa Portuguesa* (Porto, Typ. Empreza Litteraria e Typographica, 1891), 105-06.

democracy” in the lusophone world would persist well into the 20th century.²²⁷ The colonizer’s guide paints a much more flattering picture of the *Ambaquista* than some other Portuguese literature from the period. Noting the prevalence of skilled trades and literacy, the author of the guide praised the spread of *Ambaquistas* into the far interior of Angola, where they disseminated Portuguese “prestige” and knowledge of the Portuguese language.²²⁸

Pombeiros

Pombeiros are another intermediary category of people associated with caravans and European contact. According to Willy Bal, the word was already appearing in Italian and Portuguese documents by the late 1500s, and referred to black traders from the Kongo Kingdom who went into the interior to purchase slaves.²²⁹ The name is said to be derived from the word *pumbo*, which may mean “market” or “backlands,” and was used throughout the 17th century in documents referring to the slave trade.²³⁰ Some *pombeiros* were slaves themselves, but they were of a special class who were entrusted with making transactions on behalf of slave traders closer to the coast. Heintze claims that in the south of Angola, *Ambaquistas* were called *pombeiros*.²³¹ Soremekun says many “Ovimbundu were the *pombeiros* of the Portuguese.”²³²

Serpa Pinto defined *pombeiros* as the “chiefs” of small groups of carriers, often a relative of the group, who was responsible for negotiating the carriers’ hiring and wages.²³³ In other parts of Angola, these were known as *Quissongos*, but in Bailundo and Bihé they were known as *pombeiros*. According to Serpa Pinto, *pombeiros* received lower pay, but did not carry a load.

²²⁷ Miguel Vale de Almeida, *An Earth-Colored Sea: “Race,” Culture, and the Politics of Identity in the Post-Colonial Portuguese-Speaking World* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2004).

²²⁸ Castel-Branco, *Guia do Colono*, 126.

²²⁹ Willy Bal, “Portugais *Pombeiro* ‘Commerçant Ambulant du <<Sertão>>,” *Annali*, Vol. 7-8 (1965-66), 123-161.

²³⁰ Bal, “Portugais *Pombeiro*,” 133.

²³¹ Heintze, “Hidden Transfers,” 25.

²³² Soremekun, “The Bailundo Revolt, 1902,” 456.

²³³ Serpa Pinto, *The King’s Rifle*, 165.

Rather they were responsible for looking after the wellbeing of their small group of carriers during caravan journeys.

In 1892, Henrique de Paiva Couceiro described the process of recruiting carriers for his expedition into the highlands. The first step was to convene *pombeiros* and negotiate with them to determine what number of carriers they would recruit. Then the *pombeiros* would receive a number of *jardas* or bundles of cloth corresponding with the number of carriers they promised, to be offered as advance payment, as well as eight bundles for the *pombeiro* himself.²³⁴ In 1901, administrators in Benguela wrote to the Captain Major of Bailundo asking for detailed information about the rubber trade in the region. They asked for the number of *pombeiros* the traders sent into the backlands to procure rubber each month.²³⁵

Social Mobility

The declining agency of these trade-dependent groups—which opened the way for increased Portuguese settlement later in the twentieth century—is manifest in the late-19th- and early-20th-century military campaigns targeting *gentio* from many of the strong polities like Mbailundu, which had been a vassal of Portugal since the late eighteenth century. The period from about 1880-1910 marked the beginning of the end of a style of Portuguese rule that had persisted since the late fifteenth century arrival of the first explorers. That style involved minimal administrative involvement in the interior, and spawned new groups and identities and afforded social mobility through trade while also allowing existing African polities to build wealth and influence and determine their own level of engagement with Portuguese people, institutions, and things.

²³⁴ Paiva Couceiro, *Relatório de Viagem*, 9-10.

²³⁵ Biblioteca Municipal do Huambo (BMH 20-8-901), Secretary of Benguela to Captain Major of Bailundo, 1 August 1901.

Many *gentio* in nineteenth century Angola were identified by others and/or self-identified with the *soba* or the polity of which they were subjects, but categories were fluid and major social transformations meant that ambitious people could elevate their status and change the social categories to which they belonged. Vellut's formulation of the dynamic Luso-African frontier rests upon his argument that the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a time of dramatic social transformation in the interior of Angola, an argument that is carried further by the present work. By accruing small profits through independent transactions while serving as carriers, individuals of low social status found opportunities for social mobility, a phenomenon which eventually undermined the authority of African elites and Portuguese traders.²³⁶

Silva Porto described the process by which a lowly porter could accrue a bit of wealth and change his status, thereby "occupying the position of *pombeiro*, magnate in court or *seculo*, chief of a village."²³⁷ He also noted that "Bailundos and Bienes" were nearly all merchants who traded for themselves, they had "no interest in *sertanejos* [hinterlandsmen] to whom they owe[d] this position."²³⁸ More offensive than their disregard for the interests of the white men to whom Silva Porto thought *pombeiros* owed loyalty, there were "some who were formerly our porters, and now we see them dressed [in European clothes] wearing hats with pants and being carried in hammocks like any European."²³⁹ That such a sight was so vexing to Silva Porto reveals the degree to which race was indeed an operative social category, at least for Europeans, despite the remarkable level of social mobility that was possible. Portuguese-born observers like Silva Porto

²³⁶ Vellut, "Notes sur le Lunda," 139; Wheeler & Pélissier, *Angola*, 66. Heywood, *Production, Trade, and Power*, 317.

²³⁷ Silva Porto, quoted in: Linda Heywood, "Porters, Trade, and Power: The Politics of Labor in the Central Highlands of Angola, 1850-1914," in eds. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Paul Lovejoy, *The Workers of African Trade* (Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1985), 255.

²³⁸ Silva Porto in Heywood, "Porters, Trade, and Power," 257.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

still drew a distinction between “Europeans” and black Africans, the latter seeming decidedly out of place in hats and pants and enjoying a form of transport that denoted elite status.

Empacaceiros

Another social category associated with Portuguese colonization and long distance trade, but not with the sartorial trappings of this influence, was the *empacaceiro*. According to historians Wheeler and Pélissier, the word derives from the name of an indigenous buffalo of which *empacaceiros* were skilled hunters. Their bravery, skill, and knowledge of the countryside led the early Portuguese administration to employ them as soldiers, mail carriers, porters and policemen.²⁴⁰ *Empacaceiros* comprised a significant part of the black troops (*guerra preta*) that assisted the Portuguese in conquering resistant African polities and punishing rebels. In 1776 they assisted with an attack on a Mbailundu *soba* who refused to submit to Portuguese authority.²⁴¹ *Empacaceiros* had served as armed escorts for ambassadors from the Lunda Empire on an official visit to Luanda in 1808.²⁴² According to Vellut, the boundary between the area of Angola that was “more or less subject to the control of civilian authorities and militarily dependent on Luanda,” and the Mbangala, Chokwe, and Ovimbundu regions whose prosperity depended on long-distance trade, “was symbolized by a guard of some *empacaceiros*” in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁴³ These militarized intermediary figures literally marked the boundaries of the Luso-African frontier, straddling worlds.

Capello & Ivens met an *empacaceiro* on their expedition in 1879. They had heard legends of the *empacaceiros* originating as a kind of secret society that was founded in order to discourage cannibalism, substituting the flesh of the buffalo for human flesh, but they could not

²⁴⁰ Wheeler & Pélissier, *Angola*, 57; Childs, *Umbundu Kinship*, 173.

²⁴¹ Sociedade Geográfica de Lisboa (SGL), “Notícia do Sertão do Balundo, por Candido de Almeida Sandoval, 1837.” *Annaes do Concelho Ultramarino*, Serié I: Fev. 1854-Dez. 1858, p. 520.

²⁴² Vellut, “Notes sur de Lunda,” 114.

²⁴³ Vellut, “Notes sur de Lunda,” 119.

verify this history, and the *empacaceiros* they asked denied it.²⁴⁴ Despite their traditional employment as postal carriers, caravan guides, and soldiers, *empacaceiros* had become dispersed by the late 1870s, having “deserted by the hundreds” in the 1860s as Portuguese authorities retreated to the coast.²⁴⁵ Capello and Ivens noted that the man they met came from Kissama, a region along the coast between Luanda and Benguela whose population harbored runaway slaves and sustained active and violent resistance to Portuguese control until the 1920s.²⁴⁶ These figures seemed as uninterested in European sartorial norms as they were in remaining under Portuguese control.



EMPACACEIRO OF QUISSAMA.

Illustration 4:
*Empacaceiro of Quissama*²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ Capello & Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca*, 215-17; Childs, *Umbundu Kinship*, 173.

²⁴⁵ Wheeler & Pélissier, *Angola*, 57.

²⁴⁶ Wheeler & Pélissier, *Angola*, 58. See also Sweet, “Reimagining the African-Atlantic Archive,” 152.

²⁴⁷ Capello & Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca*, 216.

Capello and Ivens described the appearance of *empacaceiros*: “Wrapped in a wretched cloth, they carry with them all the articles that are required in the woods, and ornament their heads either with a bunch of feathers or two or three horns, which give them a devil-may-care appearance.”²⁴⁸ Managing their interactions with colonial power on their own terms, *empacaceiros* had retreated from Portuguese military and postal service into the protective space of Kissama by the middle of the nineteenth century, venturing out on expeditions when it suited them.

Their sartorial expressions, as described by Capello and Ivens, suggest an aesthetic sensibility that was perhaps deliberately divergent from European norms. Dress and personal adornment represent an immediately perceptible and material manifestation of identity. Serpa Pinto noted that in the late 1870s, black beads were extremely popular in Mbailundu, while in Viye: “they are not current at all.”²⁴⁹ Multiple layers of aesthetic meaning were being communicated through the deployment of beads, hairstyles, European clothing and shoes, pens and paper. If braids, horns, piercings, and beads represented a rejection of European aesthetic standards, other groups of people like those classed as Mambaris, *Ambaquistas*, and *pombeiros* developed identities at least partly based on displaying the trappings of Portugueseness.

Hair, Clothing, and Style

The adoption of European clothing by Africans was a way of indexing status and particular types of associations, especially with trade. As far back as 1794, the Mbailundu *soba* had written to the Portuguese government to request that *pombeiros* be sent to his territory bringing “swords, textiles, hats, socks, shirts, flags, alcohol, paper, and stamps.”²⁵⁰ However, not

²⁴⁸ Capello & Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca*, 217.

²⁴⁹ Serpa Pinto, *The King's Rifle*, 193.

²⁵⁰ Candido, *An African Slaving Port*, 173.

all sartorial habits and trends at the time were focused on imitating a European aesthetic. Portuguese explorers Capello and Ivens noted, on their 1879 journey, that caravans transported “an infinity of strange articles,” many of them items for personal adornment.²⁵¹ So prized were certain colors of beads that were popular at a given moment that Livingstone claimed “a trader could get almost anything he chose for beads of these colors.”²⁵² Aesthetic preferences and trends were shaped by logics that remained a mystery to European observers.

Capello and Ivens encountered a group of “Bang-ala,” or Imbangala, a group from the area around Kassanje who acted as “middlemen” in trade with groups to the east.²⁵³ The explorers noted the Imbangala men’s elaborate hairstyles: “The long tresses of their hair are intertwined with beads, shells, and bands or plates of metal, and are otherwise converted into structures that occupy entire weeks in their fabrication.”²⁵⁴ Noting the Imbangalas’ fondness for piercings of the ears and nose, Capello and Ivens added: “Tattooing or branding the body is also coming into use amongst them, the process being borrowed from the Luba, and even further to the northeast, where the practice appears to be common.”²⁵⁵ New modes of self-expression and aesthetic sensibilities were arriving in the region not only via Europeans, but also from African peoples further into the interior. Despite the power of association with Europeans and their aesthetic tastes, not everyone strove to imitate them.

Livingstone, for all his noted obsession with “European hair” and “half-castes” among the Mambari he met near the Zambezi River in 1853, dedicated a few pages of his book to describing and depicting the various elaborate hairstyles he observed along the way.²⁵⁶ He

²⁵¹ Capello & Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca*, 218.

²⁵² Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, 205.

²⁵³ Wheeler & Pélissier, *Angola*, 65.

²⁵⁴ Capello & Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yacca*, 219.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, 486-88.

observed that many of the Mambari “plait[ed] their hair in three-fold cords, and lay[ed] them carefully down around the sides of the head.”²⁵⁷ The photo below is from the last quarter of the nineteenth century and bears the caption: “Portrait of an indigenous person from Bailundo.” While the similarity to Livingstone’s description of Mambari hairstyles may be coincidental, the photograph serves to illustrate the diversity of aesthetic sensibilities among Angolans who were involved in long-distance trade and commerce with Portuguese agents. It also suggests that “Bailundo” and “Mambari” were social categories that may have overlapped considerably.



Illustration 5:
*Portrait of an indigenous person from Bailundo (c. 1880s-1890s)*²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, 238.

²⁵⁸ Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, Lisboa. *Angola - Bailundo [retrato de um indígena do Bailundo]*. Imagem digital n.o 5679. Papel Directo de Colódio ou Gelatina, formato 9x12cm - Coleção Provas Antigas. [Accessed online at <http://actd.iict.pt/view/actd:AHUD7115> on April 6, 2016]. The photographer José Augusto da Cunha Moraes was active in Portuguese Africa from 1877-1894, putting this Bailundo portrait somewhere in that range. Source: <https://fotojornalismo13.wordpress.com/2014/01/17/jose-augusto-da-cunha-moraes-2/> [Accessed February 2, 2016].

Clothing and Power

A 1901 report on conditions in the interior of Benguela claimed that the 1600 traders and their employees who were spread throughout the countryside in the highlands included “demobilized African soldiers,” “sergeants who had left the army reserves and who continued, as civilians, the business they had started while donning their uniforms,” and “soldiers from the disciplinary companies who had been set free.”²⁵⁹ Clothing choices were a form of expression that could assist people in their pursuit of power—even the mere possession of a military uniform could lend authority to transactions. Explorers Capello and Ivens observed that *sobas* often presented themselves “in the guise of a captain in the army,” when they were really only “privates” in the colonial “native regiments [*guerra preta*].”²⁶⁰ *Sobas* used dress to distinguish themselves and mark their authority, and military uniforms, hats and coats in particular, were a favorite style. Capello and Ivens met a *soba* who wore a long wrap of printed calico cloth, had “bangles on his wrists and ankles,” a beaded necklace, and “an enormous hat of a Portuguese infantry soldier of the eighteenth century,” all of which gave the man a “grotesque” appearance in their eyes.²⁶¹ They also claimed to have encountered a *soba* wearing the uniform of a Spanish soldier.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas*, 82.

²⁶⁰ Capello & Ivens, *From Benguela to the Territory of Yacca*, 39.

²⁶¹ Capello & Ivens, *From Benguela to the Territory of Yacca*, 10.

²⁶² Capello & Ivens, *From Benguela to the Territory of Yacca*, 45.



Illustration 6:
“Three Native Dudes” (c. 1895-96)²⁶³

The three men in the picture above, taken by Canadian missionary Frank Read around 1895, show a remarkably eclectic mixture of sartorial preferences. All three have leopard skins around their waists—a ubiquitous marker of chiefly status throughout Central Africa.²⁶⁴ They each have printed calico cloth around their waists, an imported product worn in a local fashion. They also wear articles of clothing that are distinctly “Western” or European—a long, plush

²⁶³ United Church of Canada Archives (UCCA), Toronto. 1999.001 860N “Three Native Dudes,” Angola / F. W. Read Collection, c. 1895-6.

²⁶⁴ Wyatt MacGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture: the conceptual challenge of the particular* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 170.

trench coat and a felt hat on the man on the right; a cotton shirt on the man on the left; and a jacket with lapels and a top hat on the man seated in the center. The man on the left wears a knitted skullcap that is similar to the *mpus*, which denoted status in Kongo.²⁶⁵ The seated man also holds a staff and wears a medallion around his neck, perhaps of military or religious provenance. A close inspection of the seated man's ornaments also reveals a small horn suspended from a cord around his neck—quite likely filled with ink for writing. These “three native dudes,” as the missionary photographer called them, present a visual representation of the mixed modes of power, authority, and style that people cultivated in late nineteenth century Angola. They combine African and European modes of dress, as well as emergent “creole” modes such as the inkhorn necklace, drawing on the symbolic power representative in each, without excluding one or the other.

Composition of caravans

Paiva Couceiro's caravan in 1890 consisted of: “An interpreter, ten black escorts, three *pombeiros* (leaders of groups of carriers) and ninety carriers; total, one hundred and four men.” Couceiro's interpreter was Joaquim Guilherme Gonçalves, a “man of color,” son of the late *sertanejo* Guilherme José Gonçalves, companion and friend of the famous Bihé settler Silva Porto. Joaquim served Couceiro with “zeal and dedication,” and was indispensable to the expedition due to his ability to speak the languages of all the peoples visited by the expedition.²⁶⁶

The carriers' loads had an average weight of 25 to 35 kilograms, consisting of “sixty bales of various types of fabric, calicos, striped cloths, coastal cloths, flags, uniforms, etc., eighteen volumes of beads, gunpowder, tobacco, salt, some medicines, etc., and a *tipoiã* to

²⁶⁵ Fromont, *The Art of Conversion*, 123-132.

²⁶⁶ Paiva Couceiro, *Relatório de Viagem*, 8.

transport the sick: total, eighty nine volumes.”²⁶⁷ Couceiro’s personal effects consisted of: “a small leather suitcase with some clothing and two pairs of boots, a letter box, the archive of the expedition, with paper, quills, ink and a few books, and, finally, two *moambas* (a type of long basket) with cooking utensils, a few cans of preserves and a bit of coffee, tea and sugar.”²⁶⁸ On his person, Couceiro carried his Winchester rifle with thirty-five cartridges, a watch, a pedometer, a compass, a barometer, and a thermometer, instruments with which to measure, assess, and dominate landscapes and persons.

Familiarity and Boundaries

As colonial agents made their way through the Angolan countryside in attempts to understand and control its people, they often remarked ambivalently on the varying degrees of European influence they observed. In 1889, Major Artur da Paiva commanded a reconnaissance mission to the powerful Ovimbundu kingdom of Viye. His report offered instructions for the imminent occupation of the region and described in great detail the countryside through which he passed. Major Paiva lamented the bygone days of Portuguese colonial excellence, when his compatriots’ “colonizing aptitude” was something else. Since the end of that golden era, he argued, theory had displaced practice. In his view, Portugal had lost:

A deep familiarity with the country, with the indigenous person, and with the most profitable way of educating him, without breathing egalitarian aberrations into his rudimentary spirit, stimulating the laziness, vanity, and indiscipline that provoke continuous revolts.²⁶⁹

Paiva’s comment on “egalitarian aberrations” may be a veiled reference to the work of the many North American and British Protestant missionaries who were active in Angola, who were

²⁶⁷ Paiva Couceiro, *Relatório de Viagem*, 9.

²⁶⁸ Paiva Couceiro, *Relatório de Viagem*, 9.

²⁶⁹ Artur da Paiva, ‘Relatório Oficial do Major Artur de Paiva’, *Separata do Boletim da Sociedade Geográfica de Lisboa*, 1895; in *Artur de Paiva, Vol. I.*, (Lisboa, Biblioteca Colonial Portuguesa, Divisão de Publicações e Bibliotéca Agência Geral das Colónias, 1938), 258.

always assumed to be undermining the prestige of the colonial government by educating Africans in subjects they had no business knowing about, such as democracy. Given the pattern of ignorance that prevailed among networks of Portuguese officials by the end of the nineteenth century, Paiva's nostalgia for another era might have been warranted. But the irony of his statement is that the world of interconnected networks of trade and information still existed among the communities in the hinterland. The problem was that those Portuguese agents responsible for this new, more aggressive phase of conquest were excluded from these networks, and struggled to gain access the crucial information they controlled.

Major Paiva never settled on one narrative about the effects of European contact on Africans. He praised the more "civilized" region of Caconda (where Serpa Pinto had struggled to secure carriers a decade earlier), claiming the "indigenous" Africans in that area displayed:

A certain admiration, a certain respect for the beneficent influence of a colonization flourishing for 100 years and which still today manifests in the character of the indigenous person in the ease of dealing with him, in his desire to learn, in his respect for whites, his entrepreneurial spirit...²⁷⁰

Paiva contrasted the semi-civilized population of Caconda with that of Huíla, in the south of Angola: "There we encounter the true savage, from primitive times, and, if it is possible, *more savage still* after contact with the white man."²⁷¹ That Portugal's civilizing mission had actually managed to make Angolans *more* savage was part of the larger discourse on the spectacular failure of that mission, and the fatalistic colonial discourse more broadly viewed. The barest indication of this failure was the almost constant state of revolt across Angola.²⁷²

In 1911, Portuguese ethnologist Augusto Bastos wrote from a decidedly more confident position than would have been possible only a decade before. The kingdoms of the central

²⁷⁰ Paiva, 'Relatório Oficial do Major Artur de Paiva,' 258.

²⁷¹ Ibid, emphasis mine.

²⁷² Pélissier, *História das Campanhas*.

highlands had been effectively subdued in 1902, a fact which Bastos noted with great pride, although he made it clear that several peoples of the region were still extremely hostile towards outsiders at the time of his writing.

Today the nature of some of the peoples of the [Benguela] district is good, due to the military occupation which has been taking place, and to the expansion of European commerce which has radiated to almost all of these peoples, putting them in direct contact with whites; which, *with the help of grenades*, has had the beneficial result of gradually altering their primitive ill nature.²⁷³

Ideas like Bastos' were hallmarks of the transition to a new era of Portuguese colonialism, at the level of lofty intellectual ideals if not in practice on the ground. After the violent wars of conquest in the Benguela highlands had settled down in the first years of the 1900s, a new, hyper-rational approach to colonial rule began to slowly take root in Angola, and information was meant to be part of its arsenal. Macho celebrations of the "civilizing" potential of grenades and heavy artillery were also part of this new order.

Bastos listed 54 different peoples in the Benguela district alone. His evaluation of these groups' social characteristics swung wildly between statements like the following: "In general, all of these bad-natured peoples are thieves, traitors, and murderers;"²⁷⁴ and, "The majority of these peoples are hospitable; and those who are use refinements of delicacy when attending to individuals from another population, tribe, or state, considering them guests."²⁷⁵ The deep ambivalence expressed in these statements reveals an ongoing understanding on the part of colonial officials that their ability to operate in Angola depended just as much on the hospitality and tolerance of Angolans as it did on military force—even after major kingdoms like Mbailundu had been "pacified."

²⁷³ A. Bastos, *Traços geraes sobre a ethnographia do distrcito de Benguella*. 2a edição, (Lisboa: Typographia Minerva de Gaspar Pinto de Sousa & Irmão, 1911), 23-24 (emphasis added).

²⁷⁴ Bastos, *Traços geraes*, 25.

²⁷⁵ Bastos, *Traços geraes*, 58.

Portuguese agents faced the 20th century increasingly self-conscious of their country's inability to fulfill lofty colonial dreams, but they nonetheless strove to maintain a glorified rhetoric in their publications. Still, their comments often betray conflicting ideas about the effects of white settlement on Angolans. Corrado has argued that "the history of Portuguese colonization is marked by an evident gap separating real and imaginary, practice and discourse," explaining that "Portugal developed a self-complacent attitude towards the colonies and a twisted vision of its own empire."²⁷⁶ One specific way in which the imperial vision was twisted was through the refusal to recognize Luso-Africans as key figures in the colonial effort.

But despite the effort to obscure this fluid social reality from outside observers, Luso-Africans were nonetheless paternalistically celebrated in some colonial texts. From the 1891 *Guide for the Colonizer*: "The dedication of the African to the white (Portuguese) at times comes to the point of practicing acts of love and self-sacrifice that he would not be capable of doing for his own parents."²⁷⁷ As competition intensified after the Berlin Conference and racism grew deeper roots in European societies, intermediaries and racially ambiguous people and groups became less tolerable to colonial regimes, because they did not fit into the binary colonial imagination. *Ambaquistas* and other Luso-Africans were losing ground to white settlers by the turn of the twentieth century, who justified their disenfranchisement by reducing their Western sartorial and linguistic practices to crude mimicry.²⁷⁸

Caravan labor under shifting authority

The end of the 19th century was a turning point in trade and labor relations in Angola. International powers like Great Britain began scrutinizing the colonial activities of other

²⁷⁶ Jacopo Corrado, *The Creole Elite and the Rise of Angolan Proto-Nationalism, 1870–1920* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 19-20.

²⁷⁷ Castel-Branco, *Guia do Colono*, 125-26.

²⁷⁸ Dias, "Estereótipos e Realidades Sociais," 618.

European nations, and they were particularly critical of Portugal. The construction of the Benguela Railway (to be funded by British capital) was set to begin in 1903, but caravans were indispensable until more modern forms of transportation became operational. Older patterns of alliance between the colonial state and African authorities known as *sobas* were beginning to break down. For much of Portugal's tenure in Angola, trade had been possible only with the cooperation of various local power holders. These trader-kings, in exchange for protection and trade privileges, would allow caravans to pass, and colonial administrative posts to be built in their territories. As I have shown, a key part of the vassalage agreements that *sobas* entered into with Portuguese authorities was their promise to provide carriers on demand. As the dawn of the 20th century grew closer and the dictates of the Berlin Conference required Portugal to "pacify" Angola once and for all, alliances with groups like the Mambari and the *Ambaquistas* began to break down.

One factor contributing to this change was the influx of Portuguese traders fresh from Europe, seeking to make their fortunes in Angola as the interior of the country became more accessible to outsiders. Ignorant of the complexity of identities and labor relationships that were at stake, newly arrived Portuguese traders read the situation in black and white terms, both literally and figuratively. Unlike colonial officials who had spent decades in Angola, newcomers did not understand the delicate balance of power that had allowed trade to continue up until then. Changes in the nature of caravan labor Angola reflected a more global shift in attitudes and practices of colonialism as Portuguese agents increased in number and gained more control of the territory. There was less tolerance for the old ways of doing business, and a push to entangle Africans in wage or contract labor, often under the guise of stamping out slavery. But the intrusion of Europeans into systems of labor organization in Angola had the opposite effect—it

tended to create conditions that were even less free for the majority of laborers, removing the remarkable opportunities for social mobility that had characterized the last few decades of the nineteenth century.

As traders and state officials attempted to control caravan organization at the end of the 19th century, they fundamentally disrupted the system of labor to which Angolans had grown accustomed. As a result, Luso-African and African leaders increasingly expressed their discontent through uprisings and attacks on traders and refusal to work as carriers. People who worked as carriers, even if they operated from a disadvantaged position relative to all other historical actors, understood their own collective power, and used their agency to disrupt caravan operations in large and small ways.

Into the early 20th century, the majority of caravans were organized either by Luso-Africans or *sobas*, sometimes on their own account, and in other cases at the behest of coastal trading firms.²⁷⁹ By the 1870s, caravans organized by Ovimbundu *sobas* like the great Ekuikui II became dominant for a brief period, many even cutting out Luso-African middlemen and establishing their own relations with coastal firms.²⁸⁰ This historical moment allowed for a considerable degree of social mobility, in which ordinary carriers could transition to the status of *pombeiro* or *quissongo*, a position with higher pay and greater responsibility.²⁸¹

Even as colonial reach deepened following the conquest of the Ovimbundu kingdoms on the *planalto* in 1902, colonial agents had to contend with a variety of actors who were better able to control the labor of *gentio*. Missionaries' extraordinary influence, discussed in Chapter 5, and their focus on education disrupted administrators' plans for social control. In 1908, Jayme Frazão, district administrator of Tchινό (in the district of Bailundo), complained to the Bailundo

²⁷⁹ Heintze, *Pioneiros Africanos*.

²⁸⁰ Ball, "A 'Time of Clothes,'" 29.

²⁸¹ Heintze, *Pioneiros Africanos*, 276.

administration about the “human stratum which infests the left bank of the Kukai (River).”²⁸²

Frazão described a village called Tchandalla, with about 1500 to 2000 “people who do nothing: they don’t go to [work as] carriers, they don’t work for themselves, one could absolutely say they live in idleness.”²⁸³ Despite the fact that they inhabit “a region whose lands seduce by their fertile aspect, Your Excellency would not find 5 hectares of farmed land.”²⁸⁴

Frazão complained further: “If we censure them because they don’t work, they are ready with the excuse: ‘I go to school, because Sr. Padre comes on Monday.’ If one speaks of carriers, they respond immediately, ‘I will ask permission from Sr. Padre.’”²⁸⁵ Frazão blamed the people’s refusal to work as carriers and apparent distaste for agricultural work on the missionaries offering schooling in the area. He did not specify whether the “Fathers” were Catholic or Protestant, but he sarcastically expressed his disdain for the humble classroom hut, which village residents pointed to when Frazão asked them to state their occupation. Frazão was infuriated by the fact that a village full of “able-bodied men” would refuse to provide labor for the Portuguese government; instead they had the audacity to enjoy leisure time—he described the village men “with Christ around their necks,” drinking beer all day, shirtless, with their “paunches” exposed. Given their responses to Frazão’s prodding, it was obvious that the people in Tchinó saw missionaries as their protectors and sources of authority in dealings with the state. This influence over *gentio* that many missionaries enjoyed aroused suspicion among colonial authorities, especially given that most, even at Catholic missions, were not Portuguese nationals but rather French or Alsatian. Sarcastically, and full of disdain for these people’s apparent lack of

²⁸² BMH 13.869, 1255 6 October 1908. District Administrator of Tchinó (Jayme Frazão) to the Administrator of the County of Bailundo.

²⁸³ BMH 13.869, 1255 6 October 1908. District Administrator of Tchinó (Jayme Frazão) to the Administrator of the County of Bailundo.

²⁸⁴ BMH 13.869, 1255 6 October 1908. District Administrator of Tchinó (Jayme Frazão) to the Administrator of the County of Bailundo.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, emphasis in original document.

productivity, Frazão wrote, “This is why I presume that they live either by air, or by Our Fathers.”²⁸⁶

Colonial Dependence on Carriers

Until the Benguela railway was functional in 1911, the longstanding system of large caravans was the only way to keep the colony lucrative. Colonial and missionary archives from the late 19th and early 20th century are replete with complaints and worries about the difficulties of recruiting and controlling carriers for every kind of expedition. Finding enough carriers to set off on any kind of mission was always a problem. Even when enough carriers could be arranged, fulfilling the mission without incident was a challenge all its own. People must eat, sleep, and rest; they suffer and die; they sing, shout and gossip. Carriers often did not comply with the wishes of caravans’ leaders. Scientists, journalists, military men, missionaries, and representatives of trading companies in Angola—all had to contend with a transport system that was also a living, mobile social organism.²⁸⁷

In 1896, Catholic missionary Father Lecomte wrote about the pleasant climate and abundant resources in the central highlands. He claimed, however, that the four families who had been sent to settle there in 1892 “by the colonial enterprise” had trouble earning money from the products they produced “due to the lack of means of transport.”²⁸⁸ Lecomte called the system of using carriers “tyrannical and pernicious,” and mused that civilization would never be possible without abolishing it. With people spending months and months away from home, there could be no family, no morality, and no education. “Boys from ten years of age, and numerous girls and

²⁸⁶ BMH 13.869, 1255 6 October 1908. District Administrator of Tchινό (Jayme Frazão) to the Administrator of the County of Bailundo.

²⁸⁷ Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

²⁸⁸ Lecomte, *Planalto do Sul de Angola*, 19.

women, which I find most repugnant, one finds at every step along the paths.”²⁸⁹ For many observers like Father Lecomte, the dream of civilization in Angola could never be achieved as long as people were as mobile as they were during the caravan trade.

Resistance and Refusal

During an 1885 pacification expedition attempting to penetrate the *planalto*, Captain Artur da Paiva procured carriers in the region around the long-established Luso-African settlement of Caconda. Fear and the threat of violence were effective tools that Paiva used to solve the problem of *sobas*’ reluctance to provide carriers. The “fear that we would execute the threats we made to them made them move more rapidly and smoothly.”²⁹⁰ The resistance to providing caravan labor was strong, and people collectively refused to work when they did not like the conditions. Others slipped away alone or in small groups, sometimes taking their loads with them. Explorer Serpa Pinto complained in 1877 that, after a long and arduous process of waiting in Benguela to procure enough carriers to travel inland, four carriers absconded the day before departure, and five more ran off the morning the expedition was to depart.²⁹¹

In 1890, carriers still had considerable power to refuse to work when the conditions did not suit them. Writing to the provincial Governor of Angola from Bié where he was sent on an expedition, Captain Henrique de Paiva Couceiro claimed, “it will be perfectly impossible to arrange for this purpose a single carrier here; it is well known that these peoples, already rich from the rubber trade, flatly refuse to transport cargos, if they are not for commerce, and they refuse absolutely, when one tries to convince them to follow routes which are not for trade.”²⁹² To further illustrate his point, he recounted the story of a missionary Father Fidalgo, who was

²⁸⁹ Lecomte, *Planalto do Sul*, 26.

²⁹⁰ Artur da Paiva, *Artur da Paiva: Vol. I*. (Lisbon: Biblioteca Colonial Portuguesa, 1938), 36.

²⁹¹ Serpa Pinto, *How I Crossed Africa*, 43.

²⁹² Paiva Couceiro, *Relatório de Viagem*, 162.

stalled in Bié for *four months* trying to obtain just a dozen carriers to Caconda. In the end, the missionary was unsuccessful and was forced to return to the coast to seek carriers there.

During Paiva Couceiro's march, he claimed he was "obligated to use violence against the carriers who wanted to forcibly camp in the middle of the path."²⁹³ Carriers on long-distance journeys were almost always barefoot, carrying loads of at least 30 kilograms.²⁹⁴ After hours of marching in difficult terrain with minimal food and water, they had to make camp each night before resting. They knew the burdens they carried would earn profit for someone richer and more powerful than they. Although once upon a time they had had the opportunity to bring some of their own goods to trade along the way, this right diminished as Europeans began to take direct control of caravans away from *sobas* and Luso-Africans. Caravan workers had plenty of cause for discontent. Finding enough provisions to support their hard physical labor was a constant struggle, and their wages were paltry if they existed at all. To have attempted to "forcibly camp," when it did not suit the white leader of the caravan, was an immensely powerful statement of protest.

Mass flight was another common form of resistance to caravan labor. Father Lecomte claimed it had been "a continuous source of disorder and resistance on the part of the indigenous [people]; it is what gave origin to almost all of the disputes between the authorities and the peoples; it is what has caused them to flee to the interior, abandoning entire regions."²⁹⁵ Again, the conflict between the colonial necessity for carriers to transport goods and maintain the economic importance of the territory was in direct conflict with the "civilizing" project with which colonial agents were ostensibly in agreement. It was often missionaries, both Catholic and

²⁹³ Paiva Couceiro. *Relatório de Viagem*, 25.

²⁹⁴ Heywood, "Porters, Trade, and Power," 251.

²⁹⁵ Lecomte, *Planalto do Sul de Angola*, 25.

Protestant, who protected *gentio* from forced service, and even encouraged them to abandon the tradition of working voluntarily as carriers for pay.

Colonial agents struggled with the human elements of caravan travel, complaining that they could not simply move expeditions and goods along at the pace they desired. Captain Paiva Couceiro noted with annoyance how carriers, when they were not too fatigued or too hot, were nearly always conversing or singing. Whenever they passed near a village, he complained, it was inevitable that they would take the opportunity to put down their loads, chat with local residents, and have a drink of beer.²⁹⁶ Instead of the machine-like efficiency that Europeans expected and demanded from workers, they encountered entrenched social networks and interpersonal relations that baffled and confused them. The humanity of the carriers was an inconvenience, the moving social organism a liability for European interests.

Beatrix Heintze analyzed the travelogue of German explorer Max Buchner, who visited Angola in the late 1800s.²⁹⁷ Buchner complained in his diary about the “rebel discourse” he had to listen to as his carriers sat around the fire at night. He imagined what they might be saying about him as they laughed, applauding at the antics of their orators while he sat off to the side, alone and uncomprehending. Once a caravan had departed into the interior of Angola, white caravan leaders were at the mercy of the carriers themselves, not to mention that of their translators and guides, more vulnerable with every step away from the coast or the nearest administrative post. Perhaps it could be considered remarkable that more caravans did not end in mutiny, their headmen slain and their goods carried off. After all, wages were uncertain, food was always scarce, and many of the workers were either enslaved or trapped in relations of debt bondage.

²⁹⁶ Paiva Couceiro, *Relatório de Viagem*, 11.

²⁹⁷ Heintze, *Pioneiros Africanos*.

Paiva Couceiro admitted that he employed deceit as a tool to recruit sufficient carriers for his journey. “To avoid delays, I simply hired the carriers to Môma, a population six days’ journey away, since, if I had declared where I really wanted to go, not even within two months’ time would I have been able to get on the road.”²⁹⁸ Presumably, Paiva Couceiro counted on being able to force his carriers to go further once they were mid-journey and found themselves in a disadvantageous position. But people resisted tenaciously, and archival documents from the last decades of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th brim with incidents of conflict related to the recruitment of carriers.

Conclusion

While carrier work sometimes provided Ovimbundu people with opportunities for mobility, wealth accumulation, and social interaction across long distances, it increasingly became a form of forced labor as the Portuguese colonial presence grew in the highlands by the first years of the 20th century. Many carriers were paid for their services, but colonial administrators and military officials often demanded the services of unremunerated carriers as a colonial tax or as a form of debt repayment. Those demanding carrier labor used the typical colonial rhetoric of civilization through work, claiming that Africans were lazy and idle if they were not working for white men as carriers, to justify this form of forced labor.

As the importance of rubber grew in the last two decades of the 19th century, *sobas* enriched themselves through trade and associated tribute payments from caravans passing through their territories. Ovimbundu carriers achieved elevated status as *pombeiros* and *sekulus* and began to amass wealth at a level that had not previously been possible within local sociopolitical structures. At the same time that these new economic opportunities were emerging, however, the colonial presence in the highlands was strengthening and powerful forms of

²⁹⁸ Paiva Couceiro, *Relatório de Viagem*, 10.

coercion and force overshadowed economic opportunity. So while the figure of the Ovimbundu carrier at one time represented economic agency, freedom of movement, and social mobility, from the 1880s onward carriers were increasingly subject to brutal force and colonial control of labor.

The process of wresting of control of caravans away from *sobas* and *sekulus* heralded the end of an older form of colonialism. The previous period was in some ways still “precolonial,” if such a designation has any use at all, but the coming of the 20th century brought with it the more direct and exclusionary form of colonialism that would dominate until independence. It stripped Angolans of their own self-fashioned genealogies, social groups, and political hierarchies, replacing them with a more rigidly dichotomous system based on the West’s own imagined genealogies of “race” and “civilization.” It paved the way for the violent policies of settler colonialism and forced labor that would shape 20th century Angola. The growing presence of missionaries, who brought their own ways of organizing social groups and shaping attitudes about labor, contributed to this new era of firm boundaries.

As Chapters 3 and 4 will show, the attempts of Europeans and intermediaries to control the labor of *gentio* often sparked violence and revolts. Missionaries too, who are the subject of Chapter 5, struggled to secure caravan workers, but were rarely the target of violence by *gentio* in this period. Several incidents leading up to the explosion of the Mbailundu Revolt in 1902 started with carriers refusing to work for colonial agents or traders, usually backed by a *soba* or *sekulu* of whom they were subjects. One of the first effects of the 1902 Revolt was the complete cessation of caravan travel throughout the highlands. Carriers were aware of their own importance, and this widespread refusal to work was a crucial way of participating in the revolt. The military

columns preparing crush the uprising faced major delays because they struggled to recruit carriers at the coast during that uncertain time.

Chapter Three

“A Just Vengeance:” Mediation, Authority, and a Murdered Luso-African Trader

This chapter discusses the murder of a trader named Silveira—described in different sources as white or *mestiço*—in the interior of Novo Redondo district, adjacent to Bailundo in January of 1902. There is much evidence to suggest that this incident, and the general state of social unrest that followed, set the stage for the much larger uprising that began in April 1902 in Mbailundu. I delve into the details of these pre-revolt events, drawing from oral history interviews conducted in Bailundo in 2013, and from a collection of documents produced by Lieutenant Barradas, who was sent to investigate the murder. These details, taken together, produce a dramatic illustration of the social and political context wherein rogue agents like Silveira endeavored to exercise authority over *gentio*, but were rejected as illegitimate by both the communities they sought to control *and* by colonial authorities.

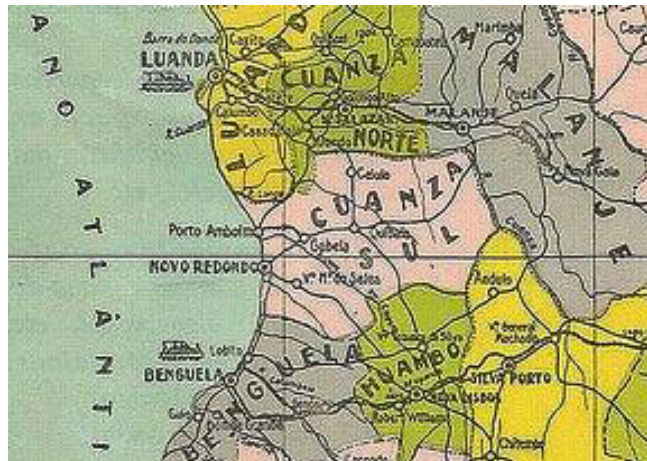


Figure 3:
*Map of Novo Redondo*²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ Cropped from: https://farm9.staticflickr.com/8586/16171225928_94b1f9ac86.jpg, accessed 3 March 2017.

“Ocimboto”

The first time I heard the story of the trader Silveira’s murder was during a group interview with about a dozen elders at the UNITA³⁰⁰ headquarters in Bailundo, Angola, in May 2013.³⁰¹ An influential UNITA deputy in Huambo named Liberty Chiyaka had generously arranged for me to speak with a packed room filled with the eldest and most respected local affiliates of the party.³⁰² When I asked them what had been some of the causes of the 1902 Mbailundu Revolt, a man began recounting the story of a white trader known to Angolans as “Ocimboto.” The name, which means *frog* in Umbundu, poked fun at Silveira’s corpulent build, a detail that drew many chuckles from the group. Different voices chimed in to add to the tale, and it emerged that a conflict over whether or not to carry Ocimboto in a *tipoia* had led to the violence when carriers refused to take him where he wanted to go. I had found a bit peculiar the day I heard it because it seemed unrelated to the Revolt, having happened some 370km to the north and west of Mbailundu in what is now Cuanza Sul Province.

A few months later in Lisbon I was reading through a set of documents at the Arquivo Histórico Militar. I remembered this story when I found a set of military reports from January 1902, detailing the story of an ill-fated trader named Silveira in the area of Novo Redondo (now

³⁰⁰ UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola), the main opposition group in the 1975-2002 Angolan Civil War. Fighting against the Communist MPLA (Movimento Popular da Libertação de Angola), which won the war and is still in power today, UNITA received military and political support from the United States and apartheid South Africa during the 1980s. Traditionally, the party has been associated with the highland region and the Ovimbundu people. The town of Bailundo was UNITA’s headquarters for several years during the 1990s, when it managed to capture and hold several strategic areas in the Benguela highlands.

³⁰¹ Group interview by the author: May 3, 2013, UNITA Party Headquarters, Bailundo, Angola. Both men and women were present, although slightly more men. There were a total of around 25 people in the room, and only a couple of them chose to give their names. The air of ceremony and formality that surrounded the event made it very difficult for me to interject and ask for biographical details from the participants. Elderly men were centrally seated and were very clearly intended by the hosts to be the focus of the interview. I had to explicitly ask the women, all seated to the side of the room, to speak at the end, in what became sort of a separate interview where the topics tended to be specifically around “women’s issues.”

³⁰² Chiyaka claims he faced an assassination attempt in 2014, the year after my fieldwork. See: <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/radioangola/2014/10/14/deputado-da-unita-liberty-chiyaka-fala-sobre-a-tentativa-de-assassinato>.

Cuanza Sul Province). The reports claim Silveira was murdered and eaten by *gentio* who had grown tired of his violence and extortion, exacting “a just vengeance” upon him. The official military report notes dryly that Silveira’s attempt to evade his attackers failed because of the trader’s “great fatness, which did not permit him to move [well], nor could he be transported by *tipoia* because of his great weight and thus he was taken by the *gentio*.”³⁰³

Governor General of Angola Cabral de Moncada, writing in the immediate aftermath of the Mbailundu Revolt, narrates the story of Silveira’s death in his published report, *A Campanha do Bailundo em 1902*. He used the reports of Lt. Barradas, which this chapter relies heavily upon, but added a detail that Silveira was a *mulato* who went by the name *Cambensis* (I could not find a definition for this name).³⁰⁴ Governor Moncada pointed to Silveira’s murder on 16 January 1902, and the subsequent social unrest, as direct causes of the much larger uprising that began in Mbailundu in April of the same year.

The inclusion of *Ocimboto*’s story in oral tradition points to the affective residues left by repeating, multiplying experiences of invasion, abuse, exploitation, and violence. Whether *Ocimboto* was the trader Silveira literally or allegorically, the invocation of his harshness against the communities around him, the collective laughter about his corpulence, and the righteous nature of his punishment were remembered and shared in Bailundo in 2013. Though one man was narrating much of the *Ocimboto* story, others chimed in occasionally to corroborate details or to disagree. Someone interjected that Ekuikui II had rejected *Ocimboto*’s request to settle in his lands. But Ekuikui II died in 1893, nearly twenty years before the Silveira incident. When I asked the group what the Portuguese name of *Ocimboto* might have been, they briefly debated the question. Some possibilities proposed included Paulo Dias de Novais (the first Captain

³⁰³ AHM, PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6, Lt. José Fernandes Barradas to Military Commander of Novo Redondo, Report on Expedition of 27 January 1902, p. 12.

³⁰⁴ F. Cabral de Moncada, *A Campanha do Bailundo em 1902*, (Lisboa, Imprensa Nacional, 1903), 244.

Governor of Angola, appointed in 1575); Diogo Cão (a Portuguese navigator exploring the African coast in the 1480s); and Teixeira da Silva (the first Captain Major of Bailundo, assigned in 1896). The utterance of these names of colonizing figures dispersed across centuries indicates that this story serves an allegorical purpose in collective memory. The story of Silveira is remembered by people in the central plateau today as part of the deep history of colonial infiltration. Memories of such violent encounters mark both the *longue durée* of conquest and the early twentieth-century period when Mbailundu and other highlands polities lost their sovereignty and independence.

According to both the story I heard in 2013 and the military documents, this incident happened in a region of Angola that is Kimbundu-speaking in the 21st century. But a Kimbundu grammar published in 1964 covers the “Omumbuim” dialect—that is, a version of Kimbundu spoken in the region the Portuguese called Amboim, the same region where Ocimboto (and Silveira) lived. In most Kimbundu dictionaries, “frog” is *rizundu* or *risote*. The Omumbuim grammar lists *zundu* and *ximboto*, the latter bearing clear resemblance to the Ovimbundu *ocimboto*.³⁰⁵ By 21st-century popular understanding in Angola, “Kimbundus,” “Ovimbundus,” and “Kongos” occupy well-defined separate regions, and are deeply associated with the cleavages of the major political parties and infused with bitterness leftover from the civil war (1975-2002). But it would be a mistake to assume that these boundaries were somehow “natural” or even particularly rooted.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ A. da Silva Maia, *Lições da gramática de Quimbundo (português e banto), dialecto omubuim – língua indígena de Gabela – Amboim – Quanza-Sul – Angola – África Ocidental Portuguesa*, (Cucujães, Portugal, Escola Tipográfica das Missões, 1964), p. 185.

³⁰⁶ Neto, ‘Hóspedes Incómodos,’ 376.

Silveira's Murder

On 16 January 1902, the colonial administrator of Novo Redondo received disturbing news from the interior of the district, where Antonio Daniel Henriques da Silveira lived in a village compound. In Bango, south of the Kwanza River, Silveira's place had been sacked and burned by local *gentio*, who chased him down and killed him. Because of the sparseness of outposts of Portuguese authority, many traders moved into positions of authority like *soba* or *sekulu* by accumulating wealth and purchasing these titles.³⁰⁷ In cases like Silveira's, traders took positions of power by force, imposing their authority on people who did not consider them legitimate rulers. Even the Portuguese military Chief of Staff who reported on this incident concluded that the people of Bango had exacted a "just vengeance" upon Silveira, who had robbed them "shamelessly" for years.³⁰⁸

Concerned about the situation intensifying into a revolt, as frequently happened in Angola, the military commander sent Lieutenant José Barradas with a sergeant and six soldiers to Bango to investigate. Barradas's report contains fascinating details about the social composition of the Angolan countryside at the turn of the 20th century. Descriptions of people and interactions, even when mentioned in passing, reveal something of the complex relationships that characterized this place and time. They display the layered, tense, and unpredictable interactions that were the norm, rather than any binary patterns of alliance, antagonism, or interaction along lines of race or background.

Lieutenant Barradas's small force embarked from Novo Redondo on 18 January with the soldiers disguised as porters, guided by an unnamed *preta* (black woman) who had been Silveira's "lover" and this knew the way to his residence. Just six hours into the march, the group

³⁰⁷ Heintze, 2000, p. 68.

³⁰⁸ AHM, Lisbon, Portugal: PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6. Cover letter to the set of reports on these events, Chief of Staff Gaudino Anselmo d'Oliveira, 6 February 1902.

encountered a trader named Bastos who shared horrifying news. After destroying Silveira's compound, the *gentio* had caught up with the trader and decapitated him.³⁰⁹ The killers allegedly cut the body into pieces to be cooked and consumed in what the Governor General later called a "savage banquet."³¹⁰ After learning of Silveira's death, the unnamed female guide elected to return to the coast immediately, leaving Barradas and his expedition without a guide, newly aware of Silveira's macabre fate, and uncertain how to proceed.

Through a discussion of Barradas's expedition and an analysis of the information it managed to gather, this chapter makes three related arguments. Scholars have often pointed to the weak, vulnerable, or subaltern quality of Portuguese colonial power, one evocatively describing it as "apparitional."³¹¹ The deficiency of military responses like this one, common in Angola in the late 19th and early 20th century, appears to support such claims. But my second argument complicates this apparent colonial "weakness" by showing how middle figures like Silveira represented expressions of colonial power in the hinterland, even when the state did not condone or support their activities. The diverse social categories, lifestyles, and relationships described in Barradas's report vexed colonial officials at the coast because they eluded neat classification and easy control, undermining the authority of the colonial state. Finally, I show how the relative privilege inherent in intermediary positions was threatened by the onslaught of Portuguese military control *and* the growing resistance by groups of *gentio* in the last decades of the 19th century. The tragicomedy of the trader Silveira illustrates the declining importance of

³⁰⁹ Arquivo Histórico Militar (AHM), Lisbon, Portugal: PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6.

³¹⁰ Moncada, *A Campanha do Bailundo em 1902*, 244. AHM, PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6, Lt. José Fernandes Barradas to Military Commander of Novo Redondo, Report on Expedition of 27 January 1902, p. 6. After relating this part of the story as told by Bastos, Barradas wrote in parentheses: (THEY ARE CANNIBALS), in different script than the rest of his text, as if to visually confirm a horrific "truth." Heintze has discussed the work done by accusations of cannibalism which Europeans and Africans leveled at each other across the continent: B. Heintze, "Contra as Teorias Simplificadoras: O 'Canibalismo' na Antropologia e História de Angola," IN M. R. Sanches, *Portugal Não É um País Pequeno: contar o "império" na pós colonialidade*. (Lisbon: Livros Cotovia 2006).

³¹¹ Roque, 'The Razor's Edge,' Santos, 'Between Prospero and Caliban.'

middle figures and the problems they presented for colonial authorities and semi-independent *gentio*.

Silveira's Race

A report penned by Governor Moncada described Silveira as a “*mulato*.”³¹² Lieutenant Barradas, who led the column sent to investigate the murder, interrogated people about the murder of “the white man who lived over yonder,” but otherwise did not comment on the unfortunate trader’s color.³¹³ When an elderly man from Bailundo recounted the story in Umbundu in 2013, he referred to Silveira as an *ocindele*, which means “white” or “European.” Regardless of his physical appearance and the various social positions with which it may have articulated according to context, Silveira straddled worlds like so many of the traders living in the Angolan interior. Although he had connections to the worlds of both “colonizer” and “colonized,” neither recognized his authority as legitimate. He meddled in local politics, leveraging rivalries between *sobas* to increase his own wealth and influence.³¹⁴ Such figures exercised considerable power despite their illegitimacy under both colonial and customary law. Their arbitrary application of force often had deadly consequences, for themselves and those they exploited, and Portuguese officials saw them as the primary cause of discontent among *gentio*.

Officials were aware of the need to establish Portuguese authority through consistent and permanent structures, but their pleas to strengthen the colonial presence in the interior with permanent residences staffed with soldiers went largely unanswered by those with the power to make such decisions. After Silveira’s murder, the military commander of Novo Redondo tried to

³¹² Moncada, *A Campanha do Bailundo*, 244.

³¹³ AHM, PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6, Lt. José Fernandes Barradas to Military Commander of Novo Redondo, Report on Expedition of 27 January 1902, p. 7.

³¹⁴ *Soba* is a generic term used by the Portuguese to designate African rulers. Candido, *An African Slaving Port*, 54-55, explains how the term designated a vassal king or ruler, but by the late 19th century the term was also used to refer to African authorities who had not submitted to Portuguese rule.

convince his superiors of the necessity of establishing a military outpost in the area. He pleaded with higher officials for a Portuguese outpost, which he claimed would provide:

A competent authority to judge claims among the *gentio*, and between the *gentio* and the traders, thus avoiding that they [traders] call these claims to themselves, judging them according to their [own] interests, and committing arbitrariness and violence, whose consequences are occurrences like the present one, which everyone attributes to the vendetta of the *gentio* for the successive pillaging of which they were the target on the part of Silveira.³¹⁵

Just as they resented the meddling of the *Ambaquistas* in judicial affairs, colonial officials were frustrated that traders took it upon themselves to decide disputes among *gentio*, both because it undermined Portuguese authority and because it led to injustice and instability. Portuguese officials at the coast had little sympathy for the protests of these traders, who constantly sought the protection of the state against the *gentio* in whose territories they resided. In response to traders' request for military protection in 1901, the Governor of Benguela responded that all of the traders in the interior were "thieves" and if they were in danger, "let them govern themselves."³¹⁶

Silveira's Crimes

Traders and colonial officials were frequently at odds. Traders often set themselves apart from the government and claimed it did not represent or defend their commercial interests and that its representatives were corrupt. Yet in the frequent rebellions that plagued the territory, Africans ignored this petty distinction and targeted both commercial and government spaces with equal vigor. The lines between different forms of authority were blurred and constantly shifting. According to information that Lieutenant Barradas collected during his expedition, Silveira had

³¹⁵ AHM 2/2/7/6: Da Matta to Chefe do Estado, 30 January 1902, p. 5.

³¹⁶ Pélissier, 1986 (Vol. II), p. 82.

“shamelessly robbed” the people around Bango for years.³¹⁷ The trader’s conflicts with people in the area were so intense that *gentio* had kidnapped him and sentenced him to death in another part of the region. Based on Silveira’s pleading and promises of reform, the people eventually took mercy on him and set him free, for which he showed his gratitude by stealing forty of their bulls and seeking refuge with the *soba* of Bango.

Conspiring with this Bango *soba*, Silveira had another *soba* killed in order occupy the latter’s *libata* and lay claim—illegally, Barradas noted—to the deceased’s slaves and crops, which should have been transferred to his relatives. When the *soba* of Bango eventually died, Silveira usurped the deceased’s position and belongings. From this new position of power, which he took by force, the trader began “resolving” matters among local people by robbing, enslaving, and meting out punishment as he saw fit. His behavior earned him the “mortal hate” of Africans, who so despised him that they eventually refused to sell him food for his own consumption.³¹⁸

The information that Barradas collected about Silveira’s exploits reveals how the trader operated both within and outside of African socio-political structures and norms. Silveira frequently made demands that *gentio* considered excessive and unreasonable. After he purchased a slave from a local man named Calungo-Cungo, the slave fell victim to the smallpox epidemic that was sweeping across the countryside, infecting Silveira’s other slaves. For this, Silveira demanded seven slaves and twelve bulls from Calungo-Cungo. Still not satisfied, Silveira discovered that Calungo-Cungo had some relation to the people who had killed his son, on which grounds he demanded and received six more slaves and eight more bulls.

³¹⁷ AHM, Lisbon, Portugal: PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6. Cover letter to the set of reports on these events, Chief of Staff Gaudino Anselmo d’Oliveira, 6 February 1902.

³¹⁸ AHM, PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6, Lt. José Fernandes Barradas to Military Commander of Novo Redondo, Report on Expedition of 27 January 1902, p. 11.

Silveira's conflict with the people of Bango escalated through such episodes of theft and retribution. When Bango residents caught two of his female slaves stealing cassava from the field, they arrested them and held them for ransom. Silveira sent a keg of rum and a bed cover as a ransom payment, but the people demanded the return of the thirteen slaves and twenty bulls he had received from Calungo-Cungo. Otherwise, they threatened to sell the two women for gunpowder in order to make war on Silveira. Refusing to return the people and animals, Silveira instead convened four local authorities with their men to attack the *libata* of Bango and get the two women back. He met with four leaders: Quicombo, Cambambe, Roberto, and Inhanheca. But after receiving gifts of rum and other goods, they betrayed Silveira and joined forces with a nobleman of Bango, attacking the trader's compound.

If officials at the coast knew of these events as they were happening, they did nothing to stop them. Archival documents reveal considerable ignorance about events and conditions in the interior, a problem that coastal officials explicitly acknowledged. Metropolitan military men were the true outsiders in Angola, entering into a mysterious social context rife with conflict, and limited by the material deficiency of the Portuguese apparatus. Troops wandered into territory that had been crisscrossed by trade caravans, controlled by state-allied Luso-African *sobas*, and integrated into the Atlantic economy for centuries, but they were so poorly prepared that they had no reliable guide to the site of Silveira's compound. That Barradas had to struggle so reveals the extravagant unwillingness of the Portuguese state to maintain minimal intellectual control of the countryside, let alone exercise meaningful authority. The military Chief of Staff described

the area as “a region that is not dominated [by Portugal].”³¹⁹ There was “no Portuguese authority, nor vassal *sobas*” in the entire area.³²⁰

Cambambe and Histories of Mobility

Silveira’s attackers were said to be from Cambambe, an area by the Kwanza River that had a long history of direct engagement with the Portuguese state—its *soba* having been a colonel in command of a detachment of colonial black troops (*guerra preta*) as recently as 1875.³²¹ In January 1902, the *soba* of Cambambe who spearheaded the attack on Silveira was described as a black man (*preto*) named Roberto. Apart from some conversations related second- and third-hand, we learn little else about Roberto from the documents because the expedition failed spectacularly, and the government did not take up the matter of repression until December 1902.³²²

Colonial officials frequently admitted their uneasiness about punishing rebellious *gentio*, knowing very well how much social and political stability in the interior of Angola depended upon their leaders’ cooperation. Officials also knew well the injustices that *gentio* faced from people like Silveira, and they frequently suggested in official reports that uprisings were justified. This hermeneutics of failure, as I call it, characterizes the Portuguese colonial record, revealing a tacit acknowledgement of the inherent illegitimacy of rule by its very perpetrators. Agents of the state panicked over the lack of prestige that Portugal commanded among residents of the territory, scrambling to point fingers at unscrupulous Luso-African traders and subversive missionaries—both Catholic and Protestant. Official policy discouraged the use of excessive

³¹⁹ AHM, Lisbon, Portugal: PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6. Cover letter to the set of reports on Silveira’s murder, Chief of Staff Gaudino Anselmo d’Oliveira, 6 February 1902.

³²⁰ AHM 2/2/7/6: Da Matta to Chefe do Estado, 30 January 1902.

³²¹ Jill Dias, ‘Black Chiefs, White Traders and Colonial Policy near the Kwanza: Kabuku Kambilo and the Portuguese, 1873-1896’, *Journal of African History*, 17, 2 (1976): 259, n. 63.

³²² Moncada, *A Campanha do Bailundo em 1902*, 247.

force against Africans, but administrators struggled with how to address the continuing cycles of violence that they could never seem to reign in, and they craved respect for their flag and revenge against insubordinate Africans. They blamed Portugal's failure to secure control of Angola's population on rogue traders like Silveira, conveniently displacing their shame about the state of the colonial project in Angola, and absolving themselves and their government from responsibility for the collective discontent of *gentio*.

The inhabitants of Angola's north/central region were no strangers to the Portuguese, whose slave trade-based incursions had affected their ancestors for more than three centuries.³²³ The Portuguese constructed a fortress at Cambambe in the early 1600s, hoping to secure access to silver mines rumored to be in the area, and it became one of the early centers of Angolan Christianity.³²⁴ During the transatlantic slave trade and its slow decline, colonial relations with the region's African leadership fluctuated wildly.³²⁵ Until the end of the 19th century, the Portuguese presence in Angola depended heavily upon uneasy alliances with trader-chiefs like Kabuku Kambilo in Cambambe.³²⁶ The intense and cyclical movement of people in this region, who had interacted with Atlantic markets for centuries, meant that few people could be thought of as simply "local" or autochthonous.

³²³ Cambambe is about 400 kilometers from Bailundo, near Dondo on the bank of the Kwanza. Ovimbundu carriers from the highlands dominated trade routes throughout Angola well into the late 19th century, and the Kwanza region was within "the Ovimbundu sphere of influence" according to Pélissier, who calls the peoples of this region "*Ovimbundizados*." Pélissier, *História das Campanhas*, 22. See also: Jill Dias, 'Black Chiefs, White Traders and Colonial Policy near the Kwanza: Kabuku Kambilo and the Portuguese, 1873-1896', *The Journal of African History*, 17, 2 (1976): 245-265.

³²⁴ John Thornton, 'Religious and Ceremonial Life in the Kongo and Mbundu Areas, 1500-1700,' and Linda Heywood, 'Portuguese into African: The Eighteenth-Century Central African Background to Atlantic Creole Cultures,' In eds. Linda Heywood and John Thornton, *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002), 87 & 95.

³²⁵ Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, 92.

³²⁶ Dias, 'Black Chiefs, White Traders.'

As Dias explains, the various *sobados*³²⁷ that existed in the Kwanza region in the 19th century had “widely varying political significance” in relation to the colonial state, and “their population was highly mobile,” with the population dispersing into different parts of the interior on an annual basis during the dry season when food was scarce.³²⁸ These historical circumstances make it impossible to draw borders between Ovimbundu and Kimbundu linguistic and cultural regions—people did not necessarily divide themselves along such lines.³²⁹ Dias describes the populations of the Angolan hinterland, “not as separate or closed cultural entities, but as open and interactive social groups.”³³⁰ Furthermore, a binary Ovimbundu-Kimbundu classification would completely disregard the existence of *Ambaquistas* and *Mambaris* as significant groups, because they did not fit into the “tribal” or ethno-linguistic categories that colonial ethnologists later in the 20th century codified as static identities.³³¹ This was of course in the state’s interest, because denying Angolans’ “civilized” or “assimilated” status left them vulnerable to forced labor and enslavement under Portuguese law, a state of affairs that persisted until 1962 when the *indígena* category was finally abolished.³³² Groups that the colonial state glossed as *gentio* in 1902 likely included a few Luso-Africans, some literate and Catholic, as well as slaves from other regions and their descendants.

People, goods, and information circulated continuously through the Kwanza River region from the coast to the west, the highlands to the south, and the interior to the east (including the powerful Lunda kingdom). Kimbundu was the lingua franca in most of this region, but there

³²⁷ The area controlled by a particular *soba*.

³²⁸ Dias, ‘Black Chiefs, White Traders,’ 246; Dias, ‘Estereótipos e Realidades Sociais,’ 601.

³²⁹ Still, 21st century Angolans tend to imagine their country as divided into regions along ethnic lines, and bitterness from the civil war continues to be understood in terms of ethnic strife, albeit mapped onto political parties.

³³⁰ Dias, ‘Estereótipos e Realidades Sociais,’ 601.

³³¹ See map of 20th century ethnicities in Pélissier, *História das Campanhas*, 338.

³³² Jeremy Ball, ‘Colonial Labor in Twentieth Century Angola,’ *History Compass*, 3, AF 168 (2005): 1–9.

were dialects like that of Amboim, which incorporated words from Umbundu.³³³ The area around the Kwanza River was regularly traversed by thousands of Umbundu-speaking carriers from Mbailundu, the populous and powerful central highland kingdom that dominated the caravan trade across much of central Angola by the end of the 19th century.³³⁴ Historian Maria da Conceição Neto notes the importance of the north-south trade route between Bailundo and Pungo Andongo, which is often overshadowed by a focus on the east-west routes between coastal ports and the interior.³³⁵ The twenty-two villages said to have participated in the attack on Silveira were scattered along this north-south trade route.³³⁶

Although Cambambe was rumored to be the home of Silveira's killers, its important recent history of colonial engagement went unmentioned in the reports and correspondence related to the murder. Poor intelligence was partly due to the ever-changing location, composition, and leadership of local populations; but it was also a symptom of the lack of management capabilities at the highest levels of colonial government, where authority was similarly shifting and contingent.³³⁷ The river crossing at Cambambe had been a crucial site during the mid-19th century in the trade route leading northwards towards the important commercial center of Dondo, and beyond to Luanda. *Sobas* amassed considerable amounts of wealth by collecting taxes from caravans wishing to cross. Trade through this area exploded as "legitimate commerce" began to

³³³ Maia, *Lições da gramática de Quimbundo*.

³³⁴ Dias, 'Black Chiefs, White Traders,' 249.

³³⁵ Neto, 'Hóspedes Incómodos,' 375-389.

³³⁶ Locating historical place names on a twenty-first century map of Angola presents several challenges. Place names changed often as people and communities moved around. Colonial maps rarely showed the location of smaller villages. Often when a village or *sobado* transplanted itself to a new location, the old place name would move with the community. Twenty-first century maps of Angola [i.e. Google maps] often show two or more locations with the same name. Despite these challenges, it seems clear that the communities noted in Barradas's report were scattered throughout a north-south corridor between Mbailundu and Cambambe. This raises the question of the relationship between the Cambambe of Kabuku Kambilo in the 1800s, and the Cambambe of Roberto in 1902.

³³⁷ Note, for example, the chaotic period between 1896 and 1902 in Bailundo, during which *six* different transfers of power occurred for the post of Captain Major. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP), F.P. 150 (microfilm), *O Jornal do Commercio*, 21 August 1902.

replace the slave trade in the mid-19th century, but colonial administrative reach remained shallow. During most of the nineteenth century, “the relationship of the Portuguese with black potentates in the interior of Angola was conditioned chiefly by the penury and consequent military and administrative weakness of the government.”³³⁸

Kabuku Kambilo was the *soba* of Cambambe and commander of the black troops (*guerra preta*) for all of Angola beginning in 1856. Dynastic families like his maintained control of political positions across wide networks.³³⁹ By the 1870s colonial law prohibited *sobas* from collecting taxes for river crossings, but resident officials turned their heads as Kabuku Kambilo continued to do so at Cambambe. The stability thus maintained was more valuable to colonial agents than the tax they could have collected, even if they had had the capacity to do so.³⁴⁰ By the last quarter of the 19th century, these patterns of alliance had begun to break down.

Portuguese traders and planters began to flow into the area, appropriating land and establishing coffee plantations, for which they demanded cheap labor. Their brutal exploitation of Angolans and their general state of impunity contributed to building tensions in the 1890s. European arrivals had no knowledge of the area and no familial ties there.

An array of Luso-African middle figures like Silveira still straddled a thin and shifting line between systems of rule and forms of authority, but they were being slowly pushed to the margins. These intermediaries often became targets of revenge by people they had abused and exploited. Annoyed by traders’ tendency to stir up trouble among the *gentio*, Portuguese officials were not always compelled to rush to traders’ aid when they faced threats. *Sobas* and other authorities, who had stronger ties to their communities than to the state, resented traders’

³³⁸ Dias, ‘Black Chiefs, White Traders,’ 253.

³³⁹ Dias, ‘Black Chiefs, White Traders,’ 254.

³⁴⁰ Dias, ‘Black Chiefs, White Traders,’ 257.

constant meddling in local affairs, their competition in trade, and their propensity to trap Africans in relations of debt bondage.³⁴¹ Discontent permeated the Angolan countryside.

By 1902, incidents like Silveira's death had become the normal state of affairs in the interior where Portuguese authority was nonexistent. The Portuguese either had no knowledge of Silveira's abuses and crimes while he was alive, or did not consider them important enough to address. The state also had no strategic knowledge of Cambambe or its contemporary leadership, considering that Barradas only discovered the first name of the alleged instigator—Roberto—several days into his march, based on a tip from an unidentified source. The lieutenant had no idea what Roberto's "moral importance" was among the people, nor what means of defense he had at his disposal.³⁴² This seems remarkable, given the prominent position that Kabuku Kambilo had occupied less than two decades earlier. Clearly Portuguese officials failed to understand the potential that these events had for escalating the climate of violence that was already building in Angola.

Bodies and Labor

Silveira lived in a world where the violent appropriation of bodies in order to use or sell their labor for profit was a reality of everyday political and social life. Communities and polities had dissolved, coalesced, and transplanted themselves to new regions in the face of the constant insecurity provoked by the transatlantic slave trade and colonial incursions. Silveira's provocations included "constantly" sending out his own slaves—so numerous that they "almost formed a gang"—on raiding expeditions to the surrounding villages, justifying this violence with petty accusations and insignificant claims against the people he targeted. Those people

³⁴¹ Vellut, 'Garenganze/Katanga,' 133-152.

³⁴² AHM, PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6, Lt. José Fernandes Barradas to Military Commander of Novo Redondo, Report on Expedition of 27 January 1902.

unfortunate enough to be captured in these raids were chained by the neck until they could be sold into slavery.

When the *gentio* caught up with Silveira, according to Barradas's report they "naturally" freed the thirteen slaves who were chained by the neck, and with whom he was attempting to flee. Enslavement of strangers from distant lands and even members of one's own kin group was common in Angola; but these particular slaves had been taken by Silveira under conditions that the local communities considered unfair, so it was perhaps "natural" that they would have been liberated. We do not know what their fates were after these events. Barradas probably did not realize the irony of condemning Silveira for his illegitimate attempts to control bodies and labor while the lieutenant attempted to do precisely the same thing. A few days into his ill-fated expedition, on 21 January 1902, Barradas met with three local *sobas*, all of whom promised to provide men to assist him in capturing *Soba* Roberto. Ultimately none of them followed through, claiming that they could not afford to remove people from agricultural labor, or asking Barradas to wait several more days. Local leaders did not appear to respect Portuguese authority any more than they had respected Silveira's, and Barradas was left frustrated and impotent as his small force were severely outnumbered.

Having thus failed to secure assistance, Barradas's group pushed on under cover night. They took care to wait until they could no longer hear drums coming from the villages to march. They ended up at the house of a trader called Nunes who was not at home when they arrived. Barradas thought it more accurate to call a *trafficker*, a title which "better describe[d] the way of life not only of this but of many individuals (except for a few small exceptions) scattered throughout the native populations." The lieutenant commented that Nunes lived in a "shack

[*choca*], which in no way differ[ed] from that of the natives”.³⁴³ Here Barradas seems to imply that Nunes’s home *should* have differed from those of the “natives,” but makes no further comment about Nunes’s identity, nationality, or appearance.

Barradas expected that Nunes, upon his return, would assist by providing valuable information about the *soba* Roberto. Barradas had heard that Roberto and Nunes were enemies, but the lieutenant soon learned the trader had made peace with the rebel *soba*. This raised Barradas’s hopes of attracting Roberto there so he could arrest him. When Nunes arrived home the next morning, he announced that he had anticipated the expedition’s arrival, and had already warned *Soba* Roberto. Barradas realized at this point that it was “ridiculous” to keep disguising his soldiers as porters as he had been since the beginning of the journey. He demanded an audience with Roberto, insisting that he only wanted to talk, and watched helplessly as Nunes relayed the message to a slave in Portuguese.³⁴⁴ The slave went and returned “five minutes later,” saying Roberto wanted Nunes to come to his house so they could talk. Then, “a *mulato* that appeared there” told Barradas that Roberto had been very close by, but turned back as soon as he got the message from Nunes’ slave.

Barradas immediately understood that the trader Nunes had betrayed him—the message delivered to Roberto was not the message sent. No one believed Barradas’ claims of peaceful intentions; according to the white trader Santos, who had been serving as the expedition’s guide, Roberto had laughed at the idea that Barradas just wanted to talk.³⁴⁵ Finally accepting that he could do nothing with so few soldiers, Barradas led his men back in the direction of the coast the

³⁴³ AHM, PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6, Lt. José Fernandes Barradas to Military Commander of Novo Redondo, Report on Expedition of 27 January 1902, 8.

³⁴⁴ Barradas probably included this detail about language in order to underscore his bafflement when he realized that Nunes somehow managed to relay a very different message to Roberto through the slave, either by slipping him a note, or perhaps giving him an alternate message in Kimbundu.

³⁴⁵ AHM, PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6, Lt. José Fernandes Barradas to Military Commander of Novo Redondo, Report on Expedition of 27 January 1902, 9.

next morning, hoping to get his hands on some unsuspecting person along the way who might verify the story in a last ditch effort to condemn Roberto for Silveira's murder. Making their way along steep hillsides on "torturous paths through the bush" where they had to crawl single file on hands and knees, the small force walked into an ambush. Barradas glimpsed some groups of *gentio* hiding up ahead and preparing silently to surround them. As the soldiers approached, the people began to make "an infernal uproar" before opening fire. Somehow the tiny force was able to avoid the shots of 150 men by returning enough gunfire to disperse the attackers.

Lieutenant Barradas remarked on his "luck" in this incident. His men only had 20 cartridges per soldier, and wanted to conserve ammunition because they feared an ambush as they passed the ruins of Silveira's house. "Luckily the natives did not know how to take advantage of the situation that the terrain offered them," and Barradas and his crew were somehow able to escape a barrage of gunfire. It is unlikely that the people who inhabited and controlled access to this region would fail to take advantage of the terrain. Perhaps the *gentio* took mercy on the men because they feared the backlash that could come up from the coast. Or it could be that Barradas exaggerated the attack's severity to glorify his own legacy in the face of the mission's complete failure.

Regardless of the outcome of Barradas's expedition, Portuguese authorities could not spare the manpower necessary to subdue the uprising spreading across the region. Military Chief of Staff Anselmo d'Oliveira wrote that it would require a depletion of already sparse troops in other parts of the province.³⁴⁶ It would be necessary to remove a large amount of soldiers from Luanda for such a mission, unless military recruitment somehow increased, which he deemed especially unlikely in light of the ongoing smallpox epidemic—a fact that may have helped to

³⁴⁶ AHM, Lisbon, Portugal: PT/AHM/DIV/2/2/7/6. Cover letter to the set of reports on Silveira's murder, Chief of Staff Gaudino Anselmo d'Oliveira, 6 February 1902.

produce the conditions for widespread rebellion.³⁴⁷ D'Oliveira mentioned the many soldiers held in the prisons of the War Council as a possible source of soldiers, but thought it a highly unlikely possibility to release them for service. All of these became moot points just a few months later, when Mbailundu warriors began attacking commercial establishments and forts in the central highland region in April 1902. Portuguese retribution for the murder of Silveira, however “just” the *gentio*'s vengeance may have been, would have to wait until December, when the Portuguese government could finally spare the resources to raid the Novo Redondo region.³⁴⁸

Conclusion

In turn-of-the-20th-century Angola, the mundane instrumentality of colonial power in quotidian practice was highly fluid, generating relationships fraught with competition and suspicion. The Portuguese state, burdened with the weight of constant uprisings, attacks on trade caravans, and general social unrest, had complicated relationships with both traders and local African power structures. Likewise, *gentio*'s protests against *mestiço* or Luso-African traders like Silveira were not always explicitly anti-colonial. More often, personal grudges based on specific histories of micro-level interaction involving material exchange generated violent uprisings. *Sobas* like Roberto had Portuguese names, presided over people considered *gentio* by the Portuguese, and had Luso-African friends and allies who lived apart from their communities like the trader Nunes. People protected each other and betrayed each other in unexpected ways. *Gentio* frequently attacked commercial establishments in conjunction symbols of state power, indicating that they associated commercial power with political power, regardless of whether a particular commercial establishment had direct support from the state. Despite deep conflicts of interest between traders and the government, the state considered attacks on commerce by the

³⁴⁷ On the smallpox epidemic in 1902, see also Wheeler & Christensen, 'To Rise With One Mind,' 68.

³⁴⁸ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas*, 40.

gentio worthy of armed retribution, and often called upon traders to help put down revolts. These facts did not escape the *gentio*, who were intermediaries in their own right.

The next chapter discusses the Mbailundu Revolt, which targeted figures like Silveira and government agents and outposts. It discusses in detail some conflicts that happened near Mbailundu in 1901, involving the two main leaders of the 1902 Revolt, Samakaka and Mutu-ya-Kavela. Both of these leaders had complicated claims to authority—neither were *sobas* from royal bloodlines, and there is some evidence that Samakaka was a *pombeiro* who had earned higher status by accumulating wealth through trade. Nevertheless, the two waged a war against intermediary figures and representatives of colonial power alike.

Chapter Four
The Mbailundu Revolt:
Violence, Boundaries, and Mutu-ya-Kavela's Moral Outrage

This chapter will explore the microlevel interactions and conflicts that comprised the 1902 Mbailundu Revolt. Tens of thousands of people from Mbailundu and dozens of other communities across the highlands, under the leadership of Mutu-ya-Kavela and Samakaka, attacked intermediary figures like Luso-African traders as well as state agents. Whereas previous scholarship has probed the motivations for the uprising, I will dig deeper into the words and actions of the rebels in order to illuminate the affective dimensions of the conflict. Most in-depth research on the Mbailundu Revolt was conducted in the 1970s by scholars who did not have access to records from the *Arquivo Histórico Militar* in Lisbon because Portugal had not yet liberated its colonies and kept these records sealed. The military documents contain a wealth of detailed information recorded by officials on the front lines of the conflict. Using a broad range of published and unpublished sources, as well as oral histories collected in 2013, I explore how enduring patterns of abuse and sporadic applications of colonial force and crises in Ovimbundu authority created the conditions for an explosive conflict. Using a microhistorical lens, I analyze interpersonal dynamics at the level of individual historical actors.

I argue that the nature of the rebels' attacks shows an attempt by the revolt's leaders to redraw boundaries between Mbailundu subjects and other Ovimbundu in the central highlands on the one hand, and "outsiders" who represented the disruptive influence of trade and colonial conquest on the other. Rather than simply focusing on the Revolt's instrumental "causes," as most previous scholarship has done, I describe the affective dimensions of the uprising—traces

of the attitudes and emotions that drove people's actions in this time of conflict, and what this reveals about the overlapping moral and social worlds people inhabited.³⁴⁹ I situate this large revolt within not only a political and economic context, but also within a detailed social and interpersonal context with a strong focus on identities, belonging, and boundaries. Mutu-ya-Kavela and Samakaka were not simply fighting against colonial invasion. They were violently affirming their belief in the importance of social boundaries that had structured Mbailundu society in an earlier time. As discussed in the Introduction, the turn of the 20th century was a time where drawing boundaries became an increasingly important part of securing power over others. The people that Mbailundu rebel leaders chose as targets, and the nature of the punishments they inflicted upon them, reveal a total rejection not only of all things colonial or European, but also of all things in-between and ambiguous.

Gentio across the highlands expressed their moral outrage by attacking not only people who had personally exploited or offended them, but by lashing out against people, institutions, and material artifacts that represented Europe or its affectations.³⁵⁰ The roots of this moral outrage were far reaching. People had grown tired of repeated abuses including forced labor, corporeal punishment for imagined slights, rape, extortion, and finally the imposition of rum, which was often offered as payment for goods and services whether the recipient wanted it or not. Much of the spectacular violence the warriors performed sent a clear message: the indignities wrought by decades of abuse by outsiders, whether they represented commerce or the colonial state, would no longer be tolerated. They would instead turn the tables, forcing the

³⁴⁹ Wheeler & Christensen, "To Rise With One Mind;" Soremekun, "The Bailundu Revolt;" Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola*; Heywood, *Production, Trade and Power*.

³⁵⁰ At least one British subject was robbed during the uprising: AHA Cx. 877, Captain Major of Bailundo to Governor of Benguela, 10 August 1903.

wives of cruel *mestiço* traders to carry their husbands' severed heads in baskets, chaining their white and Luso-African prisoners by the neck, and forcing rum down their throats.

April 1902: The Revolt Begins

In preparation for the celebration of *Soba* Kalandula's accession to the Mbailundu throne in April 1902, a military advisor or *macota* called Mutu-ya-Kavela allegedly purchased large amounts of rum on credit from a Portuguese trader. When Mutu-ya-Kavela failed to submit payment, the trader became irate and took the matter to the fort, complaining to the Captain Major, Alberto Nozolino d'Azevedo. A sergeant and two soldiers went to the Mbailundu *ombala* to enforce repayment the debt on April 17th, 1902. An altercation broke out, and the soldiers publically shamed Mutu-ya-Kavela in front of his peers.³⁵¹ Mutu-ya-Kavela and his cohort responded to this embarrassing affront to Mbailundu authority by hurling insults, jeers, and threats at the soldiers, forcing them to retreat empty-handed. On this day of "open defiance," hundreds of Ovimbundu gathered on the hillside of the old *ombala* overlooking the Portuguese fort, shouting criticisms and berating the Captain Major, who had locked himself inside with his meager force of 20 men.³⁵²

Tensions mounted over the next few weeks. Captain Major d'Azevedo reported that *Soba* Kalandula and his principal adviser (*macota*) "Muenecaria" (as colonial sources often spelled Mutu-ya-Kavela) continued to display a "hostile attitude" towards the fort and to "disrespect the orders of authorities."³⁵³ The Captain Major decided he must arrest *Soba* Kalandula to put an end to the "constant assaults" that had been carried out against traders in the region with the encouragement of Muenecaria, Palanca, Chilala, and other powerful Mbailundu advisors. Together, these powerful men had called upon the people of "Huambo, Galanga, and

³⁵¹ Soremekun, "The Bailundu Revolt," 458-9.

³⁵² Soremekun, "The Bailundu Revolt," 459.

³⁵³ AHM 2/2/7/10. 18 May 1902. Captain Major Alberto Nozolino d'Azevedo to the Secretary of Benguela.

Quipeio to start a general revolt in order to annihilate all of the Europeans resident in the area of the captaincy.”³⁵⁴ One colonial official reported that Mbailundu rebels had “the goal of exterminating all the Europeans that [we]re established there” and planned to move eastward to Viye (Bié) to pursue their murderous goal. He claimed the Chokwe (in northeastern Angola) were “also in revolt, with the same goal [of exterminating the Europeans].”³⁵⁵

Soba Kalandula arrived at the fort with several other *sobas* and *sekulus* on May 15th 1902 to attempt a conversation with Portuguese authorities. When the delegation arrived, however, the Captain Major’s soldiers immediately fell upon them and imprisoned them.^{356 357} News of their arrest sparked the armed revolt, which quickly spread from Mbailundu to other parts of the country. *Gentio* kidnapped and killed traders, looted their possessions and burned their houses. They held the fort under siege, but allowed the coming and going of missionaries who brought food and medicines to aid the refugees inside.

On July 13, after two months of deliberation as colonial troops slowly advanced from the coast, thousands of *gentio* attacked the fort, where about 600 soldiers, traders, “European and African refugees,” servants of traders, and carriers had taken refuge.³⁵⁸ By this time the military column led by Lieutenant Pais Brandão had arrived from Catumbella. Faced with Portuguese artillery, the *gentio* persevered in their assault for two days but eventually retreated after facing heavy losses, which Lieutenant Brandão found mysterious given the zeal with which they had begun their assault on the fort.³⁵⁹ Their retreat allowed Portuguese forces to spread out into the countryside and destroy villages in retaliation, and Brandão’s men eventually killed Mutu-ya-

³⁵⁴ AHM 2/2/7/10, 18 May 1902. Captain Major Alberto Nozolino d’Azevedo to the Secretary of Benguela.

³⁵⁵ AHM 2/2/7/18, Francisco Xavier de Paiva to the Head of the County of Caconda, 25 June 1902.

³⁵⁶ Wheeler & Christensen, “To Rise With One Mind,” 68-70.

³⁵⁷ Teixeira Moutinho, *Em Legítima Defesa: Resposta ao Livro (1ª Edição) do Exmo. Senhor Conselheiro Cabral Moncada, Intitulado: A Campanha do Bailundo* (Lisboa, Livraria Editora Viuva Tavares Cardoso, 1904).

³⁵⁸ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 36.

³⁵⁹ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 44.

Kavela in battle on August 3rd, 1902. The Revolt's other important leader, Samakaka, escaped capture by fleeing to the rebel stronghold of Bimbe (described in the Introduction) in the rugged mountains north of Mbailundu. He was eventually captured in 1904 when Portuguese forces finally raided Bimbe.³⁶⁰

³⁶⁰ BNP, H.G. 37943P, Lieutenant Colonel Belo de Almeida, *Operações Militares de 1904 na Região do Bimbe (Bailundo)* (Lisboa: Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca Agência Geral das Colónias, 1944).

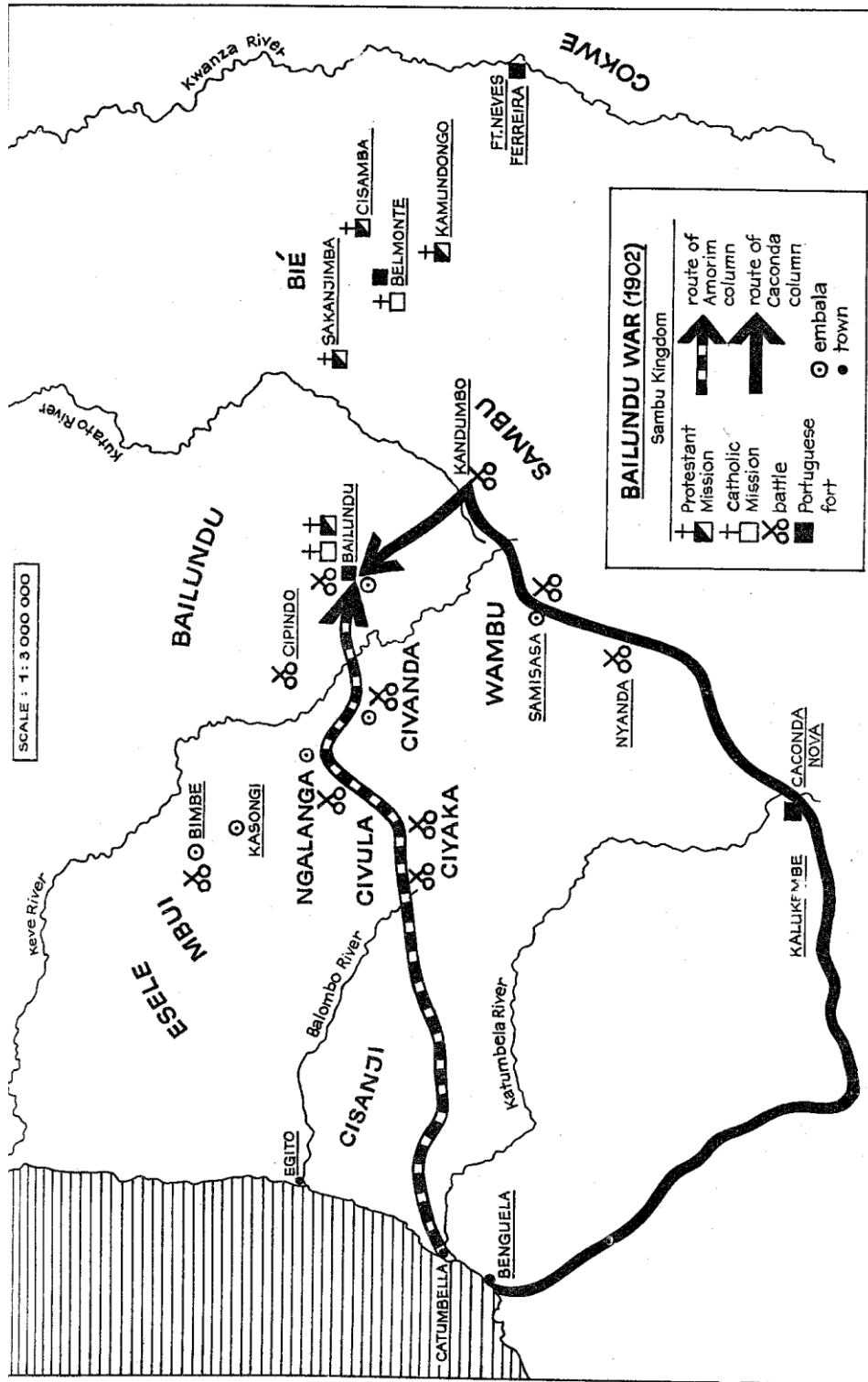


Figure 4:
*Routes of military columns sent to crush Mbailundu Revolt*³⁶¹

³⁶¹ Wheeler & Christensen, "To Rise With One Mind," 69.

Mbailundu Revolt Historiography

Most sources on the Mbailundu Revolt have used missionary letters and published Portuguese texts to reconstruct the events. Each has contributed to a general understanding of the causes of the uprising and the intentions of its organizers. But few have outlined the direct links between events like the murder of Silveira and the complicated alliances and antagonisms that facilitated the violence. Through a close reading of fresh sources, including oral traditions and detailed accounts by traders published in Lisbon newspapers, and elaborate military reports by Portuguese officials who crushed the uprising, I trace the chaotic and inconsistent interventions by the Portuguese military and the atrocious treatment by traders and soldiers that communities in the central highlands suffered leading up to 1902. The accumulation of moral outrage over such incidents provided the energy behind this extraordinary Revolt, though violent uprisings were nothing new in Angola. *Gentio* had engaged in sporadic resistance to Portuguese rule throughout four centuries of occupation. But the 1902 Revolt represented an unprecedented threat to colonial power. American Protestant missionary Wesley Stover noted, “So general an uprising is an unheard of thing in this part of Africa.”³⁶²

Wheeler and Christensen took the title of their study of the Mbailundu Revolt from a report composed by Stover’s wife Bertha, who found it remarkable that the people were able “to rise with one mind” against the Portuguese.³⁶³ But others claim that a spirit of “fierce individualism” among the Ovimbundu ultimately led to the Revolt’s failure.³⁶⁴ Indeed, the missionary trial records analyzed in Chapter 5 illustrate the complex webs of alliance and animosity that connected Ovimbundu leaders during the Revolt.

³⁶² ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, July 1902, 10.

³⁶³ Wheeler & Christensen, “To Rise With One Mind,” 70.

³⁶⁴ Soremekun, “The Bailundu Revolt,” 463.

According to Heywood, the uprising was “a reassertion of sovereignty by the Ovimbundu nobility over their lands, which they saw the Portuguese as undermining, reinforced by the complaints of the lower classes against the demands of the Portuguese for their services as porters in areas where armed force had given them temporary control.”³⁶⁵ Pélissier argues that joint exploitation by coastal merchants and military forces under Captain Majors was the main grievance of those who joined the Revolt.³⁶⁶ He also claims that the lack of understanding between the Governor General in Luanda, Cabral Moncada, and the Governor of Benguela, Joaquim Teixeira Moutinho, was “notorious.”³⁶⁷ This undoubtedly contributed to the delayed reaction on the part of colonial authorities during the early days of the Revolt.³⁶⁸

Wesley Stover, who had been at the Tchilume Mission near Mbailundu since 1882, spent several nights in the war camp the insurgents set up as they prepared to attack the nearby Portuguese fort. Stover was fluent in Umbundu and dealt closely with rebel leader Mutu-ya-Kavela at the height of the uprising, earning him the suspicion of Portuguese authorities. Stover observed the rousing speeches Mutu-ya-Kavela gave to warriors assembling in his camp, noting: “Every word spoken indicated that they do not regard themselves as supplicants for favor, but as *conquerors dictating terms to an inferior force*.”³⁶⁹ Though Portuguese forces triumphed in the end, the details discussed below show clearly that many of the people who joined in the Revolt firmly believed in their power to completely push out the Portuguese and anyone who supported their mission to control Angola. The halting and disorganized response by Portuguese forces shows that the rebels were not entirely misguided. They knew at the very least that colonial power was diffuse and disconnected.

³⁶⁵ Heywood, *Production, Trade and Power*, 321.

³⁶⁶ Heywood, *Production, Trade and Power*, 321.

³⁶⁷ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas Vol. II*, 84.

³⁶⁸ Teixeira Moutinho, *Em Legítima Defesa*.

³⁶⁹ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, July 1902, 8 (emphasis added).

Wheeler and Christensen suggest that, “Africans ultimately killed more *mestiços* and so-called ‘civilized blacks’ [...] than whites during the course of the war.” What much of the violence of the Mbailundu Revolt amounted to, besides an attack on the Portuguese state, was a settling of old scores against westernized blacks.³⁷⁰ Even the slaves and domestic servants of such traders wound up imprisoned in Mutu-ya-Kavela’s war camps. Missionary Bertha Stover wrote: “A half caste whom we know and whose wife has been to the station for medical help had his head cut off, heart cut out and they were put into a basket and the wife was made to carry them to camp.” According to Stover this *mestiço* trader “was an especially cruel man.”³⁷¹ Wheeler & Christensen suggest that this story may have referred to the murder of Silveira, which they call “the most celebrated single killing committed by the African forces” during the Mbailundu Revolt.³⁷² Lieutenant Pais Brandão briefly recounted the story of “Paschoal *ambaquista*,” whose house was burned by rebels before he was hunted down, killed, and “eaten over fire.”³⁷³ Black Angolans like *Ambaquistas*, who lived outside of the social structures of polities like Mbailundu, were at least as hated as whites. Recent work on the eighteenth century in Angola shows that this enmity and competition between such “in-between” figures and groups of *gentio* was longstanding.³⁷⁴

My analysis of the uprising emphasizes the important social processes of *boundary making* that were underway, pushed by Mbailundu nobles who led the revolt as much as by colonial agents. Portuguese authorities had their reasons for drawing lines between groups as they tried to push Angolans into colonial submission. Mixed and intermediary individuals, whose loyalties were always in question, would have no place in this new colonial society. As the next

³⁷⁰ Wheeler & Christensen, “To Rise With One Mind,” 73.

³⁷¹ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, July 1902, 2.

³⁷² Wheeler & Christensen, “To Rise With One Mind,” 73.

³⁷³ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 85.

³⁷⁴ Candido, *An African Slaving Port*, and Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange*.

chapter will show, North American missionaries were also disrupting social hierarchies by treating freed slaves as equals, harboring runaways, and undermining the authority of *sobas* and *ocimbandas* (healers and diviners) by offering a new conduit to the sacred.³⁷⁵

As I show in the next few paragraphs, people expressed their moral outrage during the Mbailundu Revolt by attacking people and things associated with the affectations of European culture. They targeted as enemies Luso-Africans and the people who worked for them. They sacked facilities for producing rum. They screamed insults at colonial troops. Those who participated in the uprising made it abundantly clear that people living on the margins of Ovimbundu social structures were not welcome to stay and continue the state of affairs that had sparked moral outrage.

Rubber

The dramatic drop in rubber prices on the world market beginning in 1899 also contributed directly to the uprising, as caravan workers refused to work for half of what they had earned previously.³⁷⁶ Added to the deterrent of reduced wages were the harsh conditions and demeaning treatment that many carriers experienced on the road. If the murders and attacks led by Mbailundu royalty were the shock and awe of the 1902 Mbailundu revolt, an important practical part of the insurgency was the refusal to perform caravan labor, and the unwillingness of *sobas* to force their dependents to work for strangers.

A report on commercial activity through Angola's coastal ports shows that the value of exports fell by nearly 40% from 1901 to 1902, a trend which the author attributes to "the crisis determined by the devaluation of products from the hinterlands and the natural withdrawal of business was aggravated by the depredations of the rebellious *gentio* of Bailundo, which resulted

³⁷⁵ Neto, 'Hóspedes Incómodos,' 375-389.

³⁷⁶ Pelissier, *História das Campanhas*, Vol, II, 81.

in the near complete paralysis of commerce in the district of Benguella.”³⁷⁷ The report shows that a similar paralysis affected Novo Redondo, the region where the trader Silveira’s murder set off the chain of events that led to the 1902 Mbailundu Revolt.

Rum

When ABCFM missionaries sent two messengers to Mutu-ya-Kavela’s war camp with gifts for the leader, the messengers observed him reproaching the white and Luso-African traders he had chained together as prisoners: “What this country wants is more teachers. We want the Words of God and the Peace they bring! We are tired of oppression and wrong, we are tired of slavery and rum.”³⁷⁸ If the uprising did indeed begin with an unpaid rum debt, as is frequently argued, we can be sure that many Ovimbundu elites including Mutu-ya-Kavela considered rum a desirable substance for ceremonial occasions like the installment of a new *soba*. But rum also represented a rash of negative social changes that came with European contact. Mutu-ya-Kavela continued in his speech by invoking a time before the traders came to Mbailundu, when they had their own home brewed beer, they lived very well and were strong.³⁷⁹ He told the prisoners that their “curse” had destroyed Mbailundu’s women and “robbed our children.”

Wheeler and Christensen suggest that the rebels intended to make a general statement against the state of the rum trade. During the uprising, the destruction of rum stills was common. Interestingly, rebels “often used the salvaged rivets [from destroyed rum stills], perhaps symbolically, as bullets against the Portuguese.”³⁸⁰ The importance of rum as a currency and as a celebratory drink should not be forgotten when considering the grievances of Mutu-ya-Kavela

³⁷⁷ AHU 1068 1069 1L Correios, Estatísticas, Diversos ANG (1902). “Relatório sobre o movimento commercial das alfândegas de Loanda, Benguella, Mossamedes, e Ambriz – 1902.”

³⁷⁸ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, July 1902, 4.

³⁷⁹ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, July 1902, 4.

³⁸⁰ Wheeler & Christensen, “To Rise With One Mind,” 74.

and his men, but it is clear that there was widespread resentment against the practices of the traders who dealt in rum.

Rum and the exploitation of labor by colonial authorities and traders often went hand in hand. Pélissier notes that there seemed to have been an intensification of the recruitment of “*serviçais*” or contract workers from Bailundo in the first four months of 1902.³⁸¹ These workers may have signed contracts, but many were illiterate and deliberately misled about the terms of their contracts, which did not protect them from virtual enslavement in the Portuguese cacao-growing islands off the coast of West Africa, São Tomé and Príncipe. These were home to a brutal plantation system from which almost no contract laborers recruited in Angola ever returned. Traders in Angola used strong drink in order to lock people into relations of debt. They would abandon a barrel of rum in the middle of a path, only to jump out of the bushes when someone laid a hand on the goods and accuse them of theft.³⁸² Threatened with arrest by the Captain Major, people caught in these traps would agree to pay their “debt” in labor—an arrangement that tended to continue indefinitely.³⁸³ One scholar argues, “Portuguese trading methods appeared to be geared to forcing drink (rum) upon the Africans, making human wrecks out of them.”³⁸⁴ A missionary who had been in Angola since 1888 wrote to the British Anti-Slavery Society in 1903 that rum consumption had “increased enormously” since his arrival in the interior of Benguela.³⁸⁵ Rum was “debauching the natives, utterly ruining them,” rendering them “crazy” and desperate enough to sell their own children for a drink.³⁸⁶

³⁸¹ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas*, Vol. II, 80.

³⁸² Cassoma interview, 2013.

³⁸³ Heywood, *Production, Trade and Power*, 81.

³⁸⁴ Soremekun, “The Bailundo Revolt,” 455.

³⁸⁵ *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, London: The Society, 4(23) (June-July 1903): 83.

³⁸⁶ *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, London: The Society, 4(23) (June-July 1903): 83.

Oral history accounts convey a sense of moral outrage, particularly with regard to rum as a tool of colonial conquest. In 2013, I asked an elderly woman from a prominent Mbailundu family (descendants of Ekuikui II with a long family history in the Congregational Church that ABCFM missionaries headed) how the Portuguese managed to defeat the fierce and populous Ovimbundu kingdoms. She responded, “They did it with drink.”³⁸⁷ Daniel Cassoma, an 84-year-old man from Cachiungo, a small town near Bailundo, told stories about the treachery of traders and colonial soldiers.³⁸⁸ He described an incident “where we [*bailundos*] lost the [1902] war.” Mutu-ya-Kavela and his troops encountered an area of white settlement that appeared to have been abandoned in the chaos of the revolt. Many objects were left behind, including several kegs of rum. Satisfied that the area was secure, and thinking all the whites had fled and they had won their war, the men distracted themselves with the spoils, indulging in copious amounts of drink. After a few hours, “they were totally inebriated, really stupid, with no judgment whatsoever.” Soldiers who had been hiding in the nearby houses attacked them while their drunkenness left them defenseless.³⁸⁹

Flying away

So great was the visceral fear and disgust felt by many Ovimbundu that great leaders like Mutu-ya-Kavela are said to have “flown away” or disappeared, using their magic to escape the humiliation and violence brought by traders and Portuguese agents. Mr. Cassoma identified the ambush described above as the moment when Mutu-ya-Kavela “flew away,” never to be seen again, as recounted in Ovimbundu oral tradition. As he told me this, he chuckled.

People that flew, we have stories like this. People who transformed into walls of earth, we have stories like this. We have lots of stories, lots of versions, about “black magic.” But scientifically, whether it’s true or not, history cannot lie. History is only in the truth.

³⁸⁷ Interview with Mrs. Epomba, 16 April, 2013, Bailundo, Angola.

³⁸⁸ Interview with Daniel Cassoma, 12 June 2013, Cachiungo, Angola.

³⁸⁹ Cassoma interview, 38:00.

But our truth goes that far – Mutu-ya-Kavela did not die, but flew [away]. And we don't know that he didn't, no one can say more than this, [no one] can say no, because our magic, black magic, and I say “we” to include myself in the class. So from there, Mutu-ya-Kavela never again organized a war. Either he died, or he disappeared, but this is the end of Mutu-ya-Kavela.³⁹⁰

As Cassoma said the words “Mutu-ya-Kavela did not die, but flew [away],” his voice and expression showed great pleasure and gravity. A similar story survives in the traditions at Candumbo, a small village near Huambo. The last battle of the Mbailundu War took place at Candumbo from September 18-19, 1902. The natural fortress created by an enormous rock formation made Candumbo an ideal location for maintaining a defensive position against Portuguese forces. Candumbo was in the territory of Quiaca (Chiyaka), one of the Ovimbundu polities that actively participated in the war. A Catholic missionary publication from 1934 made the curious claim that the people of Candumbo were descendants of Brazilians—with family names like Martins, Garcias, Rodrigues—who came to Angola in 1648 with the expedition of Salvador Correia.³⁹¹

The defensive advantage that the highland landscape offered the *gentio* was no match for the new Krupp guns the invaders had in 1902, which allowed them to inflict devastating losses on the *gentio* who fought there. Teixeira Moutinho, the governor of Benguela who commanded the column that defeated Candumbo, described the battle as “fierce and bloody.”³⁹² The *gentio* put up a “tenacious resistance, preferring to die in the caves rather than surrender.”³⁹³ And they did die. Close to four hundred people perished in the fighting at Candumbo, and two hundred ninety one were taken prisoner, while Portuguese forces only suffered four losses on their side.³⁹⁴

³⁹⁰ Cassoma interview, 2013, 38:20.

³⁹¹ Luis Keiling, *Quarenta Anos de África* (Fraião & Braga: Edição das Missões de Angola e Congo, 1934), 61.

³⁹² AHM 2/2/7/18. 21 setembro 1902. Teixeira Moutinho to Governor General of Angola.

³⁹³ Marquez do Lavradio, *A Campanha do Bailundo*, 13.

³⁹⁴ AHM 2/2/7/18. 21 setembro 1902. Teixeira Moutinho to Governor General of Angola.

When British journalist Henry Nevinson visited Candumbo in 1904, he found in the rock caves “the pitiful skeletons of the men, women, and children [...], massacred in the white man’s vengeance.”³⁹⁵

In 2013, I visited Candumbo with two UNITA representatives who had brought me to a group interview with elders in Bailundo. For a small fee, some residents led us up to the top of the rock formation. There they told the history of the 1902 battle in Umbundu as we absorbed the panoramic view of the highlands. They said that the *soba* of Candumbo had “flown away” in fear when the battle grew intense. They pointed to a smaller rock off in the distance, indicating precisely where the *soba* is said to have landed. Hearing the cries of his people, he aborted his escape plan and went back to join the fight. According to Teixeira Moutinho, this *soba* was among the dead.³⁹⁶ However in November 1902, a man identifying himself as the *soba* of Candumbo visited the Benguela governor at Caconda to pay indemnities owed to the Portuguese, which suggests that someone stepped up to fill the power vacuum left by the massacre of Candumbo’s residents.³⁹⁷

Inverting Colonial Power

Much of the action and speech reported by observers follows a clear pattern. People were in a state of revolt, exhausted with the violence and disorder bred by Portugal’s half-hearted presence in the Angolan interior. Particularly for dependents of powerful entities like Mbailundu, the sporadic and inconsistent interventions of colonial power that Portugal was able to muster constituted at best a nuisance and at worst, a violent affront to their largely independent existence. During the Revolt, the leader of the uprising, Mutu-ya-Kavela, expressed his outrage with acts that dramatically inverted colonial logics of power, causing panicked rumors to spread

³⁹⁵ Nevinson, *A Modern Slavery*, 82.

³⁹⁶ AHM 2/2/7/18. 21 setembro 1902. Teixeira Moutinho to Governor General of Angola.

³⁹⁷ AHM 2/2/7/18. 11 novembro 1902. Teixeira Moutinho to Governor General of Angola.

among European settlers in the coastal towns. Newspapers in Portugal reported the unthinkable horror that “whites in the interior [were] serving as the slaves [*muleques*] of blacks!”³⁹⁸ Mutu-ya-Kavela told his prisoners he kept them alive just so he could enslave them after he conquered the fort.³⁹⁹

Pais Brandão met some men who had escaped Mutu-ya-Kavela’s custody and found refuge at the Bailundo Catholic mission on July 18th. They described a curious dynamic among rebel leaders, where the mild-mannered Chilala opposed the ill treatment of prisoners and the executions that Mutu-ya-Kavela seemed to enjoy. Brandão’s report claimed that Mutu-ya-Kavela “punished [the prisoners] with the whip under the smallest and most futile pretext, even for not wanting to drink rum. Given the widespread use of rum to manipulate *gentio*, it is fitting Mutu-ya-Kavela forced it upon his captives as punishment for inflicting indignities on his people. To add insult to these humiliations, he even commanded his warriors to urinate in their mouths.”⁴⁰⁰ This evocative gesture echoes the violence with which rum was forced upon *gentio*, who were expected to accept it as payment whether they drank or not.

Many observers reported that insurgents paraded white and Luso-African captives from camp to camp, “stripped of clothing, chained by the neck as they chain the poor slaves, and made to carry heavy loads of the plunder ‘To see how it feels.’”⁴⁰¹ They were forced to march barefoot and carry war booty, water, and rum, mimicking the harsh conditions faced by thousands of porters in European-led caravans transporting goods to and from the coast. Mutu-ya-Kavela was said to be “vain and ambitious,” forcing his prisoners to clap their hands and praise him as the

³⁹⁸ “*Muleque*” (or *muleke*) is a Kimbundu word meaning “slave” or “servant” (similar connotation to using “boy” for black men in the American south, it connotes disrespect). Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP), F. 5701, *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 17 July 1902.

³⁹⁹ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 47b.

⁴⁰⁰ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 47.

⁴⁰¹ Wheeler & Christensen, ‘To Rise With One Mind,’ 73; Soremekun, “The Bailundo Revolt,” 463; Keiling, *Quarenta Anos de Africa*, 65; ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, July 1902.

“*soba* of all.”⁴⁰² Clearly, this leader used violence to make a statement about the nature of his people’s collective discontent—traders who had exploited carriers and slaves were to be an example for anyone who hoped to continue exploiting Mbailundu’s subjects.

Father Goepp of the Catholic mission at Bailundo, who was with Reverend Stover in Mutu-ya-Kavela’s war camp, wrote of two traders who arrived at the Bailundo Catholic mission station one day having escaped after 41 days in captivity.⁴⁰³ They described Mutu-ya-Kavela’s “barbarity” in forcing them to carry barrels of water from the river to the village. When they appeared to be slowing down or becoming weak, he whipped them until they reached their destination.⁴⁰⁴ Being forced to carry heavy loads whilst being whipped for moving too slowly was a common experience for the thousands of Angolans who had worked as carriers hauling trade goods to and from the coast. Even Father Goepp admitted that such actions by rebels, while “barbaric,” were “very appropriate to the spirit of retaliation, which develops so much in times of war.”⁴⁰⁵

Contortions of Authority

Continuous shifts in both colonial and customary authority engendered political chaos in Mbailundu around the turn of the twentieth century. A detailed editorial, published in a Lisbon newspaper in August 1902 by an anonymous author with extensive knowledge of the central highlands, recounted *six* different Captain Majors serving at Bailundo fort between 1896 and 1901.⁴⁰⁶ Historians have suggested that widespread discontent and envy stemmed from the ostentatious and rapid enrichment of these officials, whose irreputable conduct contributed to

⁴⁰² AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 47b.

⁴⁰³ Luís Keiling, *Quarenta Anos de África* (Fraião & Braga: Edição das Missões de Angola e Congo, 1934), 65.

⁴⁰⁴ Keiling, *Quarenta Anos de África*, 65.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 66.

⁴⁰⁶ BNP Microfilm F. P. 150, “A Revolta do Bailundo,” *O Jornal do Comércio*, 21 agosto 1902.

their constant demotion and replacement. High-level colonial authorities recorded disapproval of these officials' conduct, and blamed them for inciting discontent and resistance among *gentio*.⁴⁰⁷

Due to the constant shifts in power at the Bailundo fort, as well as frequent uprisings by Mbailundu and Wambu rulers, historian Pélissier writes, “no author has yet tried to penetrate the labyrinth of relations between the fort and the two kingdoms.”⁴⁰⁸ In 1897 the “*mestiço* captain” Cravid came to power as Captain Major of Bailundo, and his rule was marked by an increase in tensions between the fort and the Ovimbundu states.⁴⁰⁹ Abuses against Ovimbundu villagers by colonial soldiers—usually auxiliaries conscripted in different parts of Angola or in Mozambique—were rampant throughout the region at this time. In 1899, incensed with the abuses of colonial soldiers forcibly recruiting caravan porters in his territory, the *soba* of Wambu ordered his *sekulus* to refuse the entry of soldiers into their territories for any reason.⁴¹⁰ This *soba* gathered hundreds of men on the battlefield and threatened Cravid to come and get his “revenge.”⁴¹¹ When Cravid arrested Mbailundu *soba* Hundungulu for conspiring in this affront to Portuguese authority, the Wambu forces backed down. There was considerable unrest during Captain Cravid's reign, with soldiers committing abuses throughout the highland region, and frequent state campaigns of repression against *sobas*. Captain Majors regularly called upon traders residing in the area to help defend the fort or punish insubordinate populations, and on this occasion Cravid sent around a flyer calling upon traders to assist with the defense against Wambu warriors.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁷ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas Vol. II*, 77.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, 76-77.

⁴⁰⁹ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas Vol. II*, 77.

⁴¹⁰ BNP, Lisboa. Microfilm F. P. 150, “A Revolta do Bailundo,” *O Jornal do Comércio*, 21 agosto 1902.

⁴¹¹ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas Vol. II*, 77; BNP Microfilm F. P. 150, “A Revolta do Bailundo,” *O Jornal do Comércio*, 21 agosto 1902.

⁴¹² BNP Microfilm F. P. 150, “A Revolta do Bailundo,” *O Jornal do Comércio*, 21 agosto 1902.

Because of his apparent inability to stem the growing tide of discontent, coastal authorities demoted Captain Cravid from his post in 1901. According to an anonymous newspaper editorial published in Lisbon, Cravid's replacement promptly began a campaign for personal enrichment, which only served to fan the flames of resentment among the *gentio*. For reasons that are unclear, *soba* Hundungulu was released from Portuguese custody and reestablished as the *soba* of Mbailundu in 1901. But tired of the extortion by this new Captain Major, Hundungulu abandoned the Mbailundu *ombala*, fleeing south to Quiaca seeking the protection of Samakaka. Hundungulu established a new population center in Quiaca, far from the Bailundo fort, and was subsequently replaced by Kalandula who was *soba* at the time of the Revolt in 1902. The declining power of *sobas* coincided with the fact that many authorities in the captaincies of Bailundo and Bié were in the region to make their fortunes, with the task of governance being only an afterthought.⁴¹³ The random violence applied by colonial authorities perpetuated the era of vagabond states rather than achieving the colonial objective of crystalizing a legible population that could be easily controlled. Instead, entire communities of *gentio* continued to flee, disband, and reconstitute themselves in new locations and under new systems of authority that the state was unable to read.

While this sequence of events and transfers of power is dizzying to comprehend, it is clear that there was a crisis in colonial leadership as well as in the Mbailundu *ombala*. As discussed in Chapter Three, intermediary figures like the *mestiço* trader Silveira (aka Ocimboto) often fashioned themselves as *sobas* and claimed authority over large numbers of people, further eroding the power and status of *sobas*. While the leaders of the 1902 Mbailundu Revolt appear to have been seeking a return to a time when their polities held more power, even the positions of Samakaka and Mutu-ya-Kavela with regard to "traditional" power structures are very unclear.

⁴¹³ Péliissier, *História das Campanhas Vol. II*, 78.

There is evidence that Mbailundu nobility turned down Mutu-ya-Kavela's bid to become *soba* of Mbailundu because he did not have royal blood.⁴¹⁴ Other secondary sources claim that Mutu-ya-Kavela did in fact ascend to the position of *soba*, though they leave open the question of whether he descended from a royal lineage or took the position "due to extraordinary measures taken during a time of great unrest."⁴¹⁵ Brandão commented that Mutu-ya-Kavela did not belong to the "dynastic lineage," calling him a "simple plebe."⁴¹⁶

Resistance and Colonial Inertia

The Mbailundu Revolt was neither spontaneous nor without precedent. It is only by considering the scope of ongoing conflicts between Ovimbundu and outsider traders, as well as the repeated failure of Portuguese forces to organize a swift response, that the conditions that set up the Revolt become clear. For at least a decade prior to 1902, the region had been on the verge of an uprising and dozens of smaller disturbances were recorded. Two figures emerged as leaders during the Revolt, Mutu-ya-Kavela of Mbailundu and Samakaka of Wambu. Both had had brushes with Portuguese authority before. A look at some of these earlier skirmishes provides a rich backdrop to the conflict that broke out in April 1902, and shows the moral outrage engendered by repeating patterns of exploitation of *gentio* by traders, soldiers, and Captain Majors.

People who lived at the margins of both the colonial and the Ovimbundu states had long been targets of suspicion and violence by *gentio*. In 1896, when *Soba* Numa of Mbailundu had rebelled against the Portuguese fort after a conflict with some passing *degradados* (convicts) had escalated into violence, Captain Major Teixeira da Silva also led military action against Wambu, whose people had also shown insubordinate tendencies. A notoriously rebellious *sekulu* named

⁴¹⁴ Heywood, *Contested Power in Angola*, 29.

⁴¹⁵ Wheeler & Christensen, "To Rise With One Mind," 74.

⁴¹⁶ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 48.

Samakaka, who would later become legendary for his role in the Mbailundu Revolt, was reportedly responsible for agitating the people of Wambu. Forced to retreat under heavy artillery fire during the 1896 skirmish with the Bailundo Captain Major, Samakaka reportedly set his own house on fire, “so as not to give that glory to the expedition.”⁴¹⁷ Portuguese officers originally believed they had killed Samakaka in the attack, but he survived, spreading the news that the “whites’ bullets could not harm his fetish.”⁴¹⁸ Some sources described Samakaka as a *soba* or a *sekulu*, others call him a “robber-baron”⁴¹⁹ and yet others a “witch doctor” (*feiticeiro*) with great prestige and influence among the people.⁴²⁰ Lieutenant Brandão reported that Samakaka was not an actual *soba*, but according to “tradition” was a rich *pombeiro* who once had ambitions to the throne of Mbailundu, but became hostile to Portuguese authority after Captain Major Teixeira da Silva opposed his claim on the position. Samakaka launched attacks on caravans, traders, and Portuguese interests for many years, played a major role in the 1902 Revolt, and fled to Bimbe where he was captured in 1904.⁴²¹

Questions of titles and naming are important here, as Samakaka is also sometimes called “Palanca” as well as “Saculundungo” or “Iolundungu.” There was considerable confusion among Portuguese authorities around exactly who the rebel leaders were, and what was the nature of their power and influence. In 1897 Captain Major Simpliciano de Almeida lamented the impossibility of bringing “Saculundungo commonly known as Samacaca from the lands of Huambo” onto a “good path,” despite his “most ardent desires” to do so in the interest of keeping

⁴¹⁷ BNP Microfilm F. P. 150, “A Revolta do Bailundo,” *O Jornal do Comércio*, 21 agosto 1902.

⁴¹⁸ AHU Repartição Militar, Maço 966, “Relatorio” 1a parte. Cited in Heywood, *Production, Trade, and Power*, 315.

⁴¹⁹ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas Vol. II*, 76.

⁴²⁰ Almeida, *Operações Militares de 1904*, 53.

⁴²¹ AHM 2/2/7/21. *Relatorio da Columna do Libollo*.

the peace.⁴²² Almeida included these comments on Samakaka at the end of a report describing the difficulty controlling the notoriously rebellious population of Bimbe, which was waging constant attacks on passing caravans at the time. The report also pointed to ongoing conflicts with “Muenecaria,” who is likely the same person as Mutu-ya-Kavela.

Samakaka inspired fear in the hearts of authorities who struggled to repel his attacks and bring him under their control for many years. While some sources suggest that “Palanca” and Samakaka were the same person, Brandão’s report claimed that Samakaka came to the aid of Palanca during the uprising in 1902. According to Brandão, the two men together with their followers “began to commit the worst atrocities, imprisoning Europeans and assassinating some, taking their heads as trophies.”⁴²³ Serpa Pinto met more than one Ovimbundu authority called “Palanca” during his travels in 1879, suggesting it functioned as a title or position, which Samakaka may have occupied.⁴²⁴ A Portuguese official on an expedition in the highlands in 1898 heard tales of Samakaka from his carriers, who urged him to avoid the path that would take them near the *libata* that harbored that “celebrated author of unpunished deeds.”⁴²⁵ According to the rumors these carriers repeated, Samakaka longed to possess the scalp of a white man.⁴²⁶

On March 25, 1901, the Captain Major of Bailundo wrote to the Governor of Benguela to share some alarming information and ask the state for assistance.⁴²⁷ Captain Francisco Xavier de Paiva had spoken with a *sekulu* named Joaquim Sacco-Major (who was briefly introduced in the introduction). This literate *sekulu*, who according to Captain Paiva spoke Portuguese “normally,” warned Captain Paiva that two *sobados* within a day’s travel of Sacco-Major’s village, Huambo

⁴²² AHA, Caixa 3831, Maço 1. Evaristo Simpliciano de Almeida, “Relatorio Confidencial referido ao mes de abril de 1897,” 11 May 1897.

⁴²³ AHM 2/2/7/21 *Relatorio da Columna do Libollo*.

⁴²⁴ Serpa Pinto, *The King’s Rifle*, 107.

⁴²⁵ Andrade, *Relatório da Viagem*, 9.

⁴²⁶ Andrade, *Relatório da Viagem*, 9.

⁴²⁷ AHM 2/2/7/3, Francisco Xavier de Paiva to Governor General of Benguela, 21 March 1901.

and Quiaca, both very populous and possessing many cattle, did not recognize Portuguese authority. These two groups were preparing a war with a simple goal: “they want to cut off the heads of all the whites [*brancos*] found on the roads to Bailundo, razing the fort and continuing on to make Bié rise up.”⁴²⁸ Sacco-Major named one of the *sekulus* of Huambo as an important player in the alleged plans to revolt. The *sekulu* was called “Samacaca, Palanca or Captain of war”. Indeed, this Samakaka or Palanca had appeared in Portuguese documents as a nuisance several years earlier, and would go on to play a major role in the 1902 Mbailundu Revolt, later evading capture in Bimbe until 1904.

The Governor of Benguela Joaquim Teixeira Moutinho took the *sekulu*'s warning seriously and wrote to the Governor General in Luanda on April 22, 1901.⁴²⁹ He pleaded with the central government in Luanda to send more soldiers and weapons up to Bailundo, where the Captain Major was not in a position to defend his fort against hostile *gentio*, having only 40 soldiers available in the entire district with limited ammunition and very few functioning firearms.⁴³⁰ With his correspondence to Luanda, Benguela Governor Teixeira Moutinho included several letters from traders residing near Bailundo asking the state to protect their lives and property and offering to provide room and board for any troops the government should send. These letters offer a remarkably intimate view of traders near Bailundo—their identities, their relationships with *gentio*, and their fear of rebellion. They reveal a mounting sense of tension between “civilized” intermediaries and subjects of Ovimbundu kingdoms, showing that some of these traders claimed ignorance about why they were being cast as enemies by the *gentio*.

A trader named Antonio Dias Carreiro warned of “the critical situation in which the Europeans who live in the *sertão*, as well as all of the civilized indigenous people [*indígenas*

⁴²⁸ AHM 2/2/7/3. Francisco Xavier de Paiva to Governor General of Benguela, 21 March 1901.

⁴²⁹ AHM 2/2/7/3. Governor Moutinho to Governor General Moncada, 22 April 1901.

⁴³⁰ AHM 2/2/7/3. Governor Moutinho to Governor General Moncada, 22 April 1901.

civilizados], find themselves.”⁴³¹ Carreiro’s colleagues in their letters indicated his knowledge of the language and customs of the people in the region.⁴³² These traders had been suspicious for some time that the people of Ciyaka (Quiaca) were planning a revolt, and Carreiro had learned that they and many other highland groups were preparing a general war in which they planned “to kill and rob all the whites and civilized *filhos do paiz* [sons of the country, or ‘black Portuguese’].”⁴³³ Carreiro warned that if the government did not take action, there would be a “fatal and horrific raid” against traders, and that the rebels already had plans to surround the forts and starve out their inhabitants.

Traders José Eugenio Fragoso and Theodor José Coembra wrote on April 11 that the people of various *sobados* including Bailundo and Huambo were preparing to take up arms against “the Portuguese, and we Portuguese Africans.”⁴³⁴ This is rare case of a Luso-African trader identifying explicitly as such in official correspondence.⁴³⁵ In this case, the names of both men who signed the letter can be traced to important and established Luso-African families. The men were from Cahata, a village founded in 1879 by Francisco José Coimbra, descendant of Brazilian immigrants to Angola who went on to become an important caravan leader and patriarch of a wealth Luso-African family.⁴³⁶ Theodor José Coembra (more commonly spelled Coimbra) was undoubtedly a member of this family.⁴³⁷ “Fragoso” was the surname of another

⁴³¹ AHM 2/2/7/3. Antonio Dias Carreiro to Governor Paiva of Benguela, 12 April 1901.

⁴³² AHM 2/2/7/3. Arthuro Gavino do Rego, Luiz d’Aguiam, and Manoel da Costa Leite to Governor of Benguela, 22 April 1901.

⁴³³ AHM 2/2/7/3. 22 April 1901. Arthuro Gavino do Rego, Luiz d’Aguiam, and Manoel da Costa Leite to Governor of Benguela.

⁴³⁴ AHM 2/2/7/3. 11 April 1901. José Eugenio Fragoso and Theodor José Coembra to Antonio Dias Carreiro.

⁴³⁵ The letter is signed by two men, but is mostly written in the first person singular.

⁴³⁶ Heintze, *Pioneiros Africanos*, 211.

⁴³⁷ Another member of this family, Thomas José Coimbra, faced a *mucano* (lawsuit) for accusations of witchcraft. See: Antonio da Silva Porto, *Os Últimos Dias de Silva Porto (Extracto do seu diário)* (Lisboa: Sociedade Geographica de Lisboa, 1891), 12.

prominent family of Luso-African “industrialists” (see Conclusion for details).⁴³⁸ The letter continued: “this resolution of the *gentio* [to attack] is quite strong, and you have no idea the rancor they have towards us, I do not know why!”⁴³⁹ The author reminded the authorities of “the influence I have with almost all *Quimbundos*⁴⁴⁰, this [influence] allowed me to discover this great disgrace [the plans to revolt], no other person would be able to know as deeply as I.”⁴⁴¹

The ability of Fragoso and Coembra to access information is a notable feature of their intermediary social positions. Many spoke Umbundu or Kimbundu and lived in close proximity with their *gentio* neighbors. Balandier describes the unique position of “middlemen” like Lebanese-Syrians in French West Africa, who sometimes enjoyed a greater degree of familiarity with the populations among which they lived than did colonial officials. In the case of Angola, the middlemen were Luso-Africans, who were less markedly foreign than groups like those Balandier describes. Nonetheless it is evident from the letter described above that Luso-Africans’ relations with *gentio* were, like those of other middle figures in different colonial situations, indeed characterized by “a certain intimacy tinged with scorn.”⁴⁴²

Three more traders revealed important details about the conspiracy to revolt in a letter to the Benguela Governor from 22 April 1901.⁴⁴³ According to their letter, an important *sekulu* named Samakaka had allegedly threatened the whites living in his territory. Because Samakaka’s village was situated in a central location and crossed by many trade routes, it was “relatively easy to spread news and orders by all native means [*maneiras gentílicas*], including fetishes and

⁴³⁸ AHA, Box 2446, Folder 1. 15 June 1897, Luiz Moreira dos Reis to Captain Major of Bailundo: Report on occurrences in Galanga.

⁴³⁹ AHA, Box 2446, Folder 1. 15 June 1897, Luiz Moreira dos Reis to Captain Major of Bailundo: Report on occurrences in Galanga.

⁴⁴⁰ Portuguese corruption of “Ocimbundu” or “Kimbundu;” a generic term for “natives,” like *gentio*.

⁴⁴¹ I have tried to preserve the rhythm and voice of the original letter in Portuguese, which contains many misspellings and grammatical irregularities.

⁴⁴² Balandier, “The Colonial Situation,” 48.

⁴⁴³ AHM 2/2/7/3. 22 April 1901, Arthur Gavino do Rego, Luiz d’Aguiam, and Manoel da Costa Leite to Governor of Benguela.

charms which influence the animus of the peoples.”⁴⁴⁴ These traders noted that, because the “Bihenos, Bailundos, and Kipeios” were “constant clients of the markets of Benguela and Catumbella,” they always traveled well informed and were by nature more “clever and wily”⁴⁴⁵ than any of the surrounding groups. The letter-writers feared the detrimental effects a war would have on the rubber and rum trade, citing the inevitable retreat of caravans from Bailundo and Bié, and the resulting impossibility of obtaining carriers.⁴⁴⁶ The traders concluded their letter by kindly reminding the Governor of their past hospitality to military detachments passing through the area, and begging him to consider the lives of “the slaves [*serviçais*], civilized blacks, and whites who inhabit the region.”⁴⁴⁷

Animosity against Luso-African traders was building among Ovimbundu leadership, and colonial authorities at the coast continued to ignore the warning signs of building tensions. Whether this inertia was the result of denial or simply the material inability to respond, it helped create the conditions for the enormous uprising of 1902. The traders’ warnings to officials at the coast about mounting tensions in the interior did not result in a swift response. By May 3, 1901, Captain Major Xavier da Paiva was composing a report on a troubling incident at Tchirono, near Bailundo. The leader of Tchirono, said to have instigated aggression against Portuguese troops, was called Muenecaria—named in a Portuguese source as one of the four most important

⁴⁴⁴ AHM 2/2/7/3. 22 April 1901, Arthur Gavino do Rego, Luiz d’Aguiam, and Manoel da Costa Leite to Governor of Benguela.

⁴⁴⁵ “*Espertos e ladinos*.” The word “ladino,” used in Latin America to describe “seasoned” slaves who could speak Spanish or Portuguese and were familiar with the culture of their masters, comes up several times in sources from Angola, and usually refers to a similar intermediary linguistic and social position as in the Latin American case. It is interesting that the letter-writers use it here to describe Bailundos, who are supposed to be *gentio* and thus “uncivilized.” According to Ferreira, *ladino* slaves formed a significant portion of the population in Luanda in the 17th century, where they were often associated with religious institutions and enjoyed more autonomy than other enslaved people. Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange*, 89-90.

⁴⁴⁶ AHM 2/2/7/3. 22 April 1901, Arthur Gavino do Rego, Luiz d’Aguiam, and Manoel da Costa Leite to Governor of Benguela.

⁴⁴⁷ AHM 2/2/7/3. 22 April 1901, Arthur Gavino do Rego, Luiz d’Aguiam, and Manoel da Costa Leite to Governor of Benguela.

dignitaries of the Mbailundu state.⁴⁴⁸ This is the same Mutu-ya-Kavela who would go on to lead the Mbailundu Revolt one year later. Lieutenant Brandão, whose column killed Mutu-ya-Kavela in 1902, referred to a 1901 incident in Tchirono when discussing the war leader's history of insubordination, confirming that Muenecaria was indeed the same person as Mutu-ya-Kavela.⁴⁴⁹

A group of carriers bringing produce from Benguela to the penal colony at Moxico were allowed ten days' rest at their homes in Tchirono, two days' distance from Mbailundu, before continuing on to Moxico. The carriers had already been paid for their services, but did not present themselves at the fort when ten days had passed.⁴⁵⁰ As was "customary" when these types of disputes arose, Captain Paiva sent "a soldier and a civilized indigenous person as a guide" to Tchirono to resolve the matter of the rebellious carriers. Upon arrival, Mutu-ya-Kavela and his people tied up the two men. He threatened to kill the captives and "all the whites," and said if the Captain Major came he would cut off his head.⁴⁵¹ He announced that would no longer obey Portuguese authority, because it was "impotent," and he wanted the same freedom as Huambo, Quiaca, and Soque, which still lived independently. It would not be the last time Mutu-ya-Kavela openly defied Portuguese authority.

The "civilized guide" communicated Mutu-ya-Kavela's message to Captain Paiva in a letter, and Paiva sent an ensign with ten soldiers and a few auxiliaries to rescue Mutu-ya-Kavela's two prisoners. The small rescue party arrived at Tchirono and encountered two thousand warriors, and sent back to the fort immediately for more assistance. In the meantime they took shelter in the home of a trader, Francisco Duarte de Castro, situated only eight hundred

⁴⁴⁸ *Portugal em Africa* No. 102 (Junho 1902): 365.

⁴⁴⁹ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 47b.

⁴⁵⁰ AHM 2/2/7/3. Xavier de Paiva to Governor of Benguela, 3 May 1901.

⁴⁵¹ AHM 2/2/7/3. Xavier de Paiva to Governor of Benguela, 3 May 1901.

meters from the *ombala* of Tchirono.⁴⁵² It took days for Captain Paiva to secure enough people to assist in the attack, but a group led by former Captain Major Cravid eventually arrived with a Krupp gun and destroyed the *ombala*, taking no prisoners except a poor old woman, whom they killed with a knife.⁴⁵³ But Mutu-ya-Kavela got away and would cause much greater problems for colonial authorities the following year.

A similar state of inertia continued to plague the colonial state as the Mbailundu Revolt was unfolding in 1902. A Lisbon newspaper published a letter sent by someone only identified as S.P. from the port city of Catumbella (adjacent to Benguela) in June, claiming that not a single carrier had arrived from Bihé or Bailundo for at least a month and a half, which was strange given the normally “constant movement of carriers in Catumbella.”⁴⁵⁴ Coastal traders like the author of this letter soon learned that the “paralysis of business” was “due to the revolution which is happening in Bailundo and Huambo.” This trader added that Huambo (Wambu) “ha[d] been more or less in revolt for around three years, without anyone [in government] caring about this despite constant complaints [by traders].”⁴⁵⁵ There were assaults on caravans and murders by *gentio* from Huambo and Bailundo that went unpunished by colonial authorities because there were “no soldiers” in that district.

Several more traders wrote letters that were featured in the same Lisbon newspaper, *O Dia*, on July 17, 1902. One wrote: “the whole interior of this district [Benguela] is at war with the Europeans and Africans from the coast.”⁴⁵⁶ Another complained that officials like Governor General Cabral Moncada were moving far too slowly to send help to Bailundo:

It is hard to believe that the possessions and lives of hundreds of citizens and, what is

⁴⁵² AHM 2/2/7/3. Xavier de Paiva to Governor of Benguela, 3 May 1901.

⁴⁵³ BNP Microfilm F. P. 150, “A Revolta do Bailundo,” *O Jornal do Comércio*, 21 August 1902.

⁴⁵⁴ BNP Microfilm F.6158, “Coisas d’Africa,” *O Dia*, 9 July 1902.

⁴⁵⁵ BNP Microfilm F.6158, “Coisas d’Africa,” *O Dia*, 9 July 1902.

⁴⁵⁶ BNP Microfilm F.6158, “Coisas d’Africa,” *O Dia*, 17 July 1902.

more, the ruin of an entire province, is at the mercy of these and other authorities who could provide assistance in a timely manner as is their duty, [but instead] they let things go awry and wait for them to become more complicated, costing the nation more money and more lives. Great patriots!”⁴⁵⁷

While officials were always quick to blame revolts on the abuses of *gentio* by traders, those same traders often expressed just as much disdain for the authorities, whom they considered apathetic and unpatriotic in their repeated refusals to take these uprisings seriously.

Traders represented the old order of vagabond states that was threatening to topple Portugal’s fragile colonial apparatus at the turn of the 20th century. They benefitted from the general lack of colonial oversight—avoiding taxes, exploiting labor, and enforcing their own version of justice by deciding disputes and lacing material transactions with the specter of violence. But when traders became the targets of angry *gentio*, they called upon colonial forces to protect their lives and property. The state’s failure to provide such protection for traders elicited a bitter critique of colonial officials’ lack of patriotism. Many traders must not have realized that a stronger colonial state would depend upon the elimination of their roles as ambivalent representatives of colonial power.

This analysis draws largely on sources written by white Portuguese men from the metropole who put down the uprising, and whose entire social and political apparatus was the rebels’ target. But archival “traces” abound in this archive, revealing a wealth of “subtleties worth gleaning and the value of an approach privileging ‘nearness.’”⁴⁵⁸ I follow Nancy Hunt in “insisting that persons composed the state and its guises.”⁴⁵⁹ Colonial power was by no means

⁴⁵⁷ BNP Microfilm F.6158, “Coisas d’Africa.” *O Dia*, 17 July 1902.

⁴⁵⁸ Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Nervous State: violence, remedies, and reverie in colonial Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 10.

⁴⁵⁹ Hunt, *A Nervous State*, 9.

absolute at this time; the colonial “state” boasted no visible institutions save for its poor and ragged military. Representatives of the Portuguese state were not monolithic. A focus on competing individuals representing state power in this context, as well as the extent to which their interests diverged, reveals how unstable the idea of a “state” was in this context. Lines between the state and commerce were blurry, and various actors quite literally took up the “guises” of the state for their own purposes (e.g. the case of *sobas* wearing military uniforms), whether they had legitimate links to Portuguese power structures or not. Educated Portuguese officials were invaders and conquerors, but some had been long-term residents of Angola who daily interacted with the diverse social groups in the province. Their prejudices and contemptuous attitudes towards Africans color every turn of their (often eloquent) prose, but so do their own visceral responses to events precipitated by their enemies, as well as their readings of what their enemies felt. In these moments of violent and terrified “nearness,” we can get close enough to hear and see traces of what drove people on different sides of the conflict.

This is an experiment in nearness to the texts themselves. As I scoured military reports for evidence of the Mbailundu Revolt’s causes and the rebels’ grievances, I quickly realized the extraordinary level of descriptive detail they contained. Officials recorded every detail of their marches, leaving behind a remarkable trove of documents containing the pulse of the people animating this landscape of conflict. The chaos and confusion inscribed in colonial records underscores the insecurity of the state and the need for its agents to establish control over people by making them legible. The mass flight, equivocation, and even the cooperation of some *sobas* and *sekulus* with Portuguese authorities reflect the ongoing fragmentation of “traditional” power structures in the face of the growing colonial presence. Understanding the social effects of continuous contortions of authority is a central concern of this chapter. Other authors have

pointed to the instability of authority as a cause of the Mbailundu Revolt, but none have shown how the widespread instability of social hierarchies led directly to a conflict that saw opposing sides fighting to establish boundaries. Colonial officials and Mbailundu leaders were engaged in a struggle over moral supremacy, social legibility, and sovereignty over land and people. It is in the affective undertones of this conflict that these struggles become visible.

This chapter has mined archival moments for traces of “moods”⁴⁶⁰ that had brewed for over a century leading up to this 1902 explosion of feeling. Even the men sent to crush it could not deny its power or escape its emotional impact. Lieutenant Pais Brandão wrote the following passage about the moment rebels attacked the Bailundo fort:

The people advanced intoning a war song, the most melodious and sublime song I have ever heard or will ever hear, which echoed majestically across the valley. This was not a song [*canto*] but an enchantment [*encanto*]; enrapturing the thoughts until the infinite and enfolding the soul in the sweetest and most sublime delight, despite expressing that which is most hard, cruel, and monstrous within humanity—war.”⁴⁶¹

With great sentimentality, he described the moment when thousands of warriors from Mbailundu advanced in an attack that had been building for weeks, singing a battle song in unison. As he and his troops prepared to mow down the advancing *gentio* with their artillery, the lieutenant took a moment to let himself be overwhelmed with a wave of emotion, struck by the undeniable power and sublime beauty of the insurgents’ battle song.

⁴⁶⁰ Hunt, *A Nervous State*, 9.

⁴⁶¹ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 38.



Illustration 7:
*Lieutenant Augusto Albano Pais Brandão*⁴⁶²

Moods and affective states drove action and influenced outcomes. The central highlands and much of the surrounding region in 1902 were in upheaval. Lieutenant Brandão recognized that people were rising up in an explosion of feeling, and his observations frequently provide a window into how rebels were channeling emotions into action. To use Brandão's original phrase (which does not translate smoothly into English), their "spirits were exalted" (*ânimos exaltados*). When questioning the loyalties of one *soba*, Brandão wrote: "he and his people could not be indifferent to an issue as thrilling (*palpitante*) as the revolt of Bailundo."⁴⁶³

For over one hundred and seventy pages, Brandão proudly discussed the scorched earth campaign he waged on the region after repelling the Mbailundu attack on the fort. His column

⁴⁶² AHU. Lieutenant Augusto Albano Pais Brandão, Major do Exército Occidental, <http://actd.iict.pt/view/actd:AHUD8320> (accessed 29 July 2015).

⁴⁶³ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 21.

swept across the countryside looting and burning villages, from which most of the terrified residents had already fled. His porters and soldiers helped themselves to whatever food and supplies they could carry, setting the rest on fire. Brandão described this pillaging with casual detachment: “At 10:45am I arrived at the populations of Cahenguengue which were destroyed without resistance, and in one of which I ate lunch.”⁴⁶⁴ But he also frequently stepped back from his narrative in order to reflect upon “moods”—his own and others’—providing valuable insights into how individual people participated in and reacted to the uprising.

Mutu-ya-Kavela’s eventual capture and murder by Pais Brandão’s troops may have been thanks to his Ovimbundu rivals, who revealed his location to Portuguese troops.⁴⁶⁵ Despite this alleged internal conflict, however, several sources name Mutu-ya-Kavela as an important figure in oral history, noting that he continued to be recognized as a *soba* and celebrated for his bravery long after his death.⁴⁶⁶ Decades after the Revolt, some people in the highlands referred to the war itself simply as “Mutu-ya-Kavela.” People I spoke to in 2013 remembered hearing songs about Mutu-ya-Kavela, but no one was able (or perhaps they were unwilling?) to sing them for me. Gladwyn Childs, an ABCFM missionary and historian, includes Mutu-ya-Kavela in his list of Mbailundu kings, but designates him along with “men not of royal lines and not regularly enthroned, but usurpers, war leaders, or ‘guarders of the stool.’”⁴⁶⁷ After independence from Portugal, in 1975, an important secondary school in Luanda was renamed “Mutu-ya-Kavela,” but in 2013 it had been closed for renovations for many years.

⁴⁶⁴ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 67-68.

⁴⁶⁵ Heywood, *Production, Trade, and Power*, 330.

⁴⁶⁶ Wheeler & Christensen, “To Rise With One Mind,” 74; Soremekun, “The Bailundu Revolt,” 470.

⁴⁶⁷ Childs, *Umbundu Kinship and Character*, 231 n. 7.

Taunting, Jeering, Irritation

When Brandão's column reached the Cutato River on their way to Bailundo in 1902, a group of *gentio* gathered on the other side of the bridge and began threatening the group. According to his report, he tried to engage them in dialogue by shouting "amicably" across the river that they should let him cross peacefully.⁴⁶⁸ They refused. Suspecting that they read his "friendliness" as "weakness," Brandão wrote that the people hurled "terrible threats, insults, and all manner of verbal offenses" at him, creating a "ghastly concert" with their whistles and shouts.⁴⁶⁹ Brandão was so offended by such incidents that he took great care to vividly illustrate the sonic effects of this auditory assault.

The *gentio* on these occasions have venomous tongues. There are no obscenities they do not vomit, no terrorist threats they do not utter, nor calamity they do not predict. He who pays attention to what they say in such moments dies a thousand times simply from...fright!"⁴⁷⁰

Brandão was likely not fluent in Umbundu, almost certainly not to a degree where he would understand insults and heckling. It is much more likely, based on the number of instances where *sobas* and *sekulus* were said to know Portuguese, that these "*gentio*" knew how to insult and offend in the language of their enemies.

Such jeering and taunting may have amounted to a form of "psychological warfare" the rebels waged against the Portuguese.⁴⁷¹ During most of May and June 1902, before the three armed columns arrived from the coast, Mutu-ya-Kavela and his allies could probably have overwhelmed the tiny and terrified group in the fort—traders, a few soldiers, and Portuguese officials with their wives, children, servants and other dependents. But instead of launching an immediate attack, *sobas* and *sekulus* from the surrounding area convened at the *ombala* to

⁴⁶⁸ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 25b.

⁴⁶⁹ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 26-26b.

⁴⁷⁰ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 41.

⁴⁷¹ Soremekun, "The Bailundu Revolt," 460.

discuss and debate how to move forward, and all this diplomatic activity took place in full view of the fort.⁴⁷² Every evening at 6:30, residents of the Mbailundu *ombala* gathered to shout loudly at the fort so that the soldiers inside could hear that they were “tired of being governed” and “would never obey the orders of authorities constituted by our [Portuguese] government.”⁴⁷³ This affective posturing may have constituted part of the insurgents’ military strategy. But there was genuine uncertainty and disagreement among Ovimbundu leaders about whether and how to take action against the fort.

Lieutenant Brandão frequently expressed irritation with the behavior and comments of *gentio* he encountered on the march. A few days after setting out from the coast, his column stopped at the home of a trader named Manuel Reis de Carvalho. There, Brandão asked people for information on the situation in Mbailundu, and what he heard made him think he was “suffering a horrible nightmare!”⁴⁷⁴ It was unclear at that stage whether the Bailundo fort had already fallen to rebel forces, but rumors were flying, so Brandão spent a good amount of his energy trying to get an accurate report. Listening to the excited chatter at the trader Carvalho’s house suggesting the fort and its occupants had already fallen to the rebels, the lieutenant despaired: “Was such a great calamity possible? So not even the captaincy [fort] had escaped the savage horde? The *gentio* in the area unanimously confirmed this with a certain pleasure, which did not escape my observation.”⁴⁷⁵ Brandão heard that “the Captain Major [of Bailundo] could not be saved, because various regions and especially the highlands of Mossamedes (Huilla

⁴⁷² Soremekun, “The Bailundu Revolt,” 460.

⁴⁷³ AHM 2/2/7/10, Captain Major Alberto Nozolino d’Azevedo to the Secretary of Benguela, 18 May 1902.

⁴⁷⁴ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 7.

⁴⁷⁵ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 7-7b.

District), Ambrizete, Bihé, N'Dullo, Novo Redondo, Quiballa, Quissama, and Libollo, were in revolt, and that even in the capital of the kingdom a revolutionary movement had arisen!"⁴⁷⁶

Causes and Effects of Discontent

Before the final battles in September, Lieutenant Brandão was already scratching his head over the confusing cacophony that bombarded him from all sides—finger-pointing, denial of guilt, colonial officials deflecting blame for their slow response, and public displays of colonial loyalty by *sobas* and *sekulus* hoping to escape punishment. Several of these showed Brandão letters to prove that they had aided in the escape of white traders during the Revolt; one even showed him a key that allegedly unlocked the house where he had stored some of the white men's belongings for safe keeping.⁴⁷⁷ Like the Portuguese-speaking *sekulu* Sacco-Major, who had warned the Captain Major of plans for a revolt in 1901, these Ovimbundu authorities understood that the balance of power was shifting in Portugal's favor, and rushed to demonstrate their loyalty to Brandão's conquering forces in hopes they would be allowed to maintain their positions of power.

Shortly after the unrest subsided, the Captain Major of Bailundo asked ABCFM missionaries to record in writing their opinions of what caused the uprising. The information the missionaries printed in their U.S.-based *Missionary Herald* was careful to emphasize that missionaries were still welcome, and that traders and corrupt colonial authorities were to blame for the uprising.

When the smoke of the first attacks on the whites began to clear away, it was plainly stated by the leaders of the revolt that they had nothing against missionaries, were tired of rum, slavery, and injustice, and wished to drive out the Portuguese traders."⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁶ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 34b.

⁴⁷⁷ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 21.

⁴⁷⁸ *Missionary Herald* 98(12) (December 1902): 520.

ABCFM missionary Walter Currie blamed the rebellion on the “lack of just administration on the part of the Portuguese authorities.”⁴⁷⁹ Currie’s interpretation of the revolt’s causes was derived from Mutu-ya-Kavela’s speech at the war camp, as his colleague Stover had recorded it.

The missionaries summarized their report in a letter to the Governor of Benguela, which diplomatically left out the indictment of colonial authorities. Because of the break in communication caused by the rebellion, the letter could not even be sent until its contents were “no longer relevant.” The missionaries never found out whether the Governor received the letter.⁴⁸⁰ In the report, the missionaries’ first order of business was to make it clear that Ovimbundu had never expressed hostility towards the Portuguese government itself, but did so only in cases where the government was thought to defend the violent acts of traders. The missionaries took care to note that “disturbances among the people” had only begun *after* the *traders* in the region began to multiply. The *gentio*’s primary complaints against the traders were:

- (a) Binding the chiefs of villages to force them to furnish carriers.
- (b) Building trading houses so near the villages as to drive natives away from their homes.
- (c) Forcing natives to buy rum whether they wished to do so or not.
- (d) Worse than all else, selling men, women, and children into enforced labor which was only another name for *slavery*.⁴⁸¹

The use of rum as a tool of colonial conquest, which is frequently foregrounded in oral traditions in 21st century Bailundo, was entangled with larger problems of trade and control over labor.

Increasing labor demands by colonial authorities proliferating in the region by the 1880s put additional pressure on *sobas*, who faced a delicate challenge of balancing their influence

⁴⁷⁹ *Missionary Herald* 98(12) (December 1902), 520.

⁴⁸⁰ ABC 15, Vol. 1: Wesley Stover, *Report of the Committee on Memorial to the Portuguese Government* (1903).

⁴⁸¹ ABC 15, Vol. 1: Wesley Stover, *Report of the Committee on Memorial to the Portuguese Government* (1903) (emphasis added).

among their subjects with the demands of their alliances with each other and with Portuguese authorities. The latter required *sobas* to provide porters, and the demands only grew as the twentieth century dawned. People living farther afield from population centers were vulnerable from all sides and needed the protection of powerful *sobas*, which was beginning to erode. *Gentio* were subject to the constant threat of roving bands of armed robbers, the growing number of traders setting up shop in the area, and the state's constant demands for their labor as carriers, enforced by bullying, abusive soldiers.

Conflicts between colonial soldiers and *gentio* were frequent in the highlands in the years leading up to 1902, and they often resulted from the outrageous demands the soldiers would place on people's hospitality. When soldiers decided to stop at a village, they would demand that people slaughter animals for them to eat, quantities of rubber (which functioned as currency), and "housing, food, and women."⁴⁸² In 1899, two soldiers on their way to Galanga to order someone to appear at the fort stopped for the night in *Soba Palanca's* village (recall that above, both Mutu-ya-Kavela and Samakaka were sometimes referred to as "Palanca" in Portuguese documents). The soldiers made the usual demands, but since no women agreed to sleep with them, they captured one of the *soba's* wives and did not release her until the next day.⁴⁸³ Palanca's people were outraged at this violation and attacked the soldiers, chasing them away. But the two men had the audacity to return to the village two days later, demanding fines in the form of a bull and a load of rubber. A similar dispute unfolded in Quiundo in 1900, resulting in a soldier's death, for which Captain Major Cravid demanded indemnity from the villagers who killed the soldier. A well-informed observer noted: "And as these cases repeated themselves all

⁴⁸² BNP Microfilm F. P. 150, "A Revolta do Bailundo," *O Jornal do Comércio*, 21 August 1902.

⁴⁸³ BNP Microfilm F. P. 150, "A Revolta do Bailundo," *O Jornal do Comércio*, 21 August 1902.

too often, very especially in Bailundo where the *capitania* was located, day by day spirits became more enflamed.”⁴⁸⁴

Boundaries

The organizers of the rebellion were engaged in a boundary making effort of their own to rival that of the colonial state. This moment represents the end of tolerance for fluid identities and categories, and the move towards a more rigid regime of social classification. Mbailundu warriors attacked not only Portuguese outposts and trading houses, but also the properties and persons of Luso-Africans and their employees and servants. Their merciless targeting of diverse individuals on the basis of their affiliations, even those affiliations that were involuntary (slavery), sent a clear message—they were attempting to restore the order of a world in which they had been in charge. The fragmentation of power, driven by the social mobility that characterized the end of the nineteenth century, threatened the power of *sobas* and *sekulus* from dynastic lineages as much as it impeded conquest by Portuguese forces. The revolt sent a clear message that traders and soldiers whose intermediary positions cast doubt upon their loyalties would no longer be tolerated in Mbailundu lands.

Colonial agents were also invested in drawing clearer social boundaries, and would no longer tolerate the meddling of intermediaries in both colonial and local political affairs. Governor General Cabral Moncada published an extensive report on the Mbailundu War, which belies a deep official discomfort with the behavior of traders in the interior. Although the Portuguese state targeted Protestant missionaries for alleged incitement of the Revolt, as the next chapter describes, many colonial officials believed that the true cause of discontent lay in traders’ abuses of *gentio*. Governor Moncada offered suggestions on how officials should proceed after the Revolt: “reprimand and even punish the abuses of whites, whose impunity is a

⁴⁸⁴ BNP Microfilm F. P. 150, “A Revolta do Bailundo,” *O Jornal do Comércio*, 21 August 1902.

risk;” and “emancipate the indigenous from our national legislation, so absurdly inappropriate for them.”⁴⁸⁵ The Governor was essentially admitting that Portugal had no legal control over the *gentio*, and furthermore that Portugal’s interference in the affairs of justice among Angolans benefitted no one. The days of traders’ houses doubling as courthouses where they resolved legal disputes (*mucanos*) for a fee would end now.

The Governor explicitly mentioned that “whites and *pardos* [brown people]” who had incited violence had been justly punished by the court system.⁴⁸⁶ Writing on the Mbailundu Revolt in 1973, Soremekun noted that he could not find any record of the names of traders who were tried and convicted after the end of the war, a fact he notes with suspicion.⁴⁸⁷ Pélissier also contends that Portuguese national pride protected the identities of the perpetrators from public exposure.⁴⁸⁸ The British Anti-Slavery Society’s *Anti-Slavery Reporter* referred to a Portuguese newspaper report in March 1903, which reported that officers from the army and navy, and merchants had been tried “before a Council of War at Benguela of persons incriminated in the revolt of Bailundo. [...] The names of the men convicted are given, and also the sentences, which were for terms of from five to ten years’ transportation, and fines, inflicted for such offences as capturing free men, acts of violence against liberty, and for robbery.”⁴⁸⁹ Other offences included “embezzlement and abuse of authority,” and “connivance at and traffic in slaving.”⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁵ Moncada, *A Campanha do Bailundo em 1902*, 8-9.

⁴⁸⁶ Moncada, *A Campanha do Bailundo em 1902*, 197.

⁴⁸⁷ Soremekun, “The Bailundo Revolt,” 458 (n. 6). The archives of the *Comarca Judicial* in Benguela, the most likely location of any such records surviving in Angola, were closed to researchers in 2013.

⁴⁸⁸ Pélissier, *História das Campanhas Vol. II*, 94-95 (n. 142).

⁴⁸⁹ *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, London: The Society, 4(23) (June-July 1903), 82.

⁴⁹⁰ *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, London: The Society, 4(23) (June-July 1903), 82.

Governor Moncada urged his countrymen in the future to “avoid all types of brutality, violence, and extortion, which have not infrequently been the cause of rebellions.”⁴⁹¹ An article in the Portuguese daily newspaper *Diário de Notícias* from September 29th, 1902, cited the low salaries of administrators assigned to remote outposts in Angola as one of the problems that led to the Revolt, arguing that poverty tempted officials to engage in illicit trade. Such entanglements of state power and commerce nearly always had negative effects on relations between authorities and *gentio*, ultimately undermining Portuguese sovereignty by breeding mistrust and discontent and furthering muddling social boundaries.⁴⁹² The fact that most of the “civilizing” and “governing” in the remote reaches of Angola’s interior was largely left to rapists, murderers, exiles, and failed traders, led to constant contortions of authority and bred discontent and violence. Scholars have claimed the Mbailundu Revolt “marked a watershed in a general crisis, [...] beginning in the last decades of the 19th century and perhaps not yet resolved.”⁴⁹³

Mutu-ya-Kavela’s Death

After more than six weeks of marching into the mountains, fending off hostile *gentio*, and burning and looting the Angolan countryside, Lieutenant Brandão and his troops were in need of good news. On August 3rd, 1902, they finally encountered Mutu-ya-Kavela in battle. Soldier number 34, Matheus Bartolomeu da Costa, took the winning shot: “with maximum peace of spirit, [he] shattered [Mutu-ya-Kavela’s] frontal bone [skull] with a bullet,” causing the remaining Mbailundu warriors to “disappear almost by magic!”⁴⁹⁴ Brandão could barely find the words to convey the emotion:

⁴⁹¹ Moncada, *A Campanha do Bailundo em 1902*, 9.

⁴⁹² BNP, *Diário de Notícias*, 29 September 1902.

⁴⁹³ Wheeler & Christensen, “To Rise With One Mind,” 54.

⁴⁹⁴ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 65b.

I cannot, because I do not know how, describe the enthusiasm that electrified everyone upon learning of Mutu-ya-Kavela's death. The soldiers shouted in unison: Viva Portugal! [...] And they were all Africans without culture, therefore one could not expect displays of patriotism from them, that sublime sentiment that not infrequently and in all nations has been the motor of acts of the highest heroism! After this scene which I will never forget, and which is clear proof that, in the African soldier disciplined and instructed in military duties and tactics, we have a loyal and valuable element, even in the most critical circumstances—I ordered the decapitation of the famous chief.⁴⁹⁵

What metric Brandão used to judge his soldiers as “Africans without culture” is unclear; but he made a point of expressing his surprise at the black troops' enthusiasm about the death of the Revolt's leader. He used this account to advance propaganda about the great potential of using “disciplined and instructed” African soldiers for colonial campaigns of occupation.

In addition to the decapitation of Mutu-ya-Kavela's corpse, which repeated the pattern of decapitation that defined the Mbailundu Revolt, Brandão also ordered his loyal soldiers to remove one of Mutu-ya-Kavela's legs. As he reported, the leader “had some defective toes,” and displaying his severed leg would facilitate identification of the corpse by those who had dealt with him when he was alive. The lieutenant took care to justify this mutilation, insisting that it was not done in order to provoke further hatred or to exercise retaliation—he simply determined it would not be possible to transport the corpse intact.

Back at the Bailundo fort, several missionaries and “European refugees” who had been hiding there verified the identity of Mutu-ya-Kavela's body parts, having had contact with him while he was alive. Victory thus confirmed and recorded, Brandão turned over Mutu-ya-Kavela's skull to the main office at the fort, “for anthropological studies,” a fascinating side note on which he unfortunately did not elaborate.⁴⁹⁶ After so many rumors of whites being decapitated by Mbailundu rebels had sown fear among whites and Luso-Africans, and tales of Samakaka's

⁴⁹⁵ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 66b.

⁴⁹⁶ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 67.

yearning for the scalp of a white man struck fear in their hearts, there is a dark irony in the fact that colonial troops carried the severed head of the rebellion's leader to the fort to be donated to "science."

Brandão returned to the business of burning villages and chasing down rebels, all while trying in vain to coerce people to work as carriers for the remainder of the expedition. When negotiating with *sobas* to provide these carriers, Brandão intentionally neglected to mention that his intended destination was the distant Bihé. He knew that the distance of the march, especially in those unstable times, would be an impediment to recruitment. But the length of the journey scarcely mattered, since he could not pay the carriers a reasonable wage and all of them refused. On the last leg of the journey, Brandão's column approached a village, startling its shell-shocked residents. They rushed to arm themselves against the colonial soldiers, protesting loudly that they were innocent and had not participated in the Revolt. Eventually the two sides reached an understanding without violence, and the villagers brought a large pig and a piglet as a gift for the soldiers. Brandão did not give anything in return, because, as he said, he was "poorer than the Biblical Job."⁴⁹⁷ Even as they invaded the land, Portuguese authorities could not reciprocate the *gentio*'s generosity or hospitality in the spirit of keeping the peace.

Conclusion

This retelling of the events, moods, and characters involved in the 1902 Mbailundu Revolt shows the confusion of identities, positions, and loyalties that resulted in countless incidences of violence and retaliation. While Portuguese officials struggled to separate themselves from the shameful behavior of traders and soldiers, these actors nonetheless represented the power of the colonial state. For *gentio* in Mbailundu and the surrounding communities who were subjected to regular abuse, exploitation, and theft by people who dwelled

⁴⁹⁷ AHM 2/2/7/21, *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo*, 72.

outside their social structures, there was little use distinguishing between “good” and “bad” outsiders. Indeed, those who straddled worlds and occupied intermediary positions were most frequently the targets of violence during the Revolt. Rebels wanted to expel or exterminate “whites,” and “African Portuguese” traders and anyone associated with them were among their targets.

The depth of moral outrage among Ovimbundu people was apparent through their actions. They shouted insults and threats at colonial officials in order to belittle and berate them, perhaps symbolically removing some of their threatening power. They paraded white and Luso-African captives in chains like slaves, made them carry heavy loads like caravan workers, and forced rum and urine down their throats. They destroyed facilities that produced rum and fashioned bullets out of the rivets they salvaged from rum stills. They asserted their desire for independence and sovereignty by demanding it through spectacular violence.

For colonial authorities coming up from the coast, it was plain to see that these intermediary figures were the cause of the *gentio*'s discontentment. These figures were convenient scapegoats for elite colonial agents to maintain their self-image as noble colonizers acting in the best interests of the *gentio*, while also providing a justification for the total military takeover of Mbailundu and its allies. Colonial troops engaged in retaliatory spectacular violence against central highlands communities on a scale that dwarfed the violence perpetrated by the insurgents. Colonial soldiers used their artillery to massacre large groups of people, despite widespread confusion about who had even supported or participated in the uprising. They raided and burned every village in their path. This moment marked an end to the tolerance for ambiguity and indeterminacy within which the colonial economy had operated in decades past. Attempts by colonial officials to settle blame for the uprising on one group or another took shape

almost immediately after the last battles were fought in September 1902, and the final chapter traces the process of blaming American Protestant missionaries for the violence.

Chapter Five

A War Camp, A Missionary Trial, and Colonial Anxieties

In September-October 1902, two ABCFM missionaries, Wesley Stover and Walter Currie, faced trials at the Portuguese forts in Bailundo and Bié, respectively, for their allegedly subversive conduct during the Mbailundu Revolt. Reports of the investigation were sent off to the highest officials in Luanda and Lisbon. These Protestant Congregationalist missionaries from North America represented yet another social category in the central highlands. They retained a considerable degree of autonomy and separation from the colonial state, operating under the purview of agreements reached by European colonial powers at the Berlin Conference in 1885. Scholarship on the Mbailundu Revolt has explored the influence of these missionaries in the central highlands, but none has discussed their trial after the revolt nor drawn upon the remarkable witness testimonies contained in the trial records.⁴⁹⁸

The records from these trials reveal the extent to which paranoid rumors circulated about the North American missionaries, reflecting Portuguese fears of their own colonial weakness. Suspicions about the activities of the missionaries focused on the wealth of their mission stations and the power of their influence over Ovimbundu people. These missionaries upset the colonial order by transgressing the boundaries of “state” power—deciding disputes, providing education and health care, freeing slaves, and even running the mail service. Their state-like presence embarrassed Portuguese officials by casting doubt upon the clear hierarchy the latter sought to

⁴⁹⁸AHU, 805 1L 1901-1904 ANG (Correspondência), *Auto de Inquérito efetuado na fortaleza do Bailundo sobre revolta do gentio na capitania do Bailundo, e ação dos missionários americanos junto deles, fornecendo pólvora e munições* (1902).

establish in Angola. The weakness of the Portuguese state was exposed by the missionaries' real and imagined activities—even the power of rumors about missionary influence was enough to threaten this vagabond state.

Missionaries enjoyed a privileged position beside Mutu-ya-Kavela throughout much of the revolt, suggesting that Mbailundu elites knew that the missionaries' sympathetic ear and antagonism with colonial officials could serve their own cause well. The trial records are also unique in that they provide details about a cross-section of Angolan society that was targeted by Mbailundu rebels during the uprising—"Luso-Africans," mestiços, and people who lived with and worked for them. Writing about the Mbailundu Revolt in 1973, Soremekun complained that "the African voice" was missing from the records available to him.⁴⁹⁹ While military records (which Soremekun could not consult then) provided echoes of the voices of those who participated in the uprising in Chapter Four, the missionary trial records give voice to the intermediary figures whom, while loathed by Ovimbundu, also constitute part of any "African voice" that can be reconstructed by historians.

Missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) established their first station in Angola in 1881, near the Mbailundu *ombala*. Stover had been running the Tchilume station near Mbailundu since 1882.⁵⁰⁰ He was fluent in Umbundu, but he also had considerable experience negotiating Portuguese bureaucracy and dealing intimately with Captain Majors at the fort. Currie had been working at the Chissamba Station near Viye since 1886, and had mastered Umbundu by 1902, but did not learn Portuguese.

Conflict between the North Americans and Europeans resident in the region had been percolating since the missionaries' arrival on the *planalto* in 1881. Though suspicions ran

⁴⁹⁹ Soremekun, "The Bailundu Revolt," 467.

⁵⁰⁰ General Council of the Congregational and Christian Churches of the United States, *The Congregational Year-Book, 1906 (Vol. 28)* (Boston: The Fort Will Press, 1906).

unusually high in 1902, the trial discussed here did not result in punitive action against Stover or Currie save for increased Portuguese surveillance of mission work going forward. Despite the certainty expressed by one official, who wrote a note claiming that the trial records “proved” the missionaries’ involvement in the uprising, the state’s reluctance to take any action against them suggests the trial was more important as a spectacle of colonial power than a practical attempt at prosecution. By 1908, however, the state had accumulated enough charges to ban Stover from Angola for two years, and his alleged conduct during the Mbailundu Revolt reemerged as evidence in that case. The 1908 case against Stover is discussed at the close of this chapter.

This chapter relies on historical sources that repeat versions of popular rumors that cast doubt upon the motives of the North American missionaries. Rumors can help historians understand common vulnerabilities and fears and how they influenced people’s actions in a given context. Rumors and gossip contain “interests, embodiments, and local strands of power.”⁵⁰¹ In the case of the post-Mbailundu Revolt trials of Protestant missionaries, rumors reveal deeply rooted Portuguese insecurities about the effectiveness of their colonial mission in Angola, especially as it related to the work of other European powers like Great Britain.

⁵⁰¹ Luise White, *Speaking With Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 68.



Illustration 8:
*ABCFM and CCFMS Missionaries, June 1901*⁵⁰²

Ekuiqui II and the First ABCFM Missionaries

The first group of missionaries from the ABCFM arrived in the central highlands in 1881. They were making their way up from Benguela with intentions to open a mission station near Viye. When they stopped in Mbailundu, Ekuikui insisted that they stay and open their mission near his *ombala*.⁵⁰³ In June 1884 the *soba* had a change of heart and expelled them after Benguela merchants had warned him that the missionaries' presence would disrupt trade. But within a few months Ekuikui changed his mind and invited the missionaries to return. Legend has it that Ekuikui offered a tree which was planted a tree at the mission station to signify a

⁵⁰² UCCA, Foreign Missions Photograph Collection 1999.001P 795 N, "Annual meeting held at Sakanjimba," June 1901. Second Row (L to R) Walter Currie, Wesley Stover, Dr. Sanders; Top Row (second from left) Bertha Stover.

⁵⁰³ Maria da Conceição Neto, *In and Out of Town: A Social History of Huambo (Angola), 1902-1961*. (PhD Dissertation, SOAS, 2012), 70.

strong partnership with the missionaries, and it bloomed miraculously just after being planted. Despite those halting first days, the Congregationalist missionaries went on to establish a strong presence throughout the central highlands, and they are still remembered with deep affection among Protestant Ovimbundu in the 21st century. As Chapter 6 will show, Ekuikui II is still remembered by many in the central highlands with great fondness.

Portuguese Anxieties

The ABCFM missionaries' apparent prestige among the *gentio* irritated Portuguese representatives in Angola, who longed to see in their African subjects a respect for the Portuguese flag and a healthy fear of Portuguese force. But the reality of the colonial situation their nation had created in Angola instead bred armed revolts, acts of theft, sabotage, and disobedience of colonial administrators. Traders' and officials' suspicions of the missionaries had been constant in and around Bailundo for two decades by the time of the Mbailundu Revolt.

If instances of missionaries meddling with authority were commonplace enough to be irksome to traders and administrators, what did they mean for Ovimbundu such as those who sought the missionaries' intervention in disputes with the Portuguese, or disputes amongst themselves? Mutu-ya-Kavela's apparent trust of Wesley Stover, and his pledge that no mission stations or missionaries would be harmed, may indicate an understanding on the part of *gentio* leaders that missionaries' objectives in Angola set them apart from traders and colonial agents. But to those traders and agents, aware of the precariousness of their own positions in Angola, *gentio*'s reverence for the North Americans had profound political overtones. A Portuguese trader who testified at Stover's trial, Alvaro Pimenta, claimed: "For a long time it has been generally accepted among the indigenous people that the American missionaries are the true masters of the land, that the Europeans are just their guests who depend on them, including even

the [colonial] authorities themselves.”⁵⁰⁴ Whether this notion was indeed “generally accepted” or simply discussed, the presence of such ideas held social weight.

Captain Major of Bailundo Teixeira da Silva had written to the Governor on January 1st, 1891, requesting materials to build a permanent colonial residence there.⁵⁰⁵ He directly related the “inconvenience” of not having such a residence to the presence of the American mission: “As your excellency knows, no official residence exists here [in Bailundo], which is of great inconvenience for various reasons, among them the fact that the American mission is established [here].” This well-established and, as Teixeira da Silva noted, *well heeled* mission station was also running the local mail service, which Teixeira da Silva found “of the utmost inconvenience for Portuguese authority to be established here.”⁵⁰⁶

The Captain Major’s concerns about the missionaries’ influence persisted into 1892, when he learned that they were sending building materials to the *libata grande* (the big village, presumably at the Mbailundu *ombala* or wherever the majority of the local population lived nearby) for the construction of a chapel there.⁵⁰⁷ Teixeira da Silva admitted that such a construction theoretically should not have posed a problem since missionaries “should only concern themselves with religion.” But he strongly believed that the mission was:

Very political, because more than once the *gentio* have told me that [the missionaries] speak very ill of the Portuguese. I continue sustaining our dominion and influence, but weakly, at the feet of these people who deliver cloth with full hands, who buy everything for much more than its value just to show how rich their nation is, and God knows how much it would cost me to keep up with them.”⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁴ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 14.

⁵⁰⁵ AHN, Cx. 3831, Mç. 5, Captain Major Teixeira da Silva to Governor, 1 January 1891.

⁵⁰⁶ AHN, Cx. 3831, Mç. 5, Captain Major Teixeira da Silva to Governor, 1 January 1891.

⁵⁰⁷ AHN, Cx. 3831, Mç. 5, Captain Major Teixeira da Silva to Governor of Benguela, 1892.

⁵⁰⁸ AHN, Cx. 3831, Mç. 5, Captain Major Teixeira da Silva to Governor of Benguela, 1892.

He added that the *soba* Ekuikui II had asked repeatedly for a Portuguese missionary to teach “our language” and that he had promised the *soba* many times that the Governor would send one. He admonished the Governor that it would be extremely prudent to take advantage of the “good disposition” of the Mbailundu *gentio* before the Americans could “expand their influence.”⁵⁰⁹

A year after the Revolt, in May of 1903, Wesley Stover wrote to the Governor General of Angola requesting permission to set up temporary mission schools in villages throughout the countryside. An attorney from the Governor’s office responded that he could not allow any new schools. Citing agreements from the Berlin Conference that guaranteed “freedom of conscience and religious tolerance for indigenous people, nationals and foreigners,” the attorney claimed they did not cover the territory of Portuguese West Africa (Angola) because it was not part of the “Congo basin” that the agreements covered.⁵¹⁰ For this reason, the colonial agent claimed, he could not authorize “propaganda and schooling from any religion that is not that of the State.” A note attached to the records from the missionary trial emphasizes the same point—Bailundo did *not* constitute part of the “Congo basin” and was therefore not subject to the same rules of religious liberty as those agreed upon in Berlin.⁵¹¹

Protestant missionaries were not the only religious actors to face deep suspicion and constant accusations of harboring sinister motives. Traders and colonial authorities were also critical of Catholic missionaries, who ostensibly worked at the behest of the colonial state. Since many of the Holy Spirit Fathers who ran mission stations in the central highlands were French or Alsatian, their foreignness triggered Portuguese fears of the “denationalization” of Angola. In an open letter published in the newspaper *A Voz da Publica* in 1908, a resident of Bailundo complained about the Holy Spirit fathers who were well known to be “a constant element of

⁵⁰⁹ AHN, Cx. 3831, Mç. 5, Captain Major Teixeira da Silva to Governor of Benguela, 1892.

⁵¹⁰ AHN, Cx. 3831, Mç. 5, Attorney of the Crown, Antonio V. Cudre da Braz to Wesley Stover, 4 September 1903.

⁵¹¹ AHU, 805 1L 1901-1904 ANG (Corresp), Note included with *Auto de Inquérito*, 28 April 1903.

disorder.”⁵¹² According to the author, these missionaries put down the Portuguese in front of the indigenous people as “an entity with no value, without a shadow of respect, demoted and dilapidated, belonging to <<such a small country>> that we have to ask [the Catholic missionaries] to come to our lands.” They tell the indigenous people that we “beg them to come to our lands and civilize [the people].”⁵¹³ Portuguese anxieties about colonial inferiority extended to all entities claiming alternative forms of authority over *gentio*, and the imagined slights on the part of these entities were remarkably similar in nature.

The Post-Revolt Trials

On October 4, 1902, when the smoke had barely cleared from the Mbailundu Revolt, Portuguese officials at the recently besieged fort brought missionary Wesley Stover to trial for his alleged actions during the Revolt. The specific accusations against him involved the provision of gunpowder and cartridges to Mutu-ya-Kavela and his warriors. The trial proceedings are rich with eyewitness testimonies from Luso-Africans imprisoned in the rebels’ war camps because of their association with particular traders or with commerce in general. Most of these witnesses’ testimonies were clearly meant to incriminate the missionaries. A few witnesses, also locally born and occupying intermediary positions through their associations with Portuguese traders or with the missionaries themselves, gave testimonies that were kinder to the missionaries.

At the trial, stories served to reestablish an imagined sense of social order—deemphasizing transgressions, omitting intermediate identities, and cementing social boundaries. If Angola’s future were to be stable and prosperous rather than chaotic and anarchic, social

⁵¹² AHA, Cx. 3831, “No Bailundo – Desrespeitando a autoridade – Um preto espancado – Os padres do Espírito Santo,” *A Voz da Publica*, 20 May 1908, Bailundo.

⁵¹³ AHA, Cx. 3831, “No Bailundo – Desrespeitando a autoridade – Um preto espancado – Os padres do Espírito Santo,” *A Voz da Publica*, 20 May 1908, Bailundo.

hierarchies would have to be reaffirmed and enforced. Though the state's objective in bringing the trial was to incriminate the Protestant missionaries and prove that they materially aided the Ovimbundu in the Revolt, records from this trial can be read against the grain for fascinating details. Statements from a diverse group of men and women held prisoner by Mutu-ya-Kavela provide a rare window into conversations between missionaries and the rebel leader himself—though we must be suspicious of the competing purposes for which the speakers are ventriloquized. The prisoners taken by Mutu-ya-Kavela's men were frequently referred to as “whites” (*brancos*) in both missionary and colonial sources. But of those who testified at the missionaries' trial only a few were explicitly identified as white, others as *cabindas* (from the small enclave province of Cabinda, north of the Congo River), or *pretos* (blacks). It is significant that all of them had Portuguese names, suggesting that their status as Luso-Africans was an important motive for their capture during the Revolt.

“The Americans can stay but the ‘whites’ cannot”

The North American missionaries occupied a differently valued social category than the Portuguese. Though they shared a light skin color with Portuguese traders, they were set apart by their different purpose in Angola. According to the testimony of Victoria, a “laundress” resident in Bailundo, Mutu-ya-Kavela told Stover, “the Americans can stay in the region but the whites (*brancos*) cannot.”⁵¹⁴ *Lavandeira* (laundress) was a euphemism for “mistress” in 19th century Angola, suggesting that Victoria had been arrested by rebels because of her affiliation with a white or Luso-African trader.⁵¹⁵ Victoria alleged that the American pastors promised to send weapons to Mutu-ya-Kavela but did not follow through. Translation and language matter here, because the reported speech from Mutu-ya-Kavela was in Umbundu, which Stover and most

⁵¹⁴ AHU, 805 1L 1901-1904 ANG (Corresp) *Auto de Inquérito*, 6.

⁵¹⁵ Philip Havik, ‘Mary and Misogyny Revisited: Gendering the Afro-Atlantic Connection,’ in eds. P. Havik & M. Newitt, *Creole Societies in the Portuguese Colonial Empire* (Bristol, England: Lusophone Studies 6, July 2007), 44.

other ABCFM missionaries spoke fluently and which these Luso-African prisoners understood. The word used by the Umbundu-speakers quoted here could have been “*ocikwaputu*,” defined in William H. Sanders’ *Umbundu Grammar* as “European.” Since Portugal was known as “*oputu*,” the word *ocikwaputu* was associated more directly with Portuguese people than with Europeans or whites more generally. As far as the category of “*americano*,” while it is not clear if it was used in this way in the early 20th century, many Angolans from the highlands in 2013 told me that Ovimbundu Protestants were commonly referred to as “*americanos*” later in the 20th century because of their association with the missionaries.

Rumors and Anxieties

In a confidential letter accompanying a report on the trial sent to the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Province of Angola, Captain Pedro Francisco Massano de Amorim cautioned that the claims it contained might be questionable:

It was not an easy task to investigate what in this document is confirmed: On one side, the exaggeration of the traders, who want [...] to absolve themselves of personal responsibility, leading them to attribute the rebellion of the natives, *they [the traders] who were the principal causers of the revolt, to the machinations of the missionaries*; on the other side the reticence of the natives who could best clarify the facts which only they witnessed, but, fearful and apprehensive, contradict themselves at every moment, or claim to be ignorant of details of facts to which they referred when they gave [their initial] statements.⁵¹⁶

In Amorim’s view, the traders “were the principal causers of the revolt.” The traders, in turn, blamed the unrest on “the machinations of the missionaries,” those suspiciously foreign Anglophone Protestants from New England and Canada. The interrogated Ovimbundu were reticent, fearful and apprehensive, and their social positions shaped narratives of what had taken place during this period of extreme violence and insecurity.

⁵¹⁶ AHU, 805 1L 1901-1904 ANG (Corresp). *Auto de Inquérito*, related documents, Massano de Amorim to Chefe do Estado Maior. 28 December 1902, 1 (emphasis added).

Although Captain Amorim had an interest in blaming North American missionaries for the Revolt—really, anyone but Portuguese officials—he nonetheless foregrounded the “exaggeration” of the traders’ accounts.⁵¹⁷ Furthermore, when Amorim tried to get information about the ABCFM missionaries’ activities from officials in the area of Bailundo, he found:

A lamentable ignorance on the part of the local authorities about the background [of the missionaries], their way of life, the regimen of the missions, their professed doctrines, relations between the priests [sic] and the natives, and finally about any affairs whatsoever that could offer a secure point of departure for an inquest of this nature.⁵¹⁸

The Captain did not hide his doubts about the quality of the witness testimonies collected in Bailundo and Bihé at the trial after the Mbailundu Revolt. Amorim was urging a cautious and realistic approach to interpreting the documents, reminding the reader that traders had a vested interest in driving out the missionaries, while many Ovimbundu feared the consequences of testifying at all. This caution offers a strategy for reading the documents discussed in this chapter. A similar sensitivity to the role of emotions and individual and group interests in shaping the production of narratives and stories is essential to any historical studies of crisis. The comments and stories told by diverse people in the immediate aftermath of the Mbailundu Revolt demonstrate this process of attaching historical significance to an event—a process that takes shape even as an event is unfolding.

Captain Amorim had previous experience crushing rebellions in Angola, which is apparent in his letter. On a visit to Bailundo in 1890, Amorim had spoken with Justino Teixeira da Silva, the first Captain Major of the Bailundo outpost that boasted a small village and a modest fort by 1902. Amorim claimed that the only information he was able to get:

Consisted of public rumor or isolated declarations of some trader or another which deserved little faith, since the traders must naturally be less than fond of the

⁵¹⁷ AHU Massano de Amorim to Chefe do Estado Maior, 1.

⁵¹⁸ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 1-1b.

Americans who compete with them in the rubber trade and damage them with propaganda against the use of rum, one of the principle branches of business.⁵¹⁹

Despite Amorim's caution that the missionaries were the "natural" enemies of the traders, he did not disagree that the presence of these outsiders undermined Portuguese authority. He concluded: "For our dominion they are, if not prejudicial, then at the very least useless."⁵²⁰ They ran English schools, and according to "public rumors:"

The Americans instill in the natives' spirit false ideas that prejudice our authority and supremacy over them, telling them, for example, that it is only in America that gunpowder is produced, as well as guns and medicines; that they are the masters of the land, and that their flag is the only one that has value and importance.⁵²¹

It is notable that the Americans were rumored to refer to weapons and medicines in order to demonstrate their nation's superiority. These rumors may say more about the fears that many Portuguese officials had about the lack of colonial respectability and their inability to control Africans, than they do about any actual behavior or attitudes on the part of the missionaries.

Portuguese troops were poorly armed and the colonial apparatus provided no medical care to speak of. Traders visited the ABCFM mission stations for medical treatments. Most of the missionaries had at least some medical training, and frequently were the only doctors in the areas they served, taking on European patients as well as Africans. The significance of their ability to provide medical care should not be underestimated. This new medicine presented a powerful counterpoint to the established order in which Ovimbundu healer-diviners (*ocimbandas*) had reigned supreme in matters of health, both of the human body and the body politic. One of the principal charges against the missionaries after the Revolt was that they

⁵¹⁹ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 1b.

⁵²⁰ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 2b.

⁵²¹ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 3.

provided gunpowder and ammunition to the Mutu-ya-Kavela, and one witness even referred to a lesson in firing techniques. Amorim's letter mentioned a similar accusation, that on a festive occasion hosted at the mission in Bihé by Walter Currie one of the activities was target practice for the natives.⁵²²

Whether there was any truth to these rumors, they can be taken as important historical sources nonetheless. Rumors can be “tools with which to write colonial history.” As Luise White argues: “The inaccuracies in these stories make them exceptionally reliable historical sources as well: they offer historians a way to see the world the way the storytellers did, as a world of vulnerability and unreasonable relationships.”⁵²³ Rumors about the activities of American missionaries are foregrounded in the testimonies discussed here, and point to the particular fears and assumptions that shaped relations between the missionaries and the people in their sphere of influence.

Wesley Stover in the War Camp

One morning in July 1902, at the height of the Mbailundu Revolt, Wesley Stover awoke in a rustic hut. The people who had hastily assembled the structure for Stover were warriors from Mbailundu preparing to attack the nearby Portuguese fort. The Boston native had spent the night in the war camp (*quilombo*), a temporary settlement typically constructed during campaigns of warfare. Stover visited the camps frequently during the course of the Mbailundu Revolt and consulted with Mutu-ya-Kavela.⁵²⁴ Missionaries also spoke and corresponded with Portuguese officials at the besieged fort, negotiating the release of prisoners on both sides. The missionaries also attempted, sometimes successfully, to recover goods plundered during the confusion of the

⁵²² AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 3.

⁵²³ White, *Speaking With Vampires*, 5.

⁵²⁴ The missionaries translate Mutu-ya-Kavela as “Hard Squash.” People I interviewed in Angola in 2014 explained to me that this name refers to a squash that, no matter how long you boil it, never gets soft.

early days of the uprising. As one unsympathetic witness at Stover's trial charged, the Protestant missionaries were attempting to fashion themselves as "masters of both camps."

Wesley Stover's wife Bertha composed a detailed report expressing considerable sympathy for the rebels, which was smuggled out of Angola and sent to ABCFM headquarters in Boston. By spending the night in the camp, Wesley Stover risked being seen as subversive agent and a political agitator by colonial authorities. Mutu-ya-Kavela kept Stover by his side during speeches, and greeting parties for arriving bands of warriors. He affectionately referred to the missionary as "our white man," even as his warriors reportedly shouted in unison, "Down with the whites!"⁵²⁵ Mrs. Stover ended the report with a solemn request to readers: "Please be exceedingly careful as to what gets into print."⁵²⁶ Both Mr. and Mrs. Stover's words belie their naked contempt for the traders, whose nefarious dealings in rum and slaves and general commission of "iniquities" had caused the uprising in their opinion.⁵²⁷ This report was never meant to fall into Portuguese hands, but the sentiments contained in it would have been unlikely to surprise the colonizers.

Trial records bring social tensions to the forefront, with individuals expressing their allegiances and animosities in unambiguous terms. From the top down, elite Portuguese officials unequivocally expressed their disapproval of the organization of social and economic life in the Angolan interior. Their condemnation of the quality of Portuguese traders was evident in their letters and reports. The dream of a modern, rational, organized colonial society with neat divisions of race and class eluded them. Daily realities in Angola included frequent transgressions of social categories, confusions of tongues, mismatched cultural interpretations—and these interactions made intermediaries of everyone. It was a landscape of liminal spaces,

⁵²⁵ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, July 1902, 9.

⁵²⁶ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, July 1902, 20 (underline in original).

⁵²⁷ ABC 15, vol. 1: Walter Currie to Judson Smith, 8/21/1901.

where simplistic dichotomies of colonizer and colonized, including racialized categories, did not follow consistent logics.

Analysis of such reports reveals a sense of the emerging struggle over narration—before the Bailundo Revolt had been mostly crushed by Portuguese firepower, this new conflict over recounting, recording, and evaluating what had happened was underway. The war provided an outlet for the expression of preexisting rivalries and grievances, which this dissertation traces for at least two decades prior to 1902. The murders, attacks, arson, and kidnappings that marked the first stirrings of the Bailundo Revolt inspired terror and high emotion among all the diverse kinds of people on the *planalto*. The stakes were high for everyone as they wondered about, debated, and feared the possible outcomes of the violent uprising.

Those who had the means to produce and circulate written opinions on the causes began vying over which narratives would become “true,” variously placing blame on the abusive and exploitative behavior of corrupt colonial administrators, the vicious and irrational treatment of “natives” by traders, or the subversive and foreign influence of North American missionaries. Interestingly, each of these competing narratives presented Ovimbundu insurgents as rational actors, in every case suggesting that they had legitimate reasons to rise up in armed rebellion. The questions on the minds of whites seeking power, souls, and fortune in Angola were: *why* did this happen, *who* was to blame, and *how* could it be prevented in the future?

Walter Currie and *Soba Tchivava*⁵²⁸

In a letter to the director of the Congregational Rooms in Boston from August 3, 1902, Walter Currie described the conflict that had been unfolding in central Angola. He prefaced his long letter with an expression of surprise: “Those of us who have lived longest in the country are perhaps more surprised than strangers that such a state of things has been brought about, for it

⁵²⁸ Also written as Quibabe, Chivava, Chibabe.

scarcely seemed possible that these people could bury their differences and rise with one mind in rebellion against the Government.”⁵²⁹ Just a few weeks after writing these words, Currie would face accusations from a *soba*, Tchivava, who seemed determined to take down anyone in his path to escape punishment by Portuguese officials for allegedly participating in the Revolt.

In the same letter of August 3rd, 1902, Currie mentioned that Tchivava had gathered a large war party and was already attacking the houses of white traders. Currie claimed he had tried to persuade Tchivava to lay down his arms, but the *soba* refused—though he expressed friendship to Currie, and many of his people were enrolled at the mission school at Chissamba. According to Currie, Tchivava was undeterred by reports of Ovimbundu defeats at the hands of the advancing Portuguese forces. He refused to desist from the burning and plundering trading houses, saying he was “tired of the rum and injustice from whites who settled in his district.”⁵³⁰ This summary of Tchivava’s intentions, penned by Currie, is remarkably similar to Stover’s description of Mutu-ya-Kavela’s speech at the war camp, where he reportedly said, “We are tired of oppression and wrong, we are tired of slavery and rum.”⁵³¹ These snippets of speech were well aligned with the missionaries’ interests in Angola.

Currie faced trial for the accusations against him on September 2nd, 1902. He and Tchivava were both present at the Portuguese fort “Silva Porto,” named for the famous *sertanejo*, roughly 100km east of Bailundo in Bihé. Despite the recent history of competition and rivalry between the two kingdoms, some *biheno* leaders and minor *sobas* like Tchivava either participated in the 1902 uprising or turned a blind eye when their subjects did. Whatever the truth of Tchivava’s claims, it is evident that many Umbundu felt ambivalent about joining the rebellion. And even if Tchivava ultimately declined to participate in the uprising, as he claimed he

⁵²⁹ ABC 15, Vol. 1. Currie to Smith, 3 August 1902.

⁵³⁰ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Currie to Smith, 3 August 1902.

⁵³¹ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, 4.

had, he was given the ultimate punishment. Given the choice between exile and execution, Chivava chose exile, but was subsequently beheaded for his alleged involvement.⁵³²

Currie gave his testimony in Umbundu through an interpreter, as he did not speak Portuguese, and the authorities could find no one they deemed trustworthy who understood English. A soldier was employed to translate Currie's testimony into Portuguese. The scribe noted at the end of the transcription that Currie refused to sign his testimony, saying it would be "repugnant" to do so in light of the fact that he could not read or write in Portuguese and could not verify what had been recorded.⁵³³

The circumstances differed from those of Stover's trial. Whereas Stover's trial sought to collect general information about the level of influence the missionaries had with Mbailundu people, Currie was explicitly accused of pressuring the *Soba* Tchivava of Chissende, a tributary kingdom of Viye, to rise up against the Portuguese. Tchivava claimed to have refused to participate in the uprising despite Currie's persistent urging. Tchivava was under attack by the Portuguese because of his people's participation in the Revolt—he is described in the record of his testimony as "Quibabe, rebel ex-soba of the region of Quissende."⁵³⁴ His desire to shift the blame and deny his own culpability is not surprising. Tchivava seized the opportunity to make public accusations against Currie in the hope he might absolve himself and escape punishment at the hands of the colonial state. He also implicated six *sekulus* and two *sobas* by name as important actors in the Revolt. Because the missionaries were already suspected of encouraging insubordination among the *gentio*, it would not have seemed outrageous for Tchivava to claim

⁵³² Soremekun, "The Bailundu Revolt, 1902," 465; ABCFM Volume 15, Currie to Smith, 12 November 1902.

⁵³³ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 81b.

⁵³⁴ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 82.

that Currie had “incited [him] to revolt against the white residents of Bihé, sacking them and destroying their commercial houses.”⁵³⁵

Currie had visited the *ombala* of Tchivava at Chissende sometime in July. Tchivava claimed it was on this visit where Currie began to insist that Tchivava lead his people into revolt. Currie, on the other hand, claimed it was a mission to recover goods that had been stolen from a trader named Laforte, and to dissuade Tchivava from allowing his people’s participation in the uprising. Currie claimed he found Tchivava “dead drunk” upon his arrival at the *ombala*, so he spent the night there and resolved to take care of business the following day.⁵³⁶ In the morning, a sober Tchivava returned some of the trader Laforte’s plundered goods, and then asked Currie to hear some formal complaints. Currie refused, directing the plaintiffs to the mission station to have their complaints heard there. This last fact could not have pleased the Portuguese officials hearing the case. Just like the common practice of traders deciding disputes or *mucanos* at their houses (discussed in Chapter One), the North American missionaries’ arbitration of disputes among *gentio* deeply undermined attempts to centralize colonial authority.

Since both Currie and Tchivava were present at this hearing, the interrogators asked if Tchivava would alter anything from his previous declarations, which he declined. They asked Currie about the discrepancies between his and Tchivava’s accounts. Currie added that Tchivava had offered him a load of rubber in order to purchase a bull to slaughter for food, which Currie claimed to have refused. The missionary added that he did not make this visit for reasons of personal interest, perhaps hoping that his refusal to participate in Tchivava’s proposed transaction would serve as proof that his intentions were politically unsuspecting. This small

⁵³⁵ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 80.

⁵³⁶ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Currie to Smith, 21 July 1902.

comment is interesting to note in light of the criticisms Currie had previously faced from his own colleagues, who had alleged that he was more interested in being a trader than a missionary.

In 1900, Currie's colleague Stover wrote to the ABCFM headquarters at the Congregational Rooms in Boston, complaining that Currie was spending the bulk of his time and energy at the Chissamba Mission tending to the station's store.⁵³⁷ Stover claimed that Currie was known as far away as the coast in Benguela as "the big trader of Chissamba," that the station was primarily known by the Portuguese as trading station, and that traders living nearby were reaping the benefits of the industrial work being done there.⁵³⁸ Currie wrote to Boston in 1901 to defend himself against these accusations. He described in detail the costs of maintenance of the mission station, noting that the ABCFM had provided no grants for most of the necessary expenses. He claimed to have covered maintenance costs with his own personal funds.

Currie then described a debacle that began when he ordered some furniture for a local Portuguese trader, to be sent from Benguela. Since carriers were scarce at the time—not an uncommon occurrence, as this work has shown—there was a very long delay in getting the furniture carried up from the coast. Exasperated with the wait, the trader opted to instead purchase furniture from some missionaries who were leaving Angola on furlough. Several failed attempts by Currie to have the furniture resold in distant Benguela only resulted in broken mirrors and lost parts. When the furniture was finally delivered to Mr. Currie it cost about twice as much as it was worth. While Currie accepted responsibility for the mess, he added, "Certainly I am not to be censured for getting into the trouble from any sordid love of gain."⁵³⁹ It is interesting that Currie chose to tell this story to prove that profit was not his motivation. While he might indeed have incurred personal costs from debacles like this one, describing his

⁵³⁷ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Wesley Stover to Rev. Judson Smith, 13 October 1900, 3.

⁵³⁸ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Wesley Stover to Rev. Judson Smith, 13 October 1900, 3.

⁵³⁹ ABC 15, Vol. 1: Currie to Smith, 1 August 1901, 3-4.

involvement in such a transaction did little to prove he was not driven by profit like any common trader.

When Tchivava took the stand, he was asked why he took part in the uprising, “manifesting little respect and submission to Portuguese sovereignty.”⁵⁴⁰ The first claim the *soba* made was that Currie had sent a message via an intermediary in the days leading up to the attack on the Bailundo fort. Currie’s messenger reportedly told Tchivava:

Hear what the Americans say, do not pay attention to what the Portuguese say. Look, Quibaba [Tchivava] at what your brothers in Bailundo are doing, you know well that we have been here many years and we have never resolved a single problem, nor have we tied up *quimbundos* [“Africans”]⁵⁴¹, neither have we sold rum, so do what your brothers in Bailundo do, do not run, because this country does not belong to the Portuguese, it is ours.⁵⁴²

This alleged message from Currie touches on the worst fears of Portuguese agents in the highlands at the time—that the Protestants would successfully convince the *gentio* that their influence and power in Angola eclipsed that of the Portuguese. Tchivava’s condemnation of Currie fits comfortably with the Portuguese fears of American political designs on Angola.

Currie’s letters to his Protestant colleagues revealed a much more detailed back story about his relationship with Tchivava and the incidents that took place during those months in 1902. Describing the buildup to the July 1902 events, Currie mentioned the “shameless burning” of “several Luimbi villages,” followed by “a shameless, unjust, and ill-managed attack on some Civuque people, in which [Tchivava] was called to take part.”⁵⁴³ Colonial officials were seeking to actively divide the Ovimbundu population by pitting their leaders against one another. This disastrous Portuguese expedition ended with the officer in command so desperately fleeing the

⁵⁴⁰ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 82.

⁵⁴¹ *Quimbundos*: A Portuguese corruption of “Kimbundu,” incorrectly applied to all ethnic groups in Angola.

⁵⁴² AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 82b.

⁵⁴³ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Currie to Smith, 21 July 1902.

scene that he left his borrowed horse behind. Following the humiliating defeat, “an attempt was made to throw the responsibility for the disorderly retreat on [Tchivava] chief of Cissende. This was like throwing oil on a fire already lit.”⁵⁴⁴ Competition and rivalries between groups of Ovimbundu was not new on the *planalto*, but here Portugal engaged in brazen manipulation of inter-Ovimbundu conflict, resulting in utter confusion at the trial. While colonial officials took advantage of the disunity among sobas and sekulus, traders added still more fuel to the fire by committing atrocities against gentio.

“Like crazy devils”

Abuses and injustices by traders had been stoking the fire of rebellion in the central highlands for several years by the time of the Mbailundu Revolt. Rape, theft, and enslavement were common grievances lodged by gentio against traders. Currie wrote, “Several white and half-caste traders were acting like crazy devils who had no respect for prudence, law, or common decency.”⁵⁴⁵ Elders from Tchivava’s village reported their grievances to “two Portuguese” at the Chissamba Station in a meeting organized by Currie. He wrote to the ABCFM headquarters in Boston: “The statements of those men were enough to make white men ashamed of their boasted civilization.”⁵⁴⁶ As Currie recounted, the “common and general state of things” included “robbing fields, killing and seizing chickens, pigs, ox, beating old men and chiefs for no just cause, tying up and selling their children, [and] raping women in the fields.”⁵⁴⁷ There were several instances where traders kidnapped important people and demanded ransom paid in slaves; cases of violent retribution for refusal to pay such fines; and shots fired on Africans who

⁵⁴⁴ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Currie to Smith, 21 July 1902.

⁵⁴⁵ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Currie to Smith, 21 July 1902.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

dared to demand the return of property stolen from them by traders. Such incidents flared up in June and July 1902 as the unrest spread.

In the war camp, Stover heard the story of the Portuguese military raid at the Keve River, which was allegedly a response to Mbailundu people's plundering of a white trader there during the early stages of the revolt.⁵⁴⁸ According to Mutu-ya-Kavela's stirring speech before his assembled army, "a soldier took a child from the back of a daughter of the king, who is now in chains at the fort, and dashed its brains out against a stone, throwing its lifeless body on the ground 'as if it were a chicken.'"⁵⁴⁹ The father of the murdered child corroborated the story in Stover's presence.

Sexual violence against women, which had caused problems between Portuguese and Ovimbundu in the past, was also rampant in this context. One of the grievances reported by Tchivava's people involved a little girl who had been purchased for a keg of rum by a white man intending to make her his concubine. She protested that she was only a child, and he raped her anyway. She managed to flee from his place three times, but each time was returned to her captor (Currie's letter does not say who returned her). The white man then plundered the villages to which the girl had fled "on the charge of adultery with his woman." A different white man raped the wife of a chief when she went to his home to sell food, chasing her into the bush and violating her a second time. That chief's people burned the man's house to the ground in retribution—just the sort of score settling that made up most of the individual instances that became known as the Bailundo Revolt. After describing these horrors, Currie wrote, "not half has been told." Though it appears that Tchivava's people reported these offenses in an official capacity, there were no guarantees that the *soba* would be treated leniently if he surrendered to

⁵⁴⁸ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, 1.

⁵⁴⁹ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, 8.

the Portuguese. Still, Currie was “convinced that the whole trouble this way could be overcome by an assurance of justice tempered with mercy.”⁵⁵⁰

In Chapter One, the story of Mbailundu *soba* Numa’s 1896 revolt began with a story about his wife being raped by a trader. I heard a similar story in an interview with Daniel Cassoma, who also recounted the story about Mutu-ya-Kavela “flying away” after his men fell into the trap of drunkenness. Cassoma brought it up the rape story immediately at the beginning of our hours-long conversation, when I asked what led to the Mbailundu Revolt. After a few comments on the trickery of traders who got people hooked on rum, which “made us stupid,” Cassoma continued:

But it is not just this! The abuses were – engaging in forced, forced adultery... with the wife of the King of Mbailundu, [her name was...] Tchimbinda! [...] So this is how one day, Tchimbinda, leaving the *ombala* to go to the store – at this time Bailundo, the Vila of Teixeira da Silva already existed – there were already some figures belonging to the government, *so they forced the woman, and they abused her. They abused her.*⁵⁵¹

This incident appears in several written sources in connection with Numa’s 1896 uprising, usually euphemistically referring to the “bad behavior” or “insults” practiced by a European trader towards a wife of the king. But the importance of this type of offense is clear—white men’s and other outsiders’ violence against Mbailundu women was a major source of collective outrage, and one that has been remembered through the generations. In retribution for Tchimbinda’s rape, the *soba*’s men began arresting the first white men they could find, seeking vengeance.

Suspicious Gifts

Given the nature of the rumors recorded by Portuguese officials, the alleged material prosperity of the missionaries was a central concern of the state. The missionaries’ behavior during the Revolt exacerbated these concerns, and became the central focus of their trial.

⁵⁵⁰ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Currie to Smith, 21 July 1902.

⁵⁵¹ Cassoma interview, 6 May 2013, 12:10-14:04.

Missionary Robert Moffatt's correspondence with the Captain Major at the Bailundo Fort revolved around the continuous provision of foodstuffs to the latter, for payment in rubber.⁵⁵² But despite their assistance to the group stranded in the fort, one of the gravest accusations during the trial was that the missionaries had sent gifts to the "rebel" war camps, including gunpowder and bullets. Several witnesses, who were "interrogated separately, according to the terms of the law," described a suspicious package sent to Mutu-ya-Kavela in his war camp by the American mission at Chilume near Bailundo.⁵⁵³

The first witness was Luiz Gomes Sambo, mayor (*regedor*) of Bailundo. Sambo was born in the distant northern province of Cabinda, north of the Congo River, and could read and write. While he had not been taken prisoner by the rebels, but nonetheless testified about the missionaries' conduct, relating rumors that he had heard from traders in the area. Teixeira Moutinho's report on the activities of the "southern column" of soldiers fighting the 1902 Mbailundu Revolt lists "Luiz Gomes, mayor [*regedor*] of Balombo [in Bailundo district]" as one of the auxiliaries.⁵⁵⁴ Sambo would later serve in the expedition that defeated Bimbe in 1904, and he is pictured with his colleagues in the photo below, in the back row on the right side. In his testimony against the missionaries in 1902, Sambo repeated a rumor he heard from a trader that Stover had provided gunpowder and ammunition to Mutu-ya-Kavela during the revolt. His loyalties to the Portuguese state were clear.

⁵⁵² AHU 805 1L (Correspondência, 1901-1904, ANG), *Bailundo - Aúto de Inquérito*, Letters from Moffat to Captain Major.

⁵⁵³ AHU 805 1L (Correspondência, 1901-1904, ANG), *Bailundo - Aúto de Inquérito*, 1.

⁵⁵⁴ AHM, 2/2/7/18. Captain Major Fransico Xavier da Paiva to Governor 8 July 1902, 13b.



GRUPO DOS OFICIAIS QUE TOMARAM PARTE NAS OPERAÇÕES MILITARES NO BIMBE
 Sentados, da esquerda para a direita: Alferes: José Afonso Pereira, José Joaquim Pacheco; tenente-médico João Gomes Salgado Júnior; cap. Romeiras de Macedo; tenente Francisco Rezende; alferes: Albino Chalot e Antônio C. Lopes da Silva. De pé, da esquerda para a direita: Alferes: Antônio Baptista, Miguel de Almeida Júnior, tenente, Lourenço Pinto de Magalhães e Alferes de 2.ª linha Luiz Gomes Sambo.

Illustration 9:
*Officials from the Bimbe Campaign, 1904*⁵⁵⁵

The second witness was José Antonio Henrique. Born in Bailundo and employed by Sambo, Henrique had been held captive in one of Mutu-ya-Kavela's war camps. He alleged that ABCFM missionary Bertha Stover had sent a package for Mutu-ya-Kavela to the camp. It contained "two fine shirts, a black coat, a sack of lead bullets, a cartridge with boxes of caps, and sack of gunpowder."⁵⁵⁶ Even Mutu-ya-Kavela, who eschewed most things European, could find a use for "fine shirts" and jackets. The messengers bringing the package said that Mrs. Stover sent it so that Mutu-ya-Kavela would not harm the mission.

According to Stover's testimony at trial, the package included only the coat, shirts, and oranges (but no ammunition or gunpowder), and Mutu-ya-Kavela had demanded it unless the missionaries wanted him to sack and burn the mission. But according to Bertha Stover's report, written in English for a North American audience, there was never any fear of an attack on the

⁵⁵⁵ Almeida, *Operações Militares de 1904*, 41.

⁵⁵⁶ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 3b.

mission. Mutu-ya-Kavela had expressed friendship towards the missionaries from the start of the revolt.

On June 18 [Mutu-ya-Kavela] sent a messenger to the station, asking for a shirt, and if he could exchange rubber for ammunition, assuring us again that we were friends and his army should not come near us. Two shirts and a coat were returned to him with word that we had no ammunition.⁵⁵⁷

The missionaries appear to have been confident that no harm would come to them or their stations. But they must have known that sending weapons, even if they did have some available, would have been an ill-advised plan that would have jeopardized their ability to continue working in Angola if Portuguese authorities found out.

The next witness was Cristina, a “laundress” originally from Benguela, but residing in Bailundo. She had been a prisoner in the war camp with Henrique, and described the contents of the package exactly as Henrique did. She claimed to have overheard a conversation between Stover and Mutu-ya-Kavela during the night that Stover spent at the camp. “Mutu-ya-Kavela said that the Americans could stay in the country but they had to help him. [...] [Stover] responded that [the *bailundos*] could not win unless they had many people [to fight].” Cristina claimed that the next day she saw Mutu-ya-Kavela demonstrating a new shooting technique that Stover had taught him. Not only were the Americans sending highly suspicious “luxury” gifts to the rebels (Cristina referenced an additional gift of oranges and salt in her testimony), they were allegedly instructing the warriors in military tactics.

While much of the witnesses’ testimonies focused on establishing proof that missionaries provided material and tactical assistance to the insurgents, many accounts illustrate the popular intrigue surrounding the nature and scope of their influence among people in the region. Rumors and fantasies about what went on inside the mission stations reflect the general impression

⁵⁵⁷ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, 4.

among Portuguese that the missionaries were intentionally undermining colonial authority, not to mention competing with traders in commerce. Whether Mutu-ya-Kavela ever said the things attributed to him is impossible to verify, but each witness had a particular agenda, and the testimonies against Stover work explicitly to emphasize his supportive and cooperative relationship with the Mbailundu rebels. Cristina's testimony tries to show Stover not only provided weapons but also tactical instructions, material *and* moral support. If Mutu-ya-Kavela had really asked the Americans to stay in Angola and help him drive out other outsiders, colonial anxieties about the missionaries' superior position might be warranted.

Because the Catholic missionaries were not under investigation like the Protestants, the details of their visits to the war camps do not appear in great detail in most of the testimonies. But Cristina told the curious story of a conversation between Mutu-ya-Kavela and a man⁵⁵⁸ from the Bailundo Catholic mission who was visiting the rebel camp on behalf of Father Goepf. The visitor wished to convince Mutu-ya-Kavela that the Catholic missionaries were not guilty of anything, and reminded the war leader that they had even sent him gifts. But Mutu-ya-Kavela responded, "No, they have the priest there [at the mission] who is the witch-doctor of the whites⁵⁵⁹ and who gives them medicines."⁵⁶⁰

Despite Mutu-ya-Kavela's suspicion of a priest as the "witch-doctor of the whites," the leader met repeatedly with Father Goepf, the superior at the Bailundo Catholic mission, and Father LaGuerre from the same mission throughout the course of the uprising, and sought their help as intermediaries with authorities at the fort. Mutu-ya-Kavela's observation was astute. He

⁵⁵⁸ *Rapaz*: guy, boy, young man (informal, does not connote respect).

⁵⁵⁹ "*Feiticeiro dos brancos*." This is another place where linguistic particularities matter, but are lost to time and translation. Cristina used the Portuguese "*feiticeiro*," an inherently negative term suggesting "fetish"-worship and superstition. Mutu-ya-Kavela may have used the Umbundu term "*ocimbanda*," meaning "healer," or "*onganga*," meaning "wizard" or "sorcerer."

⁵⁶⁰ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 4b.

knew the Catholic missionaries were supported by the state, and that colonial officials were most commonly Catholic. Catholic rituals were visibly distinct from Protestant services by virtue of their material culture—rosary beads, incense, crucifixes, statues of saints—artifacts that would fall under the category of “medicines” in most African cosmologies. If residents of Bailundo and the surrounding region attended mass or consulted priests for medical or spiritual ills, they were in a sense receiving “medicines.” The priests, who provided these “medicines,” could then be understood as natural collaborators with colonial agents in the struggle for political and military power over Mutu-ya-Kavela’s people, in the same sense that *ocimbandas* (healers and diviners) worked in tandem with *sobas*.

Alvaro Pimenta, a Portuguese trader, and his family were trapped in the surrounded fort in July 1902 with a few dozen other people. ABCFM missionaries visited frequently as they tried to negotiate the release of prisoners on both sides in attempts to prevent further escalation of the conflict. Wesley Stover spoke directly to Pimenta, who was ill at the time, offering to bring the trader and his family to the ABCFM mission station for protection. According to Bertha Stover’s report, Mutu-ya-Kavela had personally given the order to remove the Pimenta family from harm’s way and see that they were protected in the event of an attack on the fort:

[Mutu-ya-Kavela] had given us permission to go to the fort and get Mrs. Pimenta and her children, and her stepmother (the wife of the former Captain – who is now in jail in Loanda, for dealing in slaves) and bring them to the station for safety. The chief [Mutu-ya-Kavela] said, “When we were in prison at the fort in Captain Cravid’s time, the Pimenta’s were kind to us. They washed our clothing and gave us food, and we do not forget a kindness – we wish them no harm.”⁵⁶¹

Despite this kind gesture, Alvaro Pimenta refused the missionaries’ offer, suspicious of the ulterior motives. Pimenta’s testimony at Stover’s trial was one of the longest and most damning in the entire record.

⁵⁶¹ ABC 15, Vol. 1, Bertha Stover Report, 10.

When Stover invited Pimenta and his family to stay at the mission, Pimenta claimed surprise, for “he was not accustomed to such excesses of amiability on the part of the missionaries.”⁵⁶² He made no attempt either to confirm or deny to the apparently good relations his family had once had with Mutu-ya-Kavela and other “rebels” who had once been imprisoned in the fort. Instead, he suggested that the fact that Stover and his colleague Moffatt’s visit to the fort during his illness was “nothing more than a pretext to establish direct relations with the local authorities *in order to make themselves masters of both camps*, that of the fort and that of the rebels.”⁵⁶³ Pimenta had been trapped inside the fort for most of the duration of the Revolt, so his testimony consisted mainly of rumors, impressions, speculation, and sweeping accusations, rather than concrete instances of wrongdoing that he witnessed himself.

Though narrated by a European, a story emerged from Pimenta’s testimony about how *gentio* viewed the missionaries, particularly in relation to the Portuguese. Asked if “the rebellion of the peoples, could, in some way, be convenient to the interests of the mission,” Pimenta responded: “The influence the American mission exerts over the peoples of Bailundo, an influence of which [the mission] is extremely protective” is “notorious and recognized.” So jealously did the missionaries guard this influence, Pimenta suggested, that they took “an active part, always protectionist, when some native is called to the fort to answer for some offense.”⁵⁶⁴ In this way the missionaries inserted themselves into local disputes, according to Pimenta, with the goal of bolstering their influence and authority over *gentio*. Like the cases of traders deciding *mucanos* in their houses for a fee, the missionaries transgressed the boundaries of the role of the state.

⁵⁶² AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 13-13b.

⁵⁶³ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 13b (my emphasis).

⁵⁶⁴ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 13b.

Asked whether offering protection to *gentio* was simply part of a missionary's humanitarian duty, Pimenta supposed that it could be so, but added: "it appeared that the [missionaries'] desired end was to maintain their prestige, which the authorities and more importantly, commercial expansion, have in recent times put at risk, thus affecting the interests of the sect to which they belong."⁵⁶⁵ In Pimenta's view, the missionaries' main concern was to hold onto the prestige they had built with Ovimbundu in the area over time—a prestige threatened by Portuguese authorities and "commercial expansion."

Friends of the Missionaries

Not all traders had such contempt for the missionaries. José Loureiro Ferreira was a trader living in Bailundo near the American mission at the time of the Revolt. He was 43 years old and a native of Bihé—most likely meaning he was Luso-African or *mestiço*. Loureiro carefully and diplomatically described his interactions with the missionaries as "cordial, but not intimate," and "limited almost exclusively to commercial relations."⁵⁶⁶ He provided some details about daily life at the mission station. Lessons at the school were restricted to reading and writing in the "national language" (Umbundu) and English. Crops grown were generally native foods. Attendance at weekly services and the school was substantial, drawing around 340 people from the surrounding villages. Loureiro testified that the missionaries did not seek to diminish the authorities or the Portuguese. He added that a man named Jacumba, who was "generally esteemed by the natives" and taught "masonry, cooking, and domestic workshops at the mission," told him in conversation that the missionaries always referred to the Portuguese authorities in good terms, and that they repeatedly affirmed that the *bailundos* could never resist

⁵⁶⁵ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 14.

⁵⁶⁶ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 74.

the whites.⁵⁶⁷ Loureiro was illiterate and did not sign his testimony, but he directed the interrogators to four “blacks” (*pretos*) who he claimed could provide facts in greater detail.

These four people were *criados* of Loureiro – dependents that were essentially slaves or servants. Three men, Chico, Denda, Catuma, and a woman named Natehiamba provided brief testimonies following Loureiro’s. None of the men were able to name their parents, determine their exact ages, or speak Portuguese, suggesting that they had been sold into servitude at a young age. Natehiamba knew the names of her parents, but had come to the American mission as a little girl and had been educated there. This is an interesting instance of a person raised by missionaries who went on to work for a trader. There are not many accounts of adults raised at the missions unless they went on to a life of itinerant preaching. Chico reported that the *soba* of Tchilume (very close to the American mission near Bailundo) and the *soba*’s brother took part in the Revolt, despite the fact that the missionaries told them not to. Catuma confirmed this fact, but claimed not to know whether the missionaries were aware of the *soba*’s participation in the war. Natehiamba spoke briefly about education at the mission, and noted that the missionaries advised pupils to obey above all the captaincy (Bailundo), but said they should also obey the mission. She claimed that the missionaries had formerly participated in the rubber trade so they could buy agricultural products for the mission, but added that they no longer purchased rubber. They never accepted *serviçais* (another euphemistic term for slaves), and they prohibited rum drinking.⁵⁶⁸

It is notable that Natehiamba mentioned the ABCFM missionaries’ positions on rubber, slaves, and rum. All three were areas of contention between the missionaries and their followers on the one hand, and traders, Ovimbundu authorities, and the colonial state on the other.

Missionaries inserted themselves into local economies by trading in rubber and other

⁵⁶⁷ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 74b-75.

⁵⁶⁸ AHU, *Auto de Inquérito*, 76-77b.

commodities. Their moral opposition to drinking was starkly opposed to an environment where nearly everyone produced, sold, or consumed rum, which was often used as currency. The missionaries recruited labor and dependents for their missions, but did so completely outside of well-established social systems that were locally understood.

Landeg White's *Magomero*, a study of a village in Malawi founded by British missionaries in the 1860s, focuses on missionaries' ignorance about the political implications of their actions. An excellent example of this is their involvement in the slave trade. Seeing themselves as crusaders of the noble cause of abolition, European and American missionaries throughout Africa during this period meddled in the affairs of slave traders and enslaved individuals. White argues that such meddling often earned missionaries a reputation as slave traders, because they employed the labor of runaway slaves and even purchased human beings in order to "free" them. Their logic in doing so did not translate easily for people so accustomed to a society based on slave dealing.⁵⁶⁹

This ambiguous position of missionaries meant that they represented yet another social category that could claim power and authority; but their power was distinct from that of the colonial state *and* that of *sobas*. Because they were not in Africa to enrich themselves, strictly speaking, but rather to introduce new moral frameworks and offer a conduit to the divine, missionaries could claim a separate space that fell outside the purview of trade and colonial control. ABCFM mission stations in the Angolan central highlands provided education and medical care, setting them apart from Portuguese spaces, which were primarily military in nature. Peter Pels writes,

⁵⁶⁹ Landeg White, *Magomero: Portrait of an African Village* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 34.

The combination of religious teaching, massive involvement in colonial education, and relative autonomy from the practice of colonial control gave missionaries a special position at the juncture of colonial technologies of domination and self-control.⁵⁷⁰

Beidelman writes that, by “pursuing a sustained policy of change, missionaries demonstrated a more radical and morally intense commitment to rule than political administrators or business men.”⁵⁷¹ In Angola, colonial officials were aware of this commitment on the part of the missionaries, which increased their anxiety about the missionaries’ influence. They knew that their own representatives could not claim moral authority over gentio, yet they watched helplessly as people fled to mission stations for protection, education, and community. Trade and military conquest were arguably the only real concerns of Portuguese officials. Traders, whose influence in the region was sustained and usually negative, must have had their own version of a “morally intense commitment to rule.” Even if they were not particularly concerned with effecting radical cultural change among Africans, many traders grounded their brutal treatment of blacks in the belief in their own cultural, moral, and increasingly racial superiority.

Missionaries as Protectors

In 1908 a sheriff in Bailundo filed a complaint at the fort.⁵⁷² The sheriff’s name was Mança and he had been born in Mozambique but now held a position of colonial authority in Bailundo. Mança had tried to recruit about twenty carriers to bring officials in *tipoias* to attend a special mass at the Bailundo Catholic mission. The mass was in honor of King Carlos of Portugal and the crown prince, who had just been assassinated by republican activists in Portugal. Mança managed to secure four carriers at the first village, but many more refused to

⁵⁷⁰ Peter Pels, “The Anthropology of Colonialism: Culture, History, and the Emergence of Western Governmentality,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* Vol. 26 (1997), 172.

⁵⁷¹ T. O. Beidelman, *Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-historical study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 6.

⁵⁷² AHA, Luanda. Cx. 3831, Mç. 5., Auto de Notícia, Concelho do Bailundo, 14 February 1908.

go. At the *libata*, which belonged to *sekulu* Palanca,⁵⁷³ not a single person acquiesced, and little by little the people began to flee into the bush. Mança managed to catch three men, whom he tied up with the help of his soldiers. Suddenly, a hundred *gentio* advanced towards them with sticks and whips, demanding the release of the captives.⁵⁷⁴

The *gentio* managed to free the prisoners, and just as they did, the American missionary Bell arrived on the scene and allegedly pushed the sheriff. Stover also appeared, angrily demanding to know what the officials were doing there, and speaking to the *gentio* in “Quimbundo.” According to Mança’s complaint, Stover “animated” the people, encouraging them to hit the soldiers with sticks.⁵⁷⁵ Stover declared that the soldiers were in his territory, that only on his orders could people be taken from there because it was *he* who governed there.⁵⁷⁶ Stover’s dramatic rejection of colonial authority and his declaration of authority over people and territory sounded remarkably similar the pronouncements of rebels like Mutu-ya-Kavela and Samakaka.

João Elenge, a man in his 80s who is a member of UNITA and the Congregational Church, told me an emotional story in 2013. When he was a child in the 1940s, he came home from school one day to find his mother missing. The neighbors told Elenge that his mother had been brought to work on the road, a common form of forced labor enforced throughout Angola during the twentieth century. Elenge enlisted the help of a Canadian missionary, and the two went directly to the work site, where the missionary confronted the Portuguese supervisor and brought Elenge’s mother home.⁵⁷⁷ Elenge recounted the story about his mother with drama and

⁵⁷³ The continuing existence of a *sekulu* named Palanca in 1908 suggests that, in this case, the name connotes a position within the nobility—likely the same position that Samakaka held in 1902.

⁵⁷⁴ AHA, Luanda. Cx. 3831, Mç. 5. 14 fevereiro 1908, Auto de Notícia, Concelho do Bailundo.

⁵⁷⁵ AHA, Luanda. Cx. 3831, Mç. 5. 14 fevereiro 1908, Auto de Notícia, Concelho do Bailundo.

⁵⁷⁶ AHA, Luanda. Cx. 3831, Mç. 5. 14 fevereiro 1908, Auto de Notícia, Concelho do Bailundo.

⁵⁷⁷ João Elenge, Interview with UNITA elders, 3 May 2013, Bailundo, Angola (56:10-59:30).

emotion, drawing to a conclusion with tears brimming in his eyes: “This was the first pact that the Angolan had with America. A sacred pact...that we needed very much.”⁵⁷⁸ Elenge’s implication here was that this “pact” between the missionaries and the people of Bailundo was a prelude to the rest of the 20th century—the advocacy the Protestant missionaries provided by smuggling information about forced labor out of Angola and reporting it to the United Nations, and the military support that UNITA would later receive from the United States in the 1980s when Cold War interests aimed at impeding the ability of the Cuban and Russian-backed MPLA to sustain power. Thanks to this shared history, Elenge said, “We can receive any American visitor who comes here as a brother, thank God.”⁵⁷⁹

When the anticolonial war began to stir in 1961, after other African nations gained their independence, North American missionaries continued to position themselves as protectors of Angolans against Portuguese labor abuses. Canadian missionary Ian Gilchrist, who is remembered in oral histories, lived in Angola as a small child and during his teenage years, between 1935 and 1951. In 1963, Gilchrist published an open letter to the United Nations Committee on Decolonization, in which he described and historicized the atrocities Portuguese settlers and officials committed as the fight for Angola’s independence intensified.⁵⁸⁰ The letter paints a macabre image of forced labor, hunger, incarceration and punishment. “The Angola I grew up in was not a pleasant place. There was always suffering and always fear.”⁵⁸¹ He recalls seeing boys aged 10 or 12, chained together and working on the roads. He saw women like João Elenge’s mother too. Women and children performed the bulk of road-building labor because most men were laboring on distant plantations growing coffee or some other cash crop, or

⁵⁷⁸ João Elenge, Interview with UNITA elders, 3 May 2013, Bailundo, Angola (59:55).

⁵⁷⁹ João Elenge, Interview with UNITA elders, 3 May 2013, Bailundo, Angola, (1:00:30).

⁵⁸⁰ Ian Gilchrist, “Witness to Terror,” *Africa Today* 10(4) (1963): 4-7.

⁵⁸¹ Gilchrist, “Witness to Terror,” 4.

languishing in prison for tax debt or some other minor transgression. Violent colonial appropriation of labor did not cease after the 1902 uprising. While the export of forced labor to São Tomé slowed for a few years after Mbailundu, it gradually resumed and became “legalized.”⁵⁸² A new Law of 29 January 1903 sought to regulate labor practices for the first time in Angola, but what materialized was more like a state-funded labor cartel. Four São Tomé planters sat on the contract labor commission in Lisbon, and workers who had their wages garnished to pay their “return passage” to Angola usually lived out their days on the island.⁵⁸³

The boundaries that the colonial state began to enforce after the Mbailundu Revolt in 1902 had hardened even further by the 1960s, and evidence suggests that *assimilados*—the latter-day equivalent of Luso-Africans—were specifically feared and targeted by Portuguese police. According to Gilchrist, some people “were shot for simply being found with pencils or pens—these indicated that their owner could write and hence was potentially dangerous.”⁵⁸⁴ Ambivalent feelings about black Africans adopting European dress and customs, common during the late 19th century, had developed into hatred. Recalling the importance of clothing in the performance of identity, some *assimilados* were told by white settlers: “We’ll take the pants off all you bastards.”⁵⁸⁵

The moment that the missionary Gilchrist described in his open letter represents the culmination of the violent process of Portugal’s physical and psychological occupation of Angola. As the state grew more paranoid in the face of a new proliferation of revolts combined with mounting international scrutiny in the early 1960s, it targeted leaders and educated elites

⁵⁸² Wheeler & Christensen, “To Rise With One Mind,” 79.

⁵⁸³ James Duffy, *A Question of Slavery: Labour Policies in Portuguese Africa and the British Protest, 1850-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 176-77.

⁵⁸⁴ Gilchrist, “Witness to Terror,” 6.

⁵⁸⁵ Gilchrist, “Witness to Terror,” 6.

with increasing ruthlessness, regularly disappearing them without a trace.⁵⁸⁶ Gilchrist drew a comparison between this paranoid moment and the “Portuguese philosophy” of a decade earlier: “Where there originally was severe paternalistic exploitation, there is now genocide. Angola must be maintained as a white province of Portugal. So immigration from Europe is encouraged.”⁵⁸⁷ He traced this change in part to demographic changes in the Portuguese population in Angola, claiming that “the old Colon families” had been “drowned out by the new white immigrants with no ties and no sympathy with the country.”⁵⁸⁸ The decline in influence of Luso-African families, once the face of Portuguese colonialism in Angola, was a slow process. By Gilchrist’s account, the transition to a new kind of white settler colonialism finally reached its apex by the 1960s—just as Angolans were launching another wave of resistance that would finally result in independence in 1975.

Conclusion

The missionaries in some ways presented a bigger problem for the state than did the rebellious *gentio*, because colonial forces could not have simply destroyed the mission station and killed the missionaries. However much they might have wanted to rid Angola of the missionaries’ meddling, there would be international repercussions if the authorities did not exercise restraint. The missionaries were connected to international humanitarian networks, and they regularly sent information about what was going on in Angola back to the United States.⁵⁸⁹ In some ways, they positioned themselves as alternative authorities in a similar way to Luso-African traders like Silveira. But they claimed legitimate leadership based on their moral

⁵⁸⁶ Gilchrist, “Witness to Terror,” 6.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Gilchrist, “Witness to Terror,” 7.

⁵⁸⁹ Vellut, “Garenganze/Katanga—Bié—Benguela,” 150.

authority—a claim that Portuguese authorities found deeply threatening in the face of their existing anxieties.

One of the consequences of the Portuguese policies that allowed a vagabond state to persist in Angola was an utter lack of knowledge about the place and its people. This dissertation has shown many examples of the chaotic conditions created by colonial attempts to dominate people it did not understand. The vagabond state, like Nancy Hunt's nervous state, "was limited in its ability to understand, perceive, and control its colonial subjects."⁵⁹⁰ North American missionaries, however, excelled at this endeavor. They learned Umbundu, lived embedded in communities for uninterrupted years, studied local customs and religious practices, and most of all, established intimacy with gentio. The people who frequented Protestant mission stations knew that these outsiders had come to Angola with a very different objective than Portuguese traders and officials, even if it was ultimately just as inscrutable. Affiliating oneself with a mission was an important avenue for social mobility during the 20th century, especially as other opportunities for advancement declined with the increase of white settlement.⁵⁹¹

As the 20th century unfolded, colonial power continued to increase gradually. The defeat of the Mbailundu Revolt in 1902, and the vanquishing of the remaining rebels at Bimbe in 1904 were major victories in Portugal's "pacification" campaign. But the influence of North American missionaries remained outsized in comparison to Portugal's power, at least in the central highlands. Many oral histories recall incidences of missionaries protecting people from forced labor during the 1950s, smuggling information out of the country and reporting abuses to the United Nations, and generally pushing back against the repressive labor regime under settler colonialism. The cultural and spiritual bond that developed between these missionaries and their

⁵⁹⁰ Hunt, *A Nervous State*, 237.

⁵⁹¹ Didier Péclard, *Les Incertitudes de la nation en Angola: aux racines sociales de l'Unita* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2015).

adherents was a powerful determinant of identity and loyalty that continued to exist in tension with the power of the state until the colonial project began to disintegrate in the 1960s.

Chapter Six **Mbailundu Remembered:** **Politics and Historical Memory in 2013**

A British journalist named Henry Nevinson visited Angola in 1904 to investigate the slave trade on the suggestion of the editor of Harper's Monthly Magazine. He found evidence that slaves were still being smuggled to the coast for shipment to São Tomé, but suspected that slave traders had developed methods for hiding their business after the 1902 "Bailundo war."⁵⁹² Nevinson described the footpaths he traveled as "strewn with dead men's bones" and discarded shackles. He visited a place by the side of the road where during the Mbailundu Revolt, "the natives burned a Portuguese trader alive and made fetich-medicine of his remains."⁵⁹³ Debris for the 1902 conflict were everywhere in the years that followed, its violence inscribed on the landscape, scattered along its paths.

On the road between Huambo and Bailundo in 2013, vivid remains of a tragic and recent history lay scattered. The country was booming, with oil fetching high prices on the global market and Angola's post-war construction boom reshaping the country. But in the central highlands, traditionally the realm of the eternal "opposition party" UNITA, ghosts still crowded the landscape. Past a shiny new *Sonangol*⁵⁹⁴ gas station; past roadsides littered with rusted out skeletons of vehicles; past shells of Soviet-built armored tanks abandoned on riverbeds where

⁵⁹² Nevinson, *A Modern Slavery*, 115.

⁵⁹³ Nevinson, *A Modern Slavery*, 84.

⁵⁹⁴ Sonangol is Angola's national oil company. The country is sub-Saharan Africa's second largest oil producer after Nigeria; oil revenues account for roughly 45% of the GDP. In 2012, the IMF reported an "accounting discrepancy in Angola's state funds," which "was linked to 'quasi-fiscal operations' by state oil firm Sonangol done on the government's behalf, but not recorded in official budget accounts."

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/25/ozatp-imf-angola-idAFJ0E8000020120125> (accessed 1/10/15).

Angola is among the top ten countries in terms of oil rents as percent of GDP, not far behind Iraq and Saudi Arabia. <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2014/CAR090514A.htm> (accessed 1/10/15).

they fought their last battles and now fuse with the landscape. About halfway to Bailundo, the road cuts through a village. On one side, in the middle of a dusty clearing that serves as both football pitch and roadside marketplace, the MPLA⁵⁹⁵ (ruling party) flag flutters. Directly facing it from across the street, flies the UNITA⁵⁹⁶ (opposition) flag with its *galo negro*⁵⁹⁷ (black rooster). Division and boundaries crowd this tiny space with the material and psychic remnants of a violent history.



Illustration 10:
*Rusted Soviet tank near Bailundo, 2013*⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁵ *Movimento Popular da Libertação de Angola* (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola): the Communist liberation movement-turned political party, which took control of the country in 1975 upon independence from Portugal.

⁵⁹⁶ *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola): one of the competing armed independence movements, based in the center-south of the country around Bailundo and Huambo. Its leader Jonas Savimbi immediately contested the MPLA's post-independence rise to power in 1975 and declared a separate independence from the highland city of Huambo (formerly *Nova Lisboa*). Fighting between the two groups continued until 2002, when Savimbi was killed in battle. Because the MPLA received support from the Soviet Union and Cuba, Savimbi sought (and received) backing from the United States and apartheid South Africa. This resulted in Angola's human and natural landscapes and its national infrastructure suffering some of the bloodiest battles of the entire Cold War era, with violence persisting even into the twenty-first century.

⁵⁹⁷ The black rooster was the sort of "avatar" of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, an Umbundu-speaker from the highland region of Bié, whose death in combat in 2002 effectively marked the end of the civil war. One informant told me that people who had never seen Savimbi used to speculate with great fear and awe that the leader was literally half man, half rooster.

⁵⁹⁸ Rusty army tank by the riverside. Bailundo, 2013. Photo by author.

This route harkens back to other epochs of Angola's past. "Debris"⁵⁹⁹ are scattered on the road from Huambo—once the shining star of Portuguese settlement in Angola and known as *Nova Lisboa* to invoke the dream of a New Lisbon—to Bailundo, named for and formerly the seat of the most powerful Umbundu kingdom in Angola's central highlands. Bailundo only began to receive a regular stream of white settlers in the 1880s, including US and Canadian Protestant missionaries and Portuguese traders. Huambo, the seat of another important Umbundu kingdom (Wambu), was only established as a colonial city in 1910, and emerged as an important locus of Portuguese settlement in the 1940s.⁶⁰⁰

Oral Tradition and Political Conflict

Feierman contends that, "the document itself, once it is written, can survive quite accidentally [...]. The usefulness of an oral tradition, however, must be reaffirmed in every generation."⁶⁰¹ The ways in which people spoke about 1902 and the era of colonial conquest in the central highlands in 2013 were laden with ideology, and reflected the group boundaries that are salient today in Angola—mainly determined by political affiliation and regional or ethnic origin. In interviews, I usually asked a set of basic questions regarding the Mbailundu Revolt. I also had many informal conversations when people I met asked what I was doing in Angola. While many younger people had little or no knowledge of the event, those who were older (and generally well versed in oral traditions) did. And those who told stories about the event *always* embedded it within larger narratives about colonial exploitation—narratives that served a moral and political purpose.

⁵⁹⁹ Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon: Of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999), 281-320; Ann Laura Stoler, "Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination," *Cultural Anthropology* 23(2) (2008), 191-219.

⁶⁰⁰ For an excellent analysis of the settlement and development of the city of Nova Lisboa/Huambo, see: Neto, *In Town and Out of Town*.

⁶⁰¹ Steven Feierman, *The Shaamba Kingdom: A History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 9.

More than one person repeated the phrase, “History is not written, it is lived,” which rings better in Portuguese (*A história não é lida, é vivida*). These accounts are all living histories, which sometimes conflicted with one another or with archival sources, and were sometimes “corrupted” by locally published histories of the Bailundo kingdom, themselves products of oral histories collected and published in the 1990s.⁶⁰² Researching this event in 2013, I was surprised that the information and knowledge people were sharing with me sometimes felt dangerous, darkened by the recent legacy of civil war. Most Ovimbundu either fought on the side of UNITA, tacitly supported them, or simply lived in territories they controlled and so had little choice but to tolerate the presence of their troops. The headquarters of UNITA’s leader Jonas Savimbi were located in Bailundo from 1994-1999,⁶⁰³ and the ethnic history of the last great Ovimbundu kingdom is still associated with the failed political project of UNITA. Jonas’s grandfather Sakaita Savimbi fought in the Mbailundu Revolt.⁶⁰⁴ Savimbi’s father Loth was a pastor with the ABCFM missionaries, and worked on the Benguela Railroad.

The political climate in Angola remained extremely tense more than a decade after the end of the civil war in 2002. José Eduardo dos Santos, Angolan’s president and head of the ruling MPLA party, has been in power since 1978. Many UNITA supporters told me it was impossible to get bank loans and other types of credit without showing a membership card from the MPLA. People still speak Savimbi’s name in hushed tones, referring to him instead as “O Doutor,” “O Mais Velho,” or even “Nosso Pai.”⁶⁰⁵ Some Angolans made worried faces when I asked questions about him in public. In such a climate, oral histories of Bailundo and the

⁶⁰² Feierman, *The Shaamba Kingdom*, 14.

⁶⁰³ Fernando Florêncio, “Un reino, dos reyes: Diferentes legitimidades en Bailundo (Angola),” *Revista CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals* (87) (2009): 167-189.

⁶⁰⁴ Karl Maier, *Angola: Promises and Lies* (London: Serif Books, 1996), 44.

⁶⁰⁵ “The Doctor” refers to Savimbi’s 1965 PhD in Political Science from Lausanne, Switzerland; “The Elder” is a term of respect; and “Our Father” reflects a feeling of kinship, paternalism, and almost religious reverence.

surrounding Ovimbundu areas are recounted differently in state spaces and non-state spaces, such as the UNITA headquarters in Bailundo, or the offices of the Ministry of Culture in Huambo.

During the 1980s and part of the 90s, Savimbi lived in a big mansion in Huambo, just across the street from the small airfield. A grand, hulking thing with a spiral staircase at its core, it was called “*a Casa Branca*” (the White House), a literal description of the white marble structure and probably a sardonic nod to Washington’s support for UNITA during the 80s and 90s. When fighting was heavy in the highlands during the 1990s, and Savimbi was always on the run, the MPLA dropped a mortar on the White House. The roof caved in, folding into two neat pieces and breaking the house in two to reveal the still standing spiral staircase, leading to the open sky. In 2013, these ruins still loomed beside another house serving as the modest UNITA party headquarters for Huambo. A family of dreadlocked Rastas was living in the shell of the house selling drums and trinkets, which they sold along with other handicrafts out of the open front of the house. Just who bought them was not clear; there were no tourists in Huambo. The patriarch of the family talked about the struggle that his life has been, fleeing violence and hunger and having nowhere to go. He referred to Savimbi reverently, in a quiet voice, as “Our Father.”

Afendo Epomba is a descendent of Ekuikui II. His family lives in Bailundo, and they are members of the *Igreja Evangélica Congregacional de Angola* (IECA), the independent church that is the legacy of the ABCFM missionaries. He proudly described his lineage and his knowledge of Mbailundu history, which he carefully entangled with that of the Protestant missionaries. Many people I spoke with in Bailundo and Huambo in 2013 featured the

missionaries in their oral histories, with special attention to the technical education and protection, they provided to Ovimbundu people. Afendo, born in 1951, painted the Bailundo of his youth as a virtual paradise, saying there had been no theft, no traffic accidents, and no mosquitoes until around 1979.⁶⁰⁶ Civilization and education had spread out to the rest of Angola from Bailundo. He assured me that all the inhabitants of Mbailundu were religious (in the past—he did not specify when). Sobas and sekulus were also deacons and catechists. According to Epomba, the Portuguese wanted to exterminate the people of Mbailundu because of their education and abilities. But the missionaries defended Mbailundu:

The missionaries had a vision of decolonization. That's just to say that everyone who made revolution against the colonizers came out of Mbailundu and were Protestants. When the Portuguese said "you have to work for us, blacks are slaves," the missionaries said otherwise."⁶⁰⁷

This was not the only instance where someone related a story of ABCFM missionaries protecting people from forced labor or enslavement.

New Contortions of Authority: Ekuikui V

In May 2013, the beginning of the cool, dry season known as *cacimbo* in the highlands, I was on my way to meet the *soba grande* of Mbailundu, Ekuikui V. In the trunk of the car were the requisite items for tribute—a case each of beer and soft drinks, palm oil, a large jug of wine. I still needed two more items—a bottle of rum, which my host João Afonso, of the Huambo Ministry of Culture, graciously agreed to provide, and a live rooster, which Afonso said we would purchase when we arrived in Bailundo. Meeting the modern day successor of the Bailundo kings of a century ago, about whom I had read and researched for more than two years, was a key moment in my fieldwork. Trade and tribute figure prominently in the context of the

⁶⁰⁶ Interview with Afendo Epomba. April 16, 2013. Bailundo, Angola. (26:24).

⁶⁰⁷ Interview with Afendo Epomba. 16 April 2013. Bailundo, Angola. (32:11).

1902 Bailundo Revolt against the Portuguese, the focus of this study. Collecting food items, including rum, for customary payment somehow felt historically resonant.



Illustration 11:
*Soba Ekuikui V, outside Mbailundu ombala, 2013*⁶⁰⁸

In Bailundo in 2013, two royal lineages claim the throne, but the family supported by the MPLA holds the position. Some people in the area dispute the current king’s claim based on the fact that he does not possess the staff that is one of the mystical objects of Mbailundu kingship. I asked Ekuikui V if there were any conflicts surrounding the throne, and he said there were not. Later, I tried to find people who might talk to me about the “other” royal lineage, or even introduce me to whomever it was that claimed the throne should be his. With my friend Faustino Kusoka, a PhD Candidate in history and a priest from Huambo, I had lunch at the Catholic mission station in Bailundo with two priests and three nuns. When I brought up the lineage

⁶⁰⁸ Ekuikui V stands outside the *ombala*. Bailundo, 2013. Photo by author.

conflict, one of our hosts affirmed emphatically that the sitting king was not the legitimate *soba*. Ekuikui V, she said, was not really the grandson of the previous king (who died in 2012) as he regularly claimed. Another person from Bailundo told me: “Today we find a kingdom that does not recognize the land on which it lives.”⁶⁰⁹ He considered Ekuikui V illegitimate, calling him, “a king who depends on Luanda.”⁶¹⁰

Fernando is a lifelong resident Bailundo who openly supports UNITA.⁶¹¹ He had many stories to tell about the close relationship between Ekuikui V and the much-reviled President of Angola and leader of the MPLA, José Eduardo dos Santos, in power since 1979.⁶¹² Fernando claimed to have knowledge of sinister forms of magic, “medicines” that President dos Santos uses to grow his wealth and power over the country. Fernando confidently told me that dos Santos had searched far and wide around the entire country for a safe place to practice his “dark arts,” finding that place in the Mbailundu *ombala*. His closest ally in the manipulation of occult forces for personal gain was, of course, the King Ekuikui V.

⁶⁰⁹ Epomba interview (22:37).

⁶¹⁰ Epomba interview (22:37).

⁶¹¹ Fernando is a pseudonym.

⁶¹² José Eduardo dos Santos is still President as of 1 April 2017.



Illustration 12:
*Statue of Ekuikui II, Bailundo, 2013*⁶¹³

Ekuikui II

Coming into the traffic circle that marks the tiny center of the town of Bailundo, a huge metal statue of revered Mbailundu *Soba* Ekuikui II towers in the center. During his reign over Mbailundu (1876-1893), the number of white missionaries, settlers, and administrators increased at an unprecedented rate. Ekuikui II sent his own children to the ABCFM missionaries' schools. It was he who allowed Portuguese traders to settle there, and requested that a Portuguese Captain be stationed permanently in Bailundo, seeking an ally in his sustained wars with neighboring Ovimbundu kingdoms, which, like in the case of rival Viye kingdom, helped facilitate conquest by Portuguese troops. Yet he is a revered figure in the pantheon of Angolan national heroes,

⁶¹³ Statue of Ekuikui II. Photo by author, Bailundo, Angola, 2013.

remembered today as a symbol of pride and dignity, and somewhat bafflingly, of *resistance* to colonization.

I went to Angola in 2013 to deepen my understanding of an event that took place before living memory – the Mbailundu Revolt of 1902. While this uprising has often been referred to as a “rebellion” or “war” in English language publications, I have most often used the term “revolt.” During a presentation I gave in Luanda about this research, a student asked why I referred to Mbailundu warriors as “rebels” (*rebeldes*) when they were defending their sovereignty in their own land against a foreign invader. This student’s simple but powerful point caused me to think more carefully about the language I use when writing about this event. “Revolt” is more apt, in both English and Portuguese, because it captures the violent and explosive nature of the uprising, *as well as* echoing the visceral sentiments and moral outrage of the Umbundu-speaking people who decided to take up arms because they were “revolted” by their people’s unjust treatment at the hands of colonizers. To call it a revolt seems more descriptive of the energy behind the attack on the Portuguese fort, when incensed *gentio* gathered at the hilltop ombala, shouting and heckling the terrified garrison of 20 men.⁶¹⁴

Interview with UNITA

Riding in the backseat of an SUV with a small UNITA flag flying on each side, peering through tinted windows, I didn’t know we were going to the Bailundo UNITA headquarters until we got there.⁶¹⁵ When we pulled up to the brightly painted red and green building, about 20

⁶¹⁴ AHM 2/2/7/21. *Relatório das Operações do Bailundo – Elaborado pelo Comandante da Coluna, tenente Pais Brandão.*

⁶¹⁵ Bailundo is a small enough town that such an event drew considerable attention and interest. Later, when I told an aid worker friend of mine about the trip, he gasped when I told him about the UNITA flags, genuinely worried that I had been openly riding around in a UNITA vehicle to the party headquarters. He thought I was naïve to think it couldn’t get me into trouble of some kind. The trip to Bailundo interview Ekuikui V a few weeks earlier had required me to visit the district administrator of Bailundo in advance, to formally request permission to do the interview. She had been kind and cordial, and expressed interest in the work. I hope to work this piece of writing

people, mostly elderly and all dressed in their Sunday best, stood waiting to greet me. A smiling man with a camera bobbed and weaved through the crowd to capture the moment. I was humbled and surprised by the spectacle of it all, as each person shook my hand and greeted me warmly, and people passing or working nearby stared in curiosity. In the background loomed *halavala*, the rocky peak that abruptly juts out of the rolling hills, characteristic of the highlands. It marks the spiritual center of the Mbailundu kingdom. The mountain was once the site of the famed *ombala* that “dominated” the Portuguese fort below. Portuguese troops razed the *ombala* in 1896 during Numa’s rebellious reign, but Mbailundu warriors reoccupied it during the 1902 uprising, shouting threats and firing at the fort from their strategic position. It is now the site of burial of the skulls of past kings, which are customarily buried separately from their bodies.⁶¹⁶ I asked about going up there at some point, and was told there are “lots of snakes” up there and it’s not safe to visit. Florêncio refers to *Halavala*’s role as the foundational center of the kingdom in the “precolonial” period—the ending of which he places in 1902.⁶¹⁷

Inside the dim UNITA party headquarters, I was treated as an honored guest, with all the soft drinks and packaged cookies that entailed. I sat on a squeaky sofa that was brightly upholstered in the striking red and green of UNITA’s flag. A portrait of Jonas Savimbi stared down at me from the cement wall. I was welcomed and introduced, then expected to make some opening remarks. I found myself explaining I was from Connecticut, adding that I attended a Congregationalist church as a child. I thought of a photograph of Savimbi visiting Reagan’s White House in the 1980s as I looked up at the leader’s huge smiling face on the wall. It was the first interview I did where some participants preferred to speak in Umbundu, and one of the

into something I can translate and share with the people who welcomed and helped me in Angola—but these are sensitive pieces of information and I grappling with how to present them.

⁶¹⁶ Hambly describes the process of treating a deceased soba’s corpse, separating the head from the body for separate storage and ritual treatment. Hambly, “The Ovimbundu of Angola,” 308.

⁶¹⁷ Florêncio, “Un reino, dos reyes,” 170.

UNITA officials who accompanied me from Huambo translated the lively session of collaborative remembering into Portuguese.

Event and Memory

The Mbailundu Revolt took on different forms of significance at different times—during the anticolonial struggle of the 1960s and 70s, it was likely remembered as a heroic event in the deeper history of Ovimbundu resistance against Portugal. The existence of a Mutu-ya-Kavela High School in Luanda (currently closed for extremely slow renovations) indicates that the Revolt had had a place in the broader narrative of Angola’s anticolonial history, its hero becoming a part of the wholesale renaming of streets and landmarks after independence. Despite encountering many Luandans who had attended the school, almost none knew the story of its namesake, apart from a vague sense of Mutu-ya-Kavela as an anti-colonial hero. But after independence in 1975, competition between the MPLA and UNITA grew increasingly bitter, and Ovimbundu contributions to Angolan history recede into the background of the official nationalist narrative. Ethnic stereotypes, particularly the one that paints Ovimbundu as colonial collaborators who were submissive to the Portuguese, became more politically useful to the MPLA.⁶¹⁸

In this divided political climate, different histories of resistance hold different weight in the national narrative. The fact that so many Ovimbundu united in a fierce challenge to colonial oppression, and nearly succeeded, threatens to disrupt the dominant MPLA narrative—that the true freedom fighters can trace their political and cultural genealogy back to the more northern regions from which the MPLA has historically drawn its support. Ovimbundu are southerners, they are UNITA, they are Protestants, stooges of the US and South Africa. Whatever contributions they might have made to Angola’s anticolonial struggle must be deemphasized in

⁶¹⁸ Maier, *Angola: Promises and Lies*, 44.

order for them to remain marginalized, forever shackled to the bleak memory of their megalomaniacal leader Jonas Savimbi and the tiresome war he waged for control of Angola. The storehouses of Ovimbundu cultural knowledge and stories are very often the spiritual spaces of American Protestantism, and the political spaces of UNITA. They cannot be easily disentangled. MPLA agents with knowledge of the Mbailundo Revolt sometimes urge a shift in focus to the fierce 1902 resistance Wambu, perhaps because the site is less explicitly associated with Savimbi and UNITA than Bailundo itself.

Bailundo holds a significant amount of symbolic and historical weight. Partly owing to the proud history of anticolonial resistance, the town is often considered the “ethnic core” of the Ovimbundu highlands by Angolans. A visit to “the south” (as people in Luanda call the highlands) is a visit to “the Ovimbundu,” and by implication a visit to “UNITA.” Karl Maier, a journalist who covered Angola’s conflict extensively during the 1990s, refers frequently in his book to the political violence directed against “*bailundos*,” as Angolans from other regions sometimes refer to Umbundu-speakers.⁶¹⁹ During a wave of violence in Luanda in October 1992, supporters of the MPLA to whom the government had handed out weapons, executed some 2000 Umbundu-speakers in peripheral neighborhoods of the capital city ‘for being UNITA.’⁶²⁰ Maier also suggests that memories of the Bailundo Revolt still contributed to conflict between coastal, urban *mestiços* and Ovimbundu in the 1990s.⁶²¹

Suspicion abounds in Angola today, within intimate groups and across social divides. When a losing political party is so closely associated with an ethnic group and a place (e.g. *bailundos*), demonization of that group penetrates to the core matters of cultural pride and tradition. Ovimbundu were powerful traders, they conquered territories, and they once had great

⁶¹⁹ Maier, *Angola: Promises and Lies*, 97.

⁶²⁰ Maier, *Angola: Promises and Lies*, 124.

⁶²¹ Maier, *Angola: Promises and Lies*, 191.

kings. They also studied with American missionaries, worked on the Benguela Railway, and tolerated the brunt of Portuguese settler colonialism in the mid-twentieth century. A charismatic leader among them rose to political power and founded UNITA, a party that challenged the political currents flowing out of the capital Luanda and maintained a state of war by its refusal to compromise on power. The reconfiguration of Ovimbundu history at the hands of the MPLA state comes in the form of forgetting, diminishing, or distorting past events.

Adjacent to Ekuikui V's house was a small snack shop selling beer, Coca-Cola, and Portuguese-style pastries attached to one side of the house. A woman in her 30s peered out at us through the doorway from her kneeling position as she mopped the café floor with a rag. She was later introduced to me as the Queen. As João Afonso of the Huambo Ministry of Culture pulled the car up to the front of the house, Ekuikui V immediately appeared outside to greet us. He was dressed in a long brown cotton gown and a matching round cap reminiscent of vaguely Muslim, perhaps West African dress. Ekuikui V's outfit and staff gave him an appearance almost identical to that of the statue of Ekuikui II, which towers over the main traffic circle in Bailundo (pictured above). Quite young for a king, in his early 40s, he has a deliberate, dignified demeanor, and a kind, smiling face. He immediately summoned a few young men to unload the goods I had brought. Afonso apologized for showing up without the rooster, and told me to instead give Ekuikui the approximately \$20 it would have cost to buy one. I awkwardly obliged, and we all went inside the house.

The home was small, and made of bricks and cement like most houses in the area. There was no yard or garden to speak of. But unlike nearby houses, it had obviously been recently endowed with a new roof, restored, and painted. Satiny curtains, heavily lacquered wood

furniture and leather couches, and flat screen TVs were abundant inside the house. The floor was newly tiled. Afonso and the Soba conversed animatedly in Portuguese. Given the close relationship of traditional authorities and the state throughout Angola, they were colleagues of a sort, and naturally they had some matters to discuss. On the agenda on this particular day was a newly built gas station on the outskirts of Bailundo, apparently a “gift” from President dos Santos himself. Ekuikui V lackadaisically lamented that it could not be opened yet, because it was presented to him without a crucial element: fuel. He appeared to have been unaware of the kind of money necessary to fill the underground tanks, and wanted Afonso to get him in touch with some folks who might be able to address that.

After being witness to this slightly awkward conversation, shot through with the intrigues of MPLA power, the state’s relationship to “traditional” authority, and the primacy of petrodollars in Angola, it was time to present my own business. As I tried a series of differently worded questions, it became clear that Ekuikui V didn’t have much to say about my research topic. But, smiling, he soon showed me a book by a man named Elias Sanjukila about the history of the Mbailundu Kingdom.⁶²²⁶²³ I had already encountered the thin paperback in the National Archives in Luanda, and Ekuikui V had a color photocopy. A government-sponsored pamphlet from the mid 1990s, the book seems to trace the oral tradition about the origins of the kingdom. Sanjukila’s book lacks detailed publication information, but based on its included timeline of Bailundo kings, it was published around 1996. Angola’s civil war was still raging, and Savimbi and his army had occupied Bailundo as UNITA headquarters in 1994.

⁶²² Elias Sanjukila, *Reino do Bailundo: Sua História na Resistência Tenaz Contra o Colonialismo Português*. Arquivo Histórico Nacional de Angola, Biblioteca, Reg. 2358, Loc. 117-2, Cota 23.

⁶²³ Historian José Curto had a similar experience during his meeting with Ekuikui V. (Personal communication, Toronto, December 2013).

The pamphlet undoubtedly helped to cement parts of Bailundo oral history, such as the aforementioned case of a queen’s “forced adultery.” In an interview with an 84-year-old man in Bela Vista, a small town between Bailundo and Kuito (Bié), I heard a similar story told as one of the reasons for the 1902 uprising. While colonial and missionary sources from the Mbailundu Revolt refer to the king’s imprisonment at the Portuguese fort as one of the causes of the uprising, Sanjukila’s book tells a different version. It describes *Soba* Kalandula, inebriated after being lured to a party by a white trader and plied with rum, presenting himself at the fort only to be immediately detained and decapitated by the Portuguese. Rum and rape instilled an enduring sense of moral outrage that has lasted through generations.

Memories of Conflict at Candumbo



Illustration 13:
*Natural Stone Fortress at Candumbo, 2013*⁶²⁴

⁶²⁴ *Pedras Candumbo*. Photo by author, 2013.

The last battle of the Mbailundu War took place at Candumbo from September 18-19, 1902. The natural fortress created by an enormous rock formation made Candumbo an ideal location for maintaining a defensive position against Portuguese forces. The defensive advantage the highland landscape offered the *gentio* was no match for the new Krupp guns the invaders had in 1902, which allowed them to inflict devastating losses on the *gentio* who fought there. Teixeira Moutinho, the governor of Benguela who commanded the column, described the battle at Candumbo as “fierce and bloody.”⁶²⁵ The *gentio* put up a “tenacious resistance, preferring to die in the caves rather than surrender.”⁶²⁶ And they did die. Close to four hundred people perished in the fighting at Candumbo, and two hundred ninety one were taken prisoner, while Portuguese forces only suffered four losses on their side.⁶²⁷ When Nevinson visited Candumbo in 1904, he found in the rock caves “the pitiful skeletons of the men, women, and children [...], massacred in the white man’s vengeance.”⁶²⁸

In 2013, I visited Candumbo with the two UNITA representatives who brought me to the group interview in Bailundo. For a small fee, some residents led us up to the top of the village’s dramatic rock formation. There they told the history of the 1902 battle in Umbundu as we absorbed the panoramic view. It was an oral tradition I had heard before in an interview. The *soba* of Candumbo had “flown away” in fear when the battle grew intense. Our guides pointed to a smaller rock off in the distance, indicating where the *soba* had landed. Hearing the cries of his people, he aborted his escape plan and went back to join the fight. According to Teixeira Moutinho, this *soba* was among the dead.⁶²⁹ However in November 1902, a man identifying

⁶²⁵ AHM 2/2/7/18. 21 setembro 1902. Teixeira Moutinho to Governor General of Angola.

⁶²⁶ Lavradio, *A Campanha do Bailundo*, 13.

⁶²⁷ AHM 2/2/7/18. 21 setembro 1902. Teixeira Moutinho to Governor General of Angola.

⁶²⁸ Nevinson, *A Modern Slavery*, 82.

⁶²⁹ AHM 2/2/7/18. 21 setembro 1902. Teixeira Moutinho to Governor General of Angola.

himself as the *soba* of Candumbo visited the Benguela governor at Caconda to pay indemnities owed to the Portuguese.⁶³⁰

At the top of this magnificent pile of stones, a tattered Angolan flag flies in the wind, suspended from a rough pole fashioned from a knotty tree branch. An obelisk erected by the Portuguese government in 1948 on the anniversary of the defeat of the resistance at Candumbo still stands in homage to the colonial soldiers who fought there. At the entrance to the footpath leading up through the stones, an inconspicuous plaque commissioned by the Huambo provincial government in 2009 memorializes the “heroes” of the Candumbo stone. It says nothing of their merciless massacre or their skeletons piled in the caves; it ignores the obelisk that stands intact just up the path. It just says that they were heroes.

⁶³⁰ AHM 2/2/7/18. 11 novembro 1902. Teixeira Moutinho to Governor General of Angola.



Illustration 14:
*Obelisk on top of Pedras Candumbo, 1949*⁶³¹



Illustration 15:
*Memorial to the Heroes of Candumbo, 2009*⁶³²

⁶³¹Portuguese memorial to the *Columna do Sul*, the Portuguese forces that defeated the last stronghold of Ovimbundu resistance at Candumbo, near Wambu and Mbailundu, erected in 1949. Photo by author, 2013.

⁶³² Memorial to the heroes (Ovimbundu) of “Pedra de Candumbo,” erected by Huambo Provincial Government in 2009. Photo by author, 2013.

Conclusion

The end of the vagabond state

After the Mbailundu Revolt was over, the new conditions of surrender imposed upon sobas and sekulus resembled items on vassalage treaties from previous years. But the language was more absolute, demanding that vassals now swear “absolute fidelity to the Portuguese crown” and “passive obedience” to local Portuguese authorities.⁶³³ The requirement to provide carriers on demand remained, and sobas were also now required to provide rations for any colonial troops passing through their territory.⁶³⁴ After 1902, new Portuguese military posts were constructed among the ruins of *ombalas*, and the heads of these posts had the power to collect taxes, impose labor obligations on local populations, and state sanctioned authority to judge *mucanos* (disputes) between all parties, *gentio* or “civilized.”⁶³⁵ *Sobas* and *sekulus* after 1902 were required to provide intelligence on the intricacies of local politics to colonial authorities, helping to usher in a new era of control and surveillance.⁶³⁶ This marked the beginning of a new period of colonization, and one in which the drawing of social and racial boundaries would be paramount.

This dissertation has charted the transition from an older era of Portuguese colonialism, in which trade was the predominant concern and a colonial “state” scarcely existed, to a new age of colonial control where boundaries and social exclusion would be an integral feature of state control. Far from a unified colonial state, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Portuguese

⁶³³ Heywood, *Production, Trade, and Power*, 327.

⁶³⁴ Heywood, *Production, Trade, and Power*, 327.

⁶³⁵ Heywood, *Production, Trade, and Power*, 328.

⁶³⁶ *Ibid*, 329.

Angola was a conglomeration of vagabond states, and a theater to various states of vagabondage. Traders such as the Mambari roamed in caravans, removing entire villages to the deep interior of the continent for months or years. In government, officials came and went, trading slaves, resigning in disgrace or being arrested, retiring to Portugal, or dying of disease. Ovimbundu responded to increasing pressure from Luso-African traders by changing the locations of villages regularly, lending a shifting quality to the social landscape. Missionaries attempted to build strong foundations and fashion lasting, organized communities, but their welcome was always on the verge of wearing thin and their setbacks were many. They too roamed the countryside, and later trained Angolans to wander on their behalf and to spread their Christian tidings.

A “creole” society that grew out of trade with Europeans at the coast flourished from an early date and persisted into 20th century. Social fluidity had its function within Angolan society for centuries, and it did not disrupt Portuguese aspirations when they were largely limited to trade. The trade that was the *raison d’être* of the Portuguese presence in fact depended upon these middle figures to continue functioning. Dozens of categories associated with trade and colonialism created new niches for Angolans to occupy, and people used new objects such as hats, shoes, pens, and paper to elevate their status and pursue greater power and wealth. This was a deeply Atlantic system—oriented towards long-distance and international trade and founded upon the incorporation of outsiders and the development of novel social categories.

When a group of gentio murdered Silveira, an ambiguously identified trader, in January of 1902, they rejected a system where unscrupulous intermediaries could claim a monopoly over violence. Silveira’s killers would no longer accept dubious claims to authority by mestiços or Luso-Africans like Silveira. The Portuguese official tasked with investigating this incident, backed by only a few soldiers on his expedition, revealed the state of ignorance that still gripped

the vagabond colonial state in the early 20th century. It failed to understand the role of Soba Roberto, who allegedly organized Silveira's killing, much less to apprehend him. The rest of the dominos began to topple.

The Mbailundu Revolt was an affective outburst of moral outrage around rum, debt, clashing economic and social systems, contested authority, and boundaries. Ovimbundu leaders like Mutu-ya-Kavela and Samakaka refused to tolerate abuses by outsider traders any longer. They asserted their sovereignty, which was under threat by the encroaching Portuguese occupation. But considering the inertia that had plagued the colonial state until that point, it may have been the scale of the uprising that ultimately jeopardized Ovimbundu sovereignty by encouraging an unprecedented response from Portuguese authorities.

The trials of the missionaries Stover and Currie reveal the depth of Portuguese insecurity about their lack of material and moral sovereignty in Angola. The trial records also show the complicated positioning of Luso-Africans, and attempts by the state to figure out where to place people in a rapidly changing social landscape. If the North American missionaries stoked Portuguese fears of colonial ineptitude, their intimate relationships with Ovimbundu leaders as the Mbailundu Revolt was unfolding confirmed those fears. Even the appearance of cooperation between the missionaries and Ovimbundu leaders was enough to bring formal charges against the North Americans. But the state's ineptitude was proven again by its unwillingness to prosecute the missionaries despite their apparent guilt that some officials considered "proven" by the trial.

In 21st century Angola, the wounds from these colonial battles over sovereignty and identity still fester. The existing historiography on Angola's more recent conflicts have shown how deep divisions according to ethnicity, region, and party continue to result in physical and

structural violence.⁶³⁷ The historiography of the Mbailundu Revolt, most of which was produced before Angolan independence from Portugal, illuminated the context and conditions that led to the uprising, but did not investigate in depth the roles of individual actors. The evidence presented in this dissertation is the first to show how *both* the colonial state and Ovimbundu leadership were reacting against the remarkable social fluidity that had been in place since the arrival of the first Portuguese ships in the late 15th century. It has shown how the Revolt marked the dramatic beginning of an important shift in social and political organization, and has followed the threads from this moment through the subsequent century by combining archival research and oral histories.

Through exceptionally close readings of historical documents produced by a diverse array of people, this dissertation has brought the social context of colonial Angola into sharp focus. Identity was determined situationally, subjectively, and often individually; zooming in on the lives and conflicts of individual people thus reveals the extent to which people adopted or rejected identities and defined their loyalties. Because this colonial situation brought together so many competing groups, using a microhistorical approach to understand a major conflict illuminated the conditions that led to violence. While past histories of this event helped establish a macro-level picture of the context, my approach has stressed the affective orientations and strategies that people employed during the Mbailundu Revolt and in similar conflicts around the same time. Finally, the combination of close readings of archival documents with ethnographic observation and oral history interviews has shown that powerful reverberations from this and

⁶³⁷ For excellent commentary on divisions and conflict in contemporary Angola, see: Justin Pearce, *Political Identity and Conflict in Central Angola, 1975-2002* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Vasco Martins, "Politics of power and hierarchies of citizenship in Angola," *Citizenship Studies* (2016): 1-17; and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, *Magnificent and Beggar Land: Angola since the Civil War* (London: Hurst, 2015).

other colonial conflicts are still felt by Angolans over a century later, and after many other battles and wars.

While this dissertation has highlighted an array of social categories by which people self-identified or labeled others, it does not claim that the existence of such fluidity indicated “equality” or “colorblindness.” The legibility of persons and categories was contested at every turn, and people performed different identities in order to make claims to rights and protections by connecting themselves to the colonial state or sobas or missionaries. David Birmingham has shown how an increasingly aggressive strain of settler colonialism gradually replaced an older class-based system of social classification with a more strict division between “citizens” and “natives,” culminating with the introduction of the Native Statute, in 1926.⁶³⁸ As this dissertation has shown, the earlier social context hosted a complex web of affective, political, and economic entanglements that allowed people to develop identities that facilitated social mobility. The vagabond state was too weak and scattered to impose its own idealized social order, and it had not been necessary to keep the wheels of trade turning. The Mbailundu Revolt forced the Portuguese state to finally become more “statelike,” as it became clear that Portugal’s hold on Angola could succumb to internal threats like the Revolt, or external threats from other European powers eager to intervene if Portugal failed to uphold its obligations under the Berlin Conference agreement.

While a racist colonial system took hold in the end, well into the 20th century the power of this system was messy, imperfect, and incomplete. The Mbailundu Revolt’s perpetrators were in a sense demanding stricter boundaries between themselves and those who represented (or claimed to represent) the Portuguese state. Black and *mestiço* people who took advantage of the opportunities for social mobility afforded by colonial objects, identities, and economic

⁶³⁸ Birmingham, *A Short History of Modern Angola*, 64.

relationships became social pariahs in a general sense by the turn of the 20th century. For members of Ovimbundu elite groups, these intermediaries represented a threat to their established hierarchies. For metropolitan Portuguese agents trying to enforce a different hierarchy with themselves at the top, Ambaquistas, Mambaris, pombeiros, and trader-sobas presented a major obstacle. Candido points out the irony that these intermediary agents “were a menace to colonialism, yet they represented the colonial state in the region.”⁶³⁹

The Mbailundu Revolt forced the Portuguese government to abandon its longstanding complicity in the “vagabond state.” Authority in important trading outposts like Bailundo could no longer be left to unscrupulous *mestiços* like Captain Cravid, whose predations stirred up tensions with communities across the central highlands in 1901. The intensification of boundary making was already underway during the aggressive phase of conquest that saw the toppling of Mbailundu’s rival to the east, Viye, in 1890. The legendary trader Silva Porto, who married into the Viye royal family and established himself as part of its trade empire, and whom Livingstone had called a “mulatto” when he encountered him leading a caravan of Mambari traders, represented the era of the vagabond state. In 1890, Silva Porto failed to negotiate a truce between advancing Portuguese troops and the Viye Soba Ndunduma. His despair over the collapse of the old order was so great that he wrapped himself in a Portuguese flag and blew himself up with a barrel of gunpowder.⁶⁴⁰ He could not bear to live to see the coming era of Portuguese conquest.

Many people on the losing end of this encroaching racialized hierarchy were aware of the dangers of adopting or accepting European affectations. The Chokwe migrants who had moved eastward into Northern Rhodesia by the 1920s brought with them contagious afflictions such as *Vindele* (European), which could only be remedied by ritually adopting those same dangerous

⁶³⁹ Candido, *An African Slaving Port*, 316-17.

⁶⁴⁰ Birmingham, *A Short History of Modern Angola*, 56.

affectations such as using plates and forks and speaking in Portuguese. The organizers of the Mbailundu Revolt understood this danger when they rejected people living “in-between” the structures of the colonial state and the authority of *sobas* and *sekulus*. The 1902 Revolt was the violent expression of anxiety about the destructive influence of morally ambiguous outsiders. Mutu-ya-Kavela’s invocation of a glorious Ovimbundu past, like the era of Soba Ekuikui II, revealed a desire to return to a time when sobas had wealth and political power that was not threatened by whites or Luso-Africans.

“Run over by history”

In the century since the Mbailundu Revolt, Angolans were “run over by history,”⁶⁴¹ as an artist friend from Luanda put it. During the past five centuries, Angolans have faced the brutal effects of the transatlantic slave trade and the violent penetration of the Atlantic economy; the nineteenth century Scramble for Africa and the age of European conquest and pacification; the sudden waves of Portuguese settlers that began arriving in the 1940s and 50s; the late and violent Portuguese withdrawal in 1974-75; and a horrifically violent, Cold War-inflected civil war from 1975 until 2002. Given this tempestuous century, one might wonder if memories of something as remote as the Mbailundu Revolt still exist. But they do. These memories hold political weight for everyone who keeps them alive—no matter whether they are aligned with “The Party” (as the MPLA is still casually referred to, despite Angola’s alleged multiparty democracy), or the opposition UNITA, heavily associated with Umbundu-speakers (especially Protestants) from the central highlands. In his carefully researched book, Justin Pearce explains how many UNITA followers felt their movement was “defending an authentic, black African and Christian Angola

⁶⁴¹ “*Atropelados pela história.*” Kiluanji Kia Henda, Personal communication, Luanda (2013).

that was under assault from an atheist Creole-dominated state in Luanda that was also the tool of Soviet imperialism.”⁶⁴²

In 1992, journalist Karl Maier watched UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi give a speech in Umbundu in the city of Kuito (near the site of the old Viye kingdom) in the buildup to hotly contested elections which ultimately resulted in a return to armed conflict. The day before, MPLA leader José Eduardo dos Santos (still president in 2017) had given a speech in the same location. Maier describes the angry image that Savimbi projected, suspecting that “his anti-white and anti-*mestiço* rhetoric” would probably cost him votes in the coastal cities, but would win him support “in Bié and throughout the central highlands where stories of the Bailundo rebellion against the Portuguese traders have been handed down from generation to generation.”⁶⁴³ Savimbi’s grandfather had fought in the Mbailundu Revolt, and his family had a long history of association with the North American missionaries and the independent Angolan Protestant church that grew out of their legacy—the *Igreja Evangélica Congregacional de Angola* (IECA).

Maier interviewed a white Angolan man, João, who lived with his black wife and six mestiço children in Benguela. João had grown up in the central highlands and was fluent in Umbundu. His wife Lila feared for the safety of their children, because UNITA soldiers allegedly targeted those with lighter skin, but her husband’s position towards the opposition group was slightly more sympathetic. In João’s opinion, Ovimbundu people had “felt oppressed for the entire [20th] century. They had great chiefs and were a proud people. But after the Portuguese occupation they were at the bottom of society. They felt like the slaves of Angola.”⁶⁴⁴ The shared history of the defeat of the Mbailundu Revolt may have helped create a sense of solidarity among Umbundu-speakers in the central highlands. The presence of North American

⁶⁴² Pearce, *Political Identity and Conflict in Central Angola*, 14.

⁶⁴³ Maier, *Angola: Promises and Lies*, 72.

⁶⁴⁴ Maier, *Angola: Promises and Lies*, 132-133.

missionaries in different Ovimbundu kingdoms likely contributed to this growing sense of identification with a discreet “ethnic” identity, juxtaposed against speakers of other languages and intermediary figures who adopted Portuguese affectations.

The rift that began to open in 1902 between subjects of central highland kingdoms and the rest of Angola still reverberated ninety years later in Savimbi’s angry 1992 campaign speeches. The division still echoed in 2013, when some people in Luanda assumed I was a UNITA supporter (and an MPLA detractor) when they heard my research was based in Huambo and Bailundo. The rift appears in a political banner hung outside a Luanda school, with a picture of President dos Santos and an admonishment: *If you don’t support the President, you support a return to war*. Pearce defines the Angolan civil war not as the decades of violent conflict but instead, “a period in which the legitimacy of the state remained contested and no single entity maintained a monopoly of violence over the legally recognized territory of Angola.”⁶⁴⁵ This state of contested legitimacy harkens back to the early colonial period discussed in this dissertation, where competing entities fought to gain statelike power. More than a decade past the end of the civil war, Luandans still called Ovimbundu “traitors,” and Bailundo residents now speculated about political sorcery involving the Mbailundu Soba and the President. Today, sobas are vassals of different type, but the state they serve is still a vagabond that lurks ominously in the background, its legitimacy and its boundaries always in question.

⁶⁴⁵ Pearce, *Political Identity and Conflict in Central Angola*, 20.

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