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Usurping freedom:

Processes of Enslavement in Benguela's hinterland, 1780-1850

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The literature on the processes of enslavement in Africa is largely focused on warfare. This is related to the fact that warfare was one of the most common strategies for enslavement in Africa, although there were other mechanisms through which slaves were produced such as kidnapping, tribute and judicial condemnation.¹ However, while the West Central Africa region produced the largest enslaved population for the transatlantic slave trade, there have been few studies on the

¹ For some examples of the prevalence of warfare in the scholarship see Philip Curtin. *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa. Senegambia in the era of the Slave Trade*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975. Herbert Klein. *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. John Thornton. *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800*. London: UCL Press, 1999; and his *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; Paul Lovejoy. *Transformations in Slavery. A History of Slavery in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000[1983]. Robin Law. "Slave-raiders and Middlemen, Monopolist and Free Traders: the Supply of Slaves for the Atlantic Trade in Dahomey, c. 1715-1850", *Journal of African History*, 30, 1989, pp. 45-68. Joseph Miller. "The Paradoxes of Impoverishment in the Atlantic Zone", in David Birmingham and Phyllis Martin (eds). *History of Central Africa*. Volume 1. London: Longman, 1983. Boubacar Barry. *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Jean Bazin, "War and servitude in Segou", *Economy and Society*, 3, 1974, pp. 107-144. Ferreira however argues that warfare did not provide the number of slaves needed to supply the transatlantic slave trade, since it produced mainly females, children and elderly. Roquinaldo Amaral Ferreira. *Transforming Atlantic Slaving: Trade, Warfare and Territorial Control in Angola, 1650-1800*. PhD Dissertation, University of California –Los Angeles, 2003, p. 177-178.

enslavement processes prevalent in this region.² In this chapter, I am particularly interested in focusing on the processes of enslavement carried out within the Benguela region between the end of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries. Through an analysis of a series of available documents produced by the Portuguese bureaucracy, travellers and local traders, my intention is to consider the mechanisms of mass and individual enslavement that took place in this region. Benguela, as is well known, was one of the main ports supplying the transatlantic slave trade during the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries. Such a constant demand for slaves along the coast could not but impact upon the mechanisms through which slaves were produced throughout its hinterland.

There is no doubt that warfare was a common way of enslaving people. Luis Candido Furtado, a Portuguese army officer, realized during his expedition along the Benguelan coast that only societies engaged in wars had slaves to sell. He concluded that without violence there could be no slaves.³ Warring groups targeted other communities, the outsiders, people who were considered enslavable. Inevitably the maintenance of the state of warfare throughout the region led to the political, economic and social instability. This weakened the areas supplying slaves, constantly deprived of their reproductive and productive capacities. While warfare constantly

² See José C. Curto, “Experiences of Enslavement in West-Central Africa”, unpublished presented at the Harriet Tubman Seminar, November 23, 2004.

³ Biblioteca Nacional (BNL), Lisbon, Cod. 8094. Luis Candido Cordeiro Pinheiro Furtado to Barão de Mossamedes [Governor of Angola], September 22, 1785.

seized slaves through the idea of a moving slave frontier,⁴ it is undeniable that part of the slaves was produced locally, through a series of mechanisms such as tributes, punishments, kidnappings as well as raids. Even though it is very difficult to estimate the ethnic origins of the population enslaved, the cases presented in this chapter and the existing slave registers, suggest that most of the slaves located in the Benguela region were from nearby regions.⁵ In contrast to the idea of a slaving frontier moving eastwards overtime, it does not seem that the process of enslavement in the interior of Benguela was organized in a way that populations along the coast were immune from raids, and that only some groups from the interior were targeted, constituting “slave reserves”.⁶ Rather than a continuous inland movement, enslavement moved eastwards

⁴ For the concept of slaving frontier see Joseph Miller. *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988. And Paul Lovejoy. *Transformations in Slavery: A history of slavery in Africa*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983. Lovejoy presented a very interested concept of layered frontier, which is essential to my understanding of frontier. See his “Slavery, the Bilad al-Sudan, and the Frontiers of the African Diaspora”, in Paul Lovejoy (ed). *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004.

⁵ This will be analyzed deeper in the chapter related with slave population of Caconda and Benguela. For more studies that have pointed out the enslavement of people from close by regions see José C. Curto, “Resistência à escravidão na África: O caso dos escravos fugitivos recapturados em Angola, 1846-1876”, *Afro-Ásia* (forthcoming), and Roquinaldo A. Ferreira, “Fontes para o estudo da escravidão em Angola: Luanda e Icolo e Bengo no pós-tráfico de escravos”, in *Construindo o passado Angolano: As fontes e a sua interpretação. Actas do II Seminário internacional sobre a história de Angola*. Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2000, pp. 667-680.

⁶ This idea of an inland reserve of slaves, where other groups eventually draw upon to supply the transatlantic slave trade is established in the literature. See Jan Vansina. *Paths in the Rainforest*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, p. 207. See also Manuel Carlos Almeida. “Migrações Formadas e Dinâmicas Demográficas (O caso particular de Angola)”, Unpublished PhD thesis Universidade Nova Lisboa, 1993.

but also southwards, northwards, and eventually westwards towards unprotected populations. Basically, there was no frontier in the sense of a stable and invariable physical limit; rather there were multiple frontiers: there was a “tidal” frontier moving eastward, along with the European penetration from the coast to the interior.⁷ At the same time that there were internal frontiers derived from local political institutions, whose territories were not conceived “as clearly bounded spaces, neither permanent or fixed, but rather as overlapping, crisscrossing spatial domains that periodically pervaded the territorial claims of the surrounding settled peasant people”.⁸ Therefore there are superimposed frontiers, where the definitions of insider/outsider were constantly reshaped. Several reports of people violently taken away demonstrate that populations along the coast and in the immediate interior were constantly threatened by enslavement. Even though most of the people enslaved did not leave the African continent, enslavement and slavery affected them in different ways. As Lovejoy stresses, “enslavement as a historical force caused death and destruction as well. Those who survived suffered dislocation, even if they were able to escape capture and avoid

⁷ I made use of Kopytoff definition tidal and internal frontiers, adding Lovejoy’s idea that internal and external frontiers are, by definition, highly ambiguous. See Igor Kopytoff, “The Internal African Frontier: The Making of African Political Culture”, in Igor Kopytoff (ed). *The African Frontier. The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, pp. 3- 86. Lovejoy, “Slavery, the Bilad al-Sudan, and the Frontiers of the African Diaspora”, p. 7-8.

⁸ Tobias Wendl and Michael Rosler, “Frontiers and borderlands. The rise and relevance of an anthropological research genre”, in Tobias Wendl and Michael Rosler (eds). *Frontiers and Borderlands. Anthropological Perspectives*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999, p. 7.

death. ... The slave trade meant that the daily lives of individuals could end abruptly during a slave raid, kidnapping expedition, or war”.⁹ It is important to highlight that no one was untouched by the slave trade. Those who remained in Africa had faced displacement. Raids and famines displaced some, while others were enslaved, sent to distant regions, where they did not share the same cultural background.

Although warfare was an important mechanism in seizing people and condemning them to slavery, it was not the only one. Other mechanisms, which existed, included abduction, tribute and tax payment, debt, judicial condemnation, pawnship, sale of relatives, and self-enslavement.¹⁰ Contemporary witnesses were also interested in the causes that led someone to be sentenced to slavery. However, there was not a single static juridical frame by which people could be enslaved. Laws and sanctions changed according to the community and, most importantly over time. Market pressure also played a vital role on the way elites perceived moral standards. Since there was a constant European demand for slaves along the coast more actions were criminalized and subject to enslavement as punishment. In 1812, for example, according to a contemporary report, most of the slaves arriving in Brazil, usually embarked at Benguela port, were condemned to slavery because of adultery, theft, warfare, and nomination to another person’s criminal punishment. Also common

⁹ Paul Lovejoy, “Daily Life in Western Africa during the era of the “Slave Route””, *Diogenes*, n. 179, 45 (3), 1887, p. 3

¹⁰ Orlando Patterson. *Slavery and Social Death. A Comparative Study*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 105. See also Lovejoy. *Transformations in Slavery*. pp. 1-9.

were the cases of trickery, especially against children, leading to enslavement. According to this report, some of the young people arriving in slave ships in Brazil were sold by their families as punishment, especially by parents unhappy with their offspring's social behaviour or men unsatisfied with their wives or concubines.¹¹ This was definitely a very drastic way of punishing someone, especially a relative. While these were the reasons why people were sent to Brazil in 1812, it by no means implies that the majority of 4.5 million Africans deported to Brazil became slaves under these circumstances.¹² While in 1812 someone could be enslaved and sent to Brazil for adultery, in 1847, among the Kimboa and Katumbela people, adultery was not considered a crime punishable by enslavement.¹³ While the Kimboas and Katumbelas did not condemn adultery in the mid-nineteenth century, they punished witchcraft with enslavement. The accused had to be executed, all his belongings appropriated by those who suffered the loss, and his relatives and dependents were sold into slavery.¹⁴ Cases like these illustrate that unlike other parts of Africa where moral restrictions to

¹¹ Luis António de Oliveira Mendes. "Discurso sobre as doenças dos pretos tirados da África" (1812). In José Luis Cardoso (ed). *Memórias económicas da Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa*. Volume IV. Lisbon: Banco de Portugal, 1991. p. 18-19. See also his *Memória a respeito dos escravos e tráfico da escravatura entre as costas d'África e o Brazil*. Lisboa: Escorpião, 1977 [1793].

¹² David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert Klein. *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

¹³ Arquivo Histórico Militar (AHM), 2-2-3-d. 14, Francisco Xavier Lopes. "Descrição da Catumbela (Usos e costumes dos seus indígenas e construção do reduto de S. Pedro)", fl. 7.

¹⁴ AHM, 2-2-3-d. 14, fl. 8

the enslavement of fellow citizens existed, as in the case of Oyo,¹⁵ a free person could be enslaved by his countrymen in some regions of Benguela's hinterland. Actions to seize free people could be organized and commanded by trustworthy people.¹⁶

African rulers in Benguela, the *sobas*, in conjunction with their *makotas*, established internal rules, which determined punishments and condemnations. The elite decided the principles by which people from their own community could be enslaved. While this code responded to local conceptions of morality in many parts of Africa (and Benguela is not an exception), criminal codes were subject to change according to external demand for slaves.¹⁷ Even though the external demand corrupted legal systems, internal mechanisms to subject people to enslavement could not provide enough captives to supply the transatlantic and the internal slave trades. Eventually

¹⁵ See Robin Law, "Legal and Illegal Enslavement in West Africa, in the context of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade", in Toyin Falola (ed) *Ghana in Africa and the World. Essays in honor of Adu Boahen*. Trenton: African World Press, 2003, p. 517

¹⁶ For the cases of people being kidnapped and seized by trustful people see the discussion of José C. Curto, "The Story of Nbena, 1817-1820: Unlawful Enslavement and the Concept of 'Original Freedom' in Angola," in Paul E. Lovejoy and David V. Trotman, eds. *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*. London: Continuum, 2003, pp. 43-64; although dealing with a different geographic region, Jennifer Lofkrantz also focuses on misleading and trickery cases. See her: "Social Status and Enslavement in 19th Century Western Sudan" unpublished paper presented at the 47th African Studies Association/ 34th Canadian Association of African Studies Annual meetings held in New Orleans, 2004; and "Changing norms of Enslavement in the Western Soudan, 1890-1910", unpublished paper presented at the Tubman Seminar, December 2004.

¹⁷ See John Thornton. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, specially chapter 4.

external demand also pressured the cycle of warfare and kidnappings.¹⁸ The existence of a series of enslavement guidelines, did not excluded the co-existence of other ways of enslaving free people. The abuse of the law was already stressed by the early 17th century, when an anonymous author reported that “great injustices are committed in the buying and selling of slaves in our empire ... it is also certain that most of the slaves of this Empire are made so upon other pretexts, of which some are notoriously unjust”.¹⁹ Like African authorities, the Portuguese accepted enslavement through “legal” justified wars, while those enslaved through trickery, kidnappings or banditry would be considered illegally enslaved. Portuguese authorities respected the customary law, known as *leis gentílicas*, in part because these laws shared similarities with the Portuguese legislation, especially on who could be enslaved.²⁰ Any report of people

¹⁸ For the link between European demand and warfare see Paul Lovejoy, *Transformation of Slavery*; Karl Polanyi *Dahomey and the Slave Trade*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966. Henry Gemery and Jan Hogendorn, “The Economic costs of West African Participation in the Atlantic Slave Trade: a Preliminary Sampling for the Eighteenth Century” in *The Uncommon Market. . Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade*. New York: Academic Press, 1979, pp. 143- 162. Patrick Manning. “The slave trade in the bight of Benin, 1640-1890”, in *Op. Cit*, pp. 107-142. And his *Slavery and African Life. Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. As well as *Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640-1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. Claude Meillassoux. *The Anthropology of Slavery. The Womb of Iron and Gold*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991

¹⁹ Anonymous. “Proposta a Sua Magestade sobre a escravaria das terras da Conquista de Portugal”, in Robert E. Conrad. *Children of God’s Fire*. p. 12

²⁰ Instituto Historico Geografico Brasileiro (IHGB), DL 45, 11. “Proposta sobre escravaria das terras da conquista de Portugal”. For the similarities on the legal systems see Laura Benton “The legal regime of the South Atlantic World, 1400-1750”, *Journal of World History*, 11(1), 2000, p. 3. Mariza de Carvalho Soares highlights the affinity between Christianity and

enslaved through mechanisms other than those considered legal, could claim their original freedom from the Portuguese. A local priest, however, admitted that “no Negro will ever say that he had been legally enslaved... they will always say that they were stolen and captured illegally, in the hope that they will be given their liberty”.²¹ What differentiates, then, the legal ways of capture from illegal ones within this region from the late eighteenth century to mid-nineteenth century?

Legal ways of enslavement: justified wars and raids.

Portuguese reports validate the assumption that warfare was a common way of capturing people. Africans and Portuguese made use of planned attacks in order to produce slaves. This mechanism pre-existed the Portuguese presence in the region and was readily incorporated by the newcomers. Violent means of capturing people was not uncommon. “Seizures of people as slaves in raids was a persistent and ordinary feature of the Mediterranean world from antiquity through the nineteenth century”.²² The Portuguese had previously used this technique to seize Muslim populations in continental Portugal, as well as in other parts of Africa.²³ In this way, Portuguese and

legislation on Portuguese expansion. See “Descobrimdo a Guiné no Brasil Colonial”, *Revista do Instituto Histórico Geográfico Brasileiro*, 161 (407), 2000, pp. 71-94.

²¹ A passage quoted in Robin Law, “Legal and Illegal Enslavement in West Africa, in the context of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade”, in Toyin Falola (ed) *Ghana in Africa and the World. Essays in honor of Adu Boahen*. Trenton: African World Press, 2003, p. 514.

²² Laura Benton “The legal regime of the South Atlantic World, 1400-1750”, p. 14

²³ For the discussion of Portuguese slaving activities in North Africa see Yacine Daddi Addoun’s PhD dissertation, “Abolition de l’esclavage en Algérie: 1816-1871”.

Africans agreed that this was a legitimate way of acquiring slaves, and warfare and raids were morally accepted by the different cultures in contact.²⁴

Due to political and economic motivations, African rulers invaded lands, taking prisoners, cattle, and ravaging agricultural land. No one was free of these violent waves of warlords in the Benguela region. Reports from 1798 inform that in one singular invasion, around 600 people were seized in Kaluquembe, in the central highlands. According to the governor of Benguela, this raid was motivated by revenge, since the soba of Kaluquembe had been cooperating with the Portuguese army.²⁵ In actions like this, independent *sobas* joined forces to punish a ruler affiliated with the Portuguese, who had been collaborating in joint operations to attack other African political entities, that were disturbing Portuguese operations in the region. In other circumstances, local authorities requested Portuguese intervention. By 1806, a *sobeta*, a secondary ruler or an adviser of the ruler, from the Humbe, named Kipa, had attacked and captured so many people from the surrounding areas that the governor of Benguela ordered his arrest.²⁶ Kipa's behavior had disrupted the political and social stability of the region to an extent that the soba of Humbe had to request Portuguese help to control the situation. The environment of constant warfare not only caused

²⁴ Mariza Soares, "Descobrimdo a Guiné no Brasil Colonial", p. 80-81.

²⁵ Arquivo Historico Nacional de Angola (AHNA), Cod. 441, fl 59, May 15, 1798. And also AHNA, Cod. 442, fl. 59v., May 15, 1798. And AHU, cx 88, doc. 3, May 15, 1798.

²⁶ AHNA, Cod. 443, fl. 137, July 1, 1806. And Cod. 443, fl. 138v., August 6, 1806.

social instability but it also resulted in a high number of children and women being constantly drawn from their societies of origin and incorporated into other groups, where they could later on be absorbed, be sold or eventually be kidnapped again. The list of people captured in a small raid in Katumbela demonstrates the vulnerable situation of women and children. Out of the 84 people apprehended only 19 were men, including 10 young boys. Women and children outnumbered the men, represented by 11 young girls, 26 women and 25 young children.²⁷ While women and children were not highly appreciated by the transatlantic traders, at least not until the end of the transatlantic slave trade period, there was an internal demand for female slaves in Africa. Not being in demand on the coast, most of the female captives were probably sold internally where they were more valued.²⁸

Most likely it was no different in 1809, when the Caconda fortress was invaded twice, in January and September. During the first raid, the *sobas* of Huambo, Kitete and Kipeio raided the household of two Luso-African traders and of two Africans. They devastated the land, destroyed the farming crops, stole cattle, and captured a large number of dependents and relatives.²⁹ Months later, another raid, this time perpetrated by the Sambu people, reached the fortress' fringes, capturing people

²⁷ AHNA, Cod. 445, fls 19-19v., June 10, 1808.

²⁸ For the internal market for female slaves see Claire Robertson and Martin Klein. *Women and Slavery in Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983, specially "Introduction".

²⁹ AHNA, Cod. 445, fls. 34- 34v., January 27, 1809.

and destroying food stock.³⁰ By early 1811, another raid, this time by the soba of Galangue, was directed against Caconda. At this time, the devastation was greater than before: only two households had escaped the raid wave. The remaining inhabitants suffered all kinds of material losses, and most of them had lost dependents.³¹ Raided at least three times in less than two years, the Caconda inhabitants probably faced economic constraints. No single sector of its economic activities had survived the raids intact. They lost labour through the capture of people, which affected cultivation capacities and compounded the problem of crops destroyed in the raids. More than anything it made people realize that they were vulnerable to external attacks.

Constant warfare brought instability and constant threat to the populations in the hinterland. The *presídios*, or the Portuguese fortresses in the interior, were always a target to *sobas* raiding.³² Warfare not only sought to capture people for enslavement but also to appropriate any valuable goods, such as alcohol and textiles. Characterized by a lack of men and serving as an entrepôt for traders carrying desirable products,

³⁰ AHNA, Cod. 445, fls. 41., September 6, 1809

³¹ AHNA, Cod. 445, fls. 88-88v., March 10, 1811. And. AHU, cx. 123, doc. 15. March 10, 1811

³² AHNA, Cod. 508, fl. 125., April 18, 1828. See also fls. 128, April 24, 1828. And fl 149v., January 24, 1829. AHNA, Cod. 509, fl 60v-61, January 17, 1830. And. 146v-149v., October 18, 1836. AHNA, Cod. 510, fl 97v-98, September 6, 1848. See also instructions from Lisbon to the Governor of Benguela to be vigilant and help the *presídios*' commanders to resist the *sobas*' attacks. AHU, Cod. 543, Fl 12., July 2, 1830. AHU, Cx. 30, doc. 6., January 29, 1737. AHU, Sala 12, L. 679, fl 158. April 18, 1843. AHU, cx 83. doc. 16. January 22, 1796. AHU, cx. 84, doc. 29. September 24, 1796. Ahu, cx 93A, doc. 20. November 11, 1799. AHU, cx 95, doc. 18. March 18, 1800. AHU, cx. 123, doc. 15. March 10, 1811. AHU, Angola, Correspondencia dos Governadores, Pasta 5, October 5, 1839. AHU, Angola, Correspondencia dos Governadores, Pasta 5B. December 24, 1842. AHU, Angola, Correspondencia dos Governadores, Pasta 6A, February 9, 1843.

Portuguese fortresses were favorite targets. In 1836, for example, Quilengues was invaded by the *sobas* of Kaluquembe, Luceque, Nguela, Lubando and Kipungo, all of them in Caconda's jurisdiction. As in the previous cases, a large number of residents were robbed, people were captured and land was destroyed.³³ Although there is no information in the reports on the estimate number of people kidnapped or gender ratios, it is easy to imagine that an extensive number of women and children were probably lost in these raids. Caught by surprise, those in more vulnerable situations would be easy targets. The remaining population had to cope with these losses, which also implied food constraints in the following months.

It is pointless to search for villains and victims in these occurrences. *Sobas* who were raided, eventually raided as well. Positions shifted according to military conditions and strategic associations. In 1799, the *soba* Kaluquembe who had been raided became a raider, seizing 200 people from the *soba* Dom Matheus. Not only were people appropriated, but also cattle, gunpowder, textiles, and even chairs.³⁴ Portuguese authorities intervened if any vassal ruler suffered attacks, since they had guaranteed protection for those under their vassalage. The regent of Caconda, to demonstrate that no one could raid a vassal of the Portuguese, arrested the

³³AHNA, Cod. 509. 146 v-149v., October 18, 1836.

³⁴ AHNA. Cod. 443, fl 39, July 16, 1799.

Kaluquembe soba after his raid.³⁵ Part of the task of these officials in the interior was to avoid situations of potential conflict and maintain order, and in doing their tasks they could be accredited for their services. Examples had to be given in order to prevent future incidents. Thus, it is not strange that the governor Manuel de Almeida Vasconcelos congratulated the captain of Quilengues for his toughness in punishing the sobas of Kiaca, Ganda and Bongo. The captain's actions were a response to the *soba's* attacks against the *soba* of Lumbole, a Portuguese vassal.³⁶ Motivated by examples like this, African rulers eventually looked for Portuguese protection, becoming vassals, accepting baptism, and aspiring to have easier access to imported goods. Vassals not only paid tributes in order to receive military support and protection, but also allowed the incursion of traders and armies into the territory under their control. They also provided men as troops and porters.³⁷ In 1844, the lieutenant Garcia reported he had met close to the Bero River, a *sobeta* from the Mucubal people. This *sobeta* was migrating with his people and cattle in order to seek

³⁵ AHNA. Cod. 443, fl 60, May 13, 1800.

³⁶ AHU, Cod. 1628. fl 60v., August 16, 1791.

³⁷ See the case of the soba of Kilengues. AHU, Angola, cx. 111, doc. 1. September 4, 1804. For vassals obligations see Beatrix Heintze. "The Angolan Vassal Tributes of the 17th Century", *Revista de História Económica e Social*, 6, 1980, pp. 57-78; as well as hers "Luso-African Feudalism in Angola? The Vassal Treaties of the 16th to the 18th Century", *Separata da Revista Portuguesa de História*, 18, 1980, pp.111-131. Cruz e Silva argues that African rulers and Portuguese officials had different interpretations on vassalage and dependency. See Rosa Cruz e Silva. "The Saga of Kakonda and Kilengues", in José C. Curto and Paul E. Lovejoy (eds). *Enslaving Connections. Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil during the Era of Slavery*. New York: Humanity Books, 2004.

Portuguese protection, avoiding the constant raids taking place to which he constantly lost people.³⁸ Although the Portuguese authorities promised protection, they did not have enough people, power and political will to control and prevent raids. Not even *sobas* under Portuguese jurisdiction followed vassals' protective rules; they eventually attacked other people who were also vassals. In 1817, for example, the *sobas* of Kitata and Kaluquembe, established in Caconda's jurisdiction and vassals of the Portuguese Crown, joined forces and invaded the territories of the Ndombe, close to the coast, under the protection of the Dombe Grande's captain. As in other cases people were seized, cattle apprehended and crops destroyed.³⁹

The correspondence exchanged between the governors of Angola and Benguela, and between the latter and officials in the interior portrays the image of successive raids, one after the other. No leader could defend his subjects and dependents. Strong political entities, such as the kingdom of Bailundo and Galangue were constantly under attack, and also on the offensive. The alliance between *sobas* was circumstantial, responding to immediate necessities and motivations. If in 1817, the soba of Kitata collaborated with the soba of Kaluquembe, two years later he acted in conjunction with the soba of Huambo.⁴⁰ If there were any pattern in association, it would be an

³⁸ João Francisco Garcia, "Explorações do sertão de Benguela. Derrota que fez o tenente de artilharia João Francisco Garcia, comandante do novo estabelecimento da bahia de Mossamêdes quando em cumprimento do ofício do ilustríssimo e exc. governador geral do reino de Angola e suas dependências", *Annaes Marítimos e Colonias*, 4^a série, 1844, pp. 240.

³⁹ AHNA, Cod. 155, fl 5- 6v., August 29, 1817.

association of neighbours. Neighbouring *sobas* tended to act together, especially when the target was a *soba* who might be affecting their political and economic aspirations.⁴¹ Vassal rulers also required Portuguese collaboration, sometimes for the supply of arms or guns, to attack enemy *sobas*. This was exactly what happened with the *soba* of Socoval who requested permission and troops to engage in a punitive expedition against the *soba* of Muquando, from Dombe Grande. Since the Portuguese wanted to get rid of Muquando to control the trade in the territory under his jurisdiction, the governor authorized the war and sent men to act on the *soba* of Socoval's armed forces.⁴² In all of these operations, people were seized and became captive's of the raider army, who would eventually try to sell them as fast as possible to profit from the operation. Capture young men would most likely be sold to traders in the interior or find their way to the coast, where they were highly valued by the captains feeding the transatlantic slave trade. Women, children and elders could also be sold to traders or ransomed by relatives, but most probably they faced long journeys until reaching their destination where they served as slaves. The cases taken place in Benguela's hinterland illustrate that it is very difficult to label any population established in the

⁴⁰ AHNA, Cod. 155, fl. 48-48v, January 19, 1819.

⁴¹ See the case of the *sobas* of Galangue, Sambo e Kingolo joining forces in 1824. AHNA, Cod. 508. fl 14-14v., January 16, 1824. Also the joint forces of five *sobas* of Nano attacking the *soba* of Sapa, who was collaborating with the Portuguese. AHU, cx. 121. doc. 68. August 28, 1810.

⁴² AHU, cx. 129, doc. 47. October 5, 1814.

interior, including those on the Portuguese fortress, as solely as producer or receptor of slaves.⁴³ In different moments, people were both.

According to a 1797 report on the habits of Bihé, political inaugurations and raids were closely linked. Every time a soba was enthroned, there was a time period allotted to raiding. Anyone could engage in attacks and raids, capturing as many people as possible and profiting from their sale. This state of permitted ‘civil war’ lasted for two or three days and it is not clear if people could ransom their relatives and dependents or what was the fate of the people captured.⁴⁴ During war expeditions, anyone could kidnap free people and transform them into captives. After paying the tribute to the soba, in the form of slaves, the captives could be sold/ransomed within the *sobado* or to traders.⁴⁵ There is no information on how long these inauguration ceremonies lasted, or if it only happened around 1797 when the report was written. It is striking that a ruler allowed internal raids without any control measures. Chances are that the witness was not able to notice some kind of order going on around this raiding period, or did not differentiate the limits of the groups, considering that the people raided, probably outsiders, were insiders. However, another report from the same time period does not mention internal raids, but stresses that the among some groups from the interior, including the Huambo, Galangue and Bailundu people, when

⁴³ See Meillassoux. *The Anthropology of Slavery*, p. 73-74.

⁴⁴ IHGB, Lata 29 Pasta 17. “Notícia Geral dos Costumes do Bié”, 1797. Fl. 2v.

⁴⁵ IHGB, Lata 29 Pasta 17. “Notícia Geral dos Costumes do Bié”. Fl. 5v

a new soba was invested he had to engage in external raids to seize people, who were later on exchanged for firewater and textiles. Only after that, *sobas* were officially installed in power.⁴⁶ There is other reference to a similar event, although four decades later, and concerning the Mbundu people. Prior to the empowerment of the new Mbundu soba, he and his army engaged in raids among neighboring areas to kidnap the largest number of people. These captives were later sacrificed during the investiture ceremony.⁴⁷

The instability that characterized this region during the era of the transatlantic slave trade was recorded in some of the reports. Reports mention insecurity of traders, constant warfare, kidnappings, selling of relatives and constant clash between vassal states willing to dominate the access to imported goods.⁴⁸ More attacks were registered in certain periods, indicating that either these periods were actually more violent or that the governor was more careful with internal correspondence. Turbulence in the hinterland was particularly well documented for the end of the 1820's. A series of wars were recorded, which showed *sobas* uniting against *sobas*, *sobas* against Portuguese

⁴⁶ BNRJ, I-28, 28, 29. Paulo Martins Lacerda. "Notícia da Cidade de S. Filipe de Benguella e dos costumes dos gentios habitantes daquele sertão", November 10, 1797. Published in *Annaes Maritimos e Coloniais*, 12, 5ª serie, Parte Nao-Oficial, 1845, pp. 488.

⁴⁷ Ladislau Magyar. *Reisen in Sud-Afrika in Den Jahren 1849 Bis 1857*, ch. 7 [I would like to express my gratitude to Maria da Conceição Neto who kindly made the Portuguese translation in progress available to me]

⁴⁸ AHU, cx 64 doc. 59 See as well AHU cx 76, doc. 8. February 3, 1791. AHU, cx. 77 doc. 14, February 1, 1792.

fortresses, and *sobas* expropriating traders.⁴⁹ However robbery of traders was not exclusive to this decade, since Silva Porto and Magyar, two traders located in Benguela by the mid-19th century, also reported assaults on the roads some decades later. Silva Porto mentioned he was caught several times by raids. In this processes, facing a large contingent of armed men, he was forced to pay tributes, or *mucanos*, to avoid greater hazards.⁵⁰

While raids prevailed in areas supposedly under Portuguese control, it is difficult to believe that chaos lasted the whole period as the sources suggest. Moments of chaos and instability must have shifted over periods of time. However the existence of raids in areas not so distant from the coast, accentuate the idea that a significant number of people were enslaved in areas not so far from the coast. In order to understand this problematic, it is necessary to have a more fluid and broad concept of frontier, less centered on physical associations and more related to an idea of positional

⁴⁹ See especially the reports on AHNA, cod. 449, fl. 116v-117, October 18, 1827. And fl 128. February 29, 1828. And Fl 147-147v., October 2, 1828.

⁵⁰ See Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa (SGL), 1-E-2. Silva Porto, “Memorial dos Mucamos, 1841-1885”. For more on traders killed in confrontations on the roads see AHU, cx. 88, doc. 5. May 25, 1798. Magyar also comments on cases like this and highlighted the danger of meeting groups of armed men in the roads, willing to acquired captives, alcohol and textiles. Ladislau Magyar *Reisen in Sud-Afrika in Den Jahren 1849 Bis 1857*, ch. 5

frontiers, related to the groups' definition of insider/outsider, or ultimately of their own identity.⁵¹

The Role of Portuguese Authorities in Enslaving:

Different from other regions of the continent where European presence was restricted to the coast, in West Central Africa the Portuguese and Luso-African agents were engaged in slave raids in the interior⁵². However, Benguela's hinterland was distinctly different from Luanda's surroundings, where markets were established to avoid the disruptive actions of the *pumbeiros*.⁵³ In Benguela, Luso-African traders circulated freely, interacted with the local authorities, and had enough power to counterattack the authorities who constantly blamed traders for commercial

⁵¹ See John and Jean Comaroff. *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992, especially ch. 2. Frederik Barth. *Los grupos étnicos y sus fronteras*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976.

⁵² AHU, cx 36, doc. 6. March 16, 1748. AHNA, Cod. 82, fl. 61v., July 17, 1787. See also José C. Curto, "Un butin illégitime: razzias d'esclaves et relations luso-africaines dans la région des fleuves Kwanza et Kwango en 1805", in Isabel de Castro Henriques and Louis Sala-Molins (eds). *Déraison, Esclavage et Droit. Les fondements idéologiques et juridiques de la traite négrière et de l'esclavage*. Paris: Unesco, 2002, pp. 315-327.

⁵³ AHU, cx. 95, doc. 9. March 10, 1800. See also Joseph Miller. "Some aspects of the commercial organization of Slaving at Luanda, Angola -1760-1830", in Henry Gemery and Jan Hogendorn (eds). *The Uncommon Market*. pp. 77-106. For the definition of *pumbeiro* see António Carreira. *Notas sobre o tráfico português de escravos*. Lisboa: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1978, p. 31. Klein also stressed the mobility of Luso-African traders within Benguela region. See Herbert Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 65-66. Ferreira also stress that distance and lack of bureaucracy made of Benguela a perfect place for those who wanted to avoid strict control. See Ferreira. *Transforming Atlantic Slaving*, p. 75-80.

instability.⁵⁴ In some regions of Benguela's hinterland people would run away whenever a caravan led by a white man arrived, afraid of possible raids or of traders ready to kidnap people.⁵⁵ However, there were expressed prohibitions for either direct or indirect involvement of governors, regents, judges or high rank military in the slave trade.⁵⁶ Instructions sent to officers stationed in the Benguela region stressed the importance of maintaining cordial relationships with the *sobas*, in order to preserve commerce from any drastic changes resulting from diplomatic mistakes.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, isolated in the hinterland, Portuguese and Luso-African traders did the minimum necessary to avoid affecting commercial links. More interested in assuring their profit from the slave trade, they requested Luanda authorization to engage in punishment wars, sometimes with very weak reasons. This was the case of the captain of Benguela who requested authorization to attack the *soba* of Bihé who did not allow white traders to establish residence in his kingdom. The Governor of Angola did not

⁵⁴ See the case of the Benguela traders denouncing the actions of the authorities. AHU, cx.124 Doc. 53. For the Portuguese authorities reports on the role of traders in disturbing the commerce see AHU, cx. 129, doc. 47. October 5, 1814.

⁵⁵ AHM, 2-2-1-7., "Cópia do exército que o senhor general dirigiu castigar o rebelde Marques de Mussulo e seus sequezes que foram invasores dos dominios da sua magestade", 1790-1791". See also Affonso de E. Taunay. *Subsídios para a história do tráfico africano no Brasil*. São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial do Estado, 1941. p. 212.

⁵⁶ AHU, Cod. 551, fl 45-53, January 30, 1810.

⁵⁷ AHNA, cod. 81, fl 14v-15, July 2, 1777. See also Cod. 448. Fl 31v., January 11, 1823. And Cod. 449, fl. 23v., January 28, 1825. See also Carlos Couto. "Regimento do Governo Subalerno de Benguela", *Studia*, 45, 1981.

find it a reasonable justification for a war.⁵⁸ Coincidentally or not, by the end of the eighteenth century, Bihé was one of the main areas of slave supply in the region.⁵⁹ It is very unlikely that a captain of Benguela wanted to employed military force in the highlands just to ensure that the soba of Bihé would accept white traders living in his territory. Chances are the captain of Benguela, Francisco Rodriguez da Silva, as many other officials, wanted to capture as many people as possible and profit from their sale along the coast. In fact by the end of the eighteenth century, slaves exports from Benguela port reached its peak, indicating that the demand for slaves along the coast led to the explosion of enslaving actions in the interior.⁶⁰

Portuguese officials' involvement in the slave trade was not limited to the end of the eighteenth century, nor also was captain Silva the last officer to request permission to attack. Francisco de Morais, an auxiliary in Catumbela fortress, also asked authorization to seize citizens of the soba of Lumbo.⁶¹ Weeks after, the trader Manoel Oliveira, who had been robbed by people from Galangue, asked permission to

⁵⁸ AHNA, cod. 81, fl 17-19, July 3, 1777.

⁵⁹ Joseph Miller, "Angola central e sul por volta de 1840", *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos*, 32,1997, p.26.

⁶⁰ For the link between Portuguese military actions in the interior and high slave exports see José C. Curto. "Luso-Brazilian alcohol and the legal slave trade at Benguela and its hinterland (1617-1830), in Hubert Bonin. *Négoce Blanc en Afrique Noire: L'évolution du commerce à longue distance en Afrique Noire du 18e au 20e siècles*. Paris: Société Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer, 2001, pp. 351-369.

⁶¹ AHNA, Cod. 440, fl 22v. Requisition N. 14, July 15, 1812.

seize people in retribution for his loss.⁶² In all the cases João Leiria, the governor of Benguela, did not authorize any measure to enslave free people.

In other cases, however, traders seized people and defended their action's, alleging to have the governor's permission. This was the case in Quilengues in 1792, when the trader Antônio Carlos Teixeira seized dependents and slaves of the soba Samba Aquime. Caught after the operation, he said he was acting with permission of the governor, who strongly denied it.⁶³ In 1803, a Benguela trader, acting in the hinterland, claimed that he had the governor's authorization to capture people in Kitata's sobado. However, the governor assured that he had never done so.⁶⁴

Governors stimulate alternative ways to solving minor problems, considering that wars affected trade and commercial operations. In their interpretation, the violent attacks organized by Portuguese and Luso-African agents in the interior provoked violent reactions and disturbed the commerce.⁶⁵ Different governors of Benguela referred to the captains of hinterland fortresses as individuals of bad character, who

⁶² AHNA, Cod. 440, fl 27v. Requisition n. 76. August 7, 1812.

⁶³ AHU, Cod. 1628. Fl 148., February 18, 1792.

⁶⁴ AHNA, Cod. 443, fl 114v-115, January 9, 1803.

⁶⁵ Governors were very concerned about the economic affects of wars. See specially the remarks on AHU, Cod. 550. fl. 68, February 24, 1800. See also AHU, Cod. 1629, fl 89v-90, November 7, 1792. AHU. Cod. 1631, fl 41v., February 18, 1795. SGL, 2-4-83. "Relatorio do governador de Angola D. Miguel Antonio de Melo". August 15, 1802. This report had been published on *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, 5ª serie, 8, 1885, pp. 548-564.

inflicted hostilities upon the traders and the African population.⁶⁶ While at least one captain was threatened with removal from office in mid-1797,⁶⁷ two others were forcibly relieved of their duties in mid-1818 and in mid-1828.⁶⁸ With very strong arguments, governors tried to exhaust other ways of settling disputes before deploying troops.⁶⁹ Arguing that the Galangue soba's rebellion was due to robbery of traders and injustices perpetrated by regents, the governor reprehended the regent of Caconda to appeal to any violent action.⁷⁰ In other cases, governors supported attacks, anticipating the financial benefits they would represent to the administration. Governor Manuel de Almeida Vasconcelos, for example, congratulated the captain of Quilengues for punishing the sobas of Kiaca, Ganda and Bongo, who had attacked the soba of Lumbole, a Portuguese vassal. In 1779, for example, the Captain of Caconda petitioned Luanda's sanction to attack those who invaded the sobado of Fende. The soba of Fende was a vassal of the Portuguese crown and had lost people in the raids. The identity of the groups who attacked Fende is not clear from the account nor how

⁶⁶ AHNA, Cód. 441, fls. 24v, February 28, 1796; AHNA, Cód.442, April 25, 1797, fl. 34v; AHU, Angola, Cx. 125, Doc. 67, August 31, 1812; AHNA, Cód. 446, fl. 96, October 7, 1816; AHNA, Cód. 447, fls. 136v. July 8, 1820

⁶⁷ This was the case of Captain João da Costa Frade: AHNA, Cód.443, fl. 19, August 14, 1797.

⁶⁸ These were, respectively, interim commander Antonio Ezequiel de Carvalho and Lieutenant Colonel Domingos Pereira Dinis: AHNA, Cód. 447, fl. 45, January 9, 1819; AHNA Cód. 508, fl. 134, August 23, 1828.

⁶⁹ Governor tried to send gifts or official representatives to solve conflicts. Examples of these can be seen in AHNA, Cod. 507, fl. 36v-37v., May 24, 1814. AHNA, Cod. 510. fl 31v., September 24, 1847. And fl 82v. May 1, 1848.

⁷⁰ AHNA, Cod. 507, fl. Fl 9v-10, September 28, 1812.

many people were captured in the operation. The captain of Caconda not only received but was also advised to be personally in charge of the royal fifth.⁷¹ Authorities appreciated the royal fifth since it generated profits to the Portuguese establishment, especially by the mid-18th century, when one single operation could generate 166 slaves for the crown.⁷²

Sometimes, captains, governors and other officials who acted without consent of higher authorities were compelled to free all the captives. This was the case in the raid organized by the captain of Quilengues, Joaquim Vieira de Andrade, who seized the soba of Socoval's people. In 1797, the captain of Quilengues and the governor of Benguela organized a punitive expedition against the soba of Socoval, considered a rebellious *soba*. During this raid the *soba* was captured and sent to Benguela, where he was arrested in the fortress. He was then replaced by a more 'collaborative' *soba*. From the inventory of 45 slaves sent as part of the royal fifth concerning the attack on Socoval *sobado*, 19 were old women, and three were old women with children. There were also two young girls, five girls, including a skinny one, six old men, including a blind one, three boys, including one who was very skinny and another one with foot problems. There were also two girls of 5.5 palms, one girl of six palms, four young

⁷¹ AHNA, Cod. 81, fl 118-120, January 30, 1779.

⁷² In 1756, the first lot of 132 slaves was sent to Benguela as royal fifth. Few days after, another 34 slaves were sent. Women composed the majority, without any mention of age groups. AHU, Cx. 40A, doc. 130. April 20, 1756. And. Cx. 43. doc. 106. October 23, 1760. For authorities interest on the royal fifth see AHU, cx. 70, doc. 7. March 15, 1785.

boys, including one with a bloated belly. As the inventory shows, from the probable total number of 225 people apprehended in the raids, only those in bad shape and considered “dispensable” were sent to the Portuguese authorities in Benguela. However, these people did not remain in captivity. After the *soba* of Socoval complained to the governor of Benguela that his relatives, tributaries, and slaves were captured without any regard to individual’s background, the governor ordered the release of all of the royal fifth captives and their return to Socoval. Any resident of Quilengues or Benguela who had acquired captives resulting from this operation had to freed them. Further, those shipped to Brazil had to be returned.⁷³ Although it is known that captain Andrade had to release all the slaves captured during the unjustified war, not too much is known about the fate of those already sold to private people and those sent to Brazil.⁷⁴ There is no follow up in this case, and therefore it is not possible to know whether these people regained their freedom and if anyone was returned from Brazil. Even without a continuation of the case, it is interesting that there was a legal space for a *soba* to claim his protégées.

From some of the royal fifth lists, there is the impression that the people destined to the fifth were those considered less valuable by slave trade standards, that is

⁷³ AHNA, Cod. 516. Fl 51-51v. “Relação dos escravos de Quilengues que trouxe o capitão Miguel Antonio Simão”. November 27, 1797. See also AHU, cx. 87, doc. 28. January 26, 1798. AHNA, Cod. 443, fl 18, June 21, 1797. AHU, Cx. 87, doc.42. March 22, 1798. AHU, cx. 87 doc. 73. April 30, 1798. AHU, cx. 87 doc. 80. April 30, 1798.

⁷⁴ AHNA, Cod. 443, fl 18, June 21, 1797.

elders, people with physical disabilities, and very young children. At least this was the case for the 1797 captives from Socoval. In another royal fifth inventory list from 1738, there is also a preponderance of women and children. However, out of the 77 people listed, there were also 12 men, including an old man with an injured leg and another one with a wounded eye.⁷⁵ Young healthy women and especially men, who could be highly valued by slave traders along the coast, probably remained in the hands of the soldiers and people engaged in the war to be sold later on.

In most of the cases it is clear that the slave coffles accompanied by soldiers which arrived at Benguela carried slaves for the royal fifth, even though in some circumstances private negotiations also made use of soldiers to conduct slaves to the coast. These operations blended public and private interests together, sometimes not in a clear way. There were several denouncements of officials engaged in the slave trade, especially about the transportation of captives to the port towns.⁷⁶ In 1796 for example, captain Regilde sent two soldiers and a resident of Caconda to deliver 50 slaves, including children and breastfeeding babies, to be sold in Benguela. One slave died during the journey but the remaining 49 were put on sale. However, no one showed interest in buying them since they were too weak. Later on, they were

⁷⁵ AHU, Cx. 30, doc. 90. April 29, 1738. This inventory is reproduced in Joseph Miller. *Way of Death*, p. xii-xiii.

⁷⁶ See for example the case of Antonio Pires Lousada, captain of Quilengues. AHNA, Cod. 442, fl. 143, October 19, 1800.

embarked on the ship *Galizia* to be sold in Luanda.⁷⁷ There is no mention if these slaves were part of a royal fifth, but Captain Regilde, Caconda's captain, spent the year of 1796 engaging in punitive wars in the hinterland, where he acquired a reputation as someone involved in illegal operations.⁷⁸

Attacks on important kingdoms were carefully planned, and demanded the participation of several authorities. In theory these wars were aimed at punishing *sobas* and people who were not paying tributes, who did not respect Portuguese authorities, or who were involved in social disruption. Nonetheless it is beyond doubt that the perspectives of profits also drove Portuguese officials. In 1814, for example, a punitive war was planned against the *sobas* of Bihé, Bailundu, Huambo and Galangue, the most important suppliers of slaves.⁷⁹ The Luanda and Benguela authorities approved this action since it could generate great royal fifths, while the traders and officials were motivated by the possibility of seizing people, with a guarantee of high profits for their sale. Eventually they also evaded paying the fifth in order to increase their gains. Attempts to defraud the government were common. In one case, the Captain of Quilengues, Joaquim Vieira de Andrade, along with residents and other officials, kidnapped more than 30 people from the Kakombo soba. However, only three slaves

⁷⁷ AHNA, Cod. 442. fl 13, August 11, 1796. And AHNA, Cod. 443, fl 4v., August 15, 1796. And AHU, Cod. 1632. fl 136, October 12, 1796.

⁷⁸ AHNA, Cod. 442. fl 17, September 29, 1796. See also AHU, Cod. 1632. Fl 207-208, January 6, 1797.

⁷⁹ AHNA, Cod. 446. fl 2- 5, August 24, 1814.

were sent to the royal fifth⁸⁰, which as only 50% of the slaves who by law belonged to the Portuguese crown. In another instance, after reports of instability in Bailundu *sobado*, captain José Velascao Galiano presented two boys and three women with two babies as the royal fifth.⁸¹ It is highly improbable that only 30 people were seized in a raid on Bailundu. *Sobas* as well evaded tributes. In 1843, the soba of Bihé was caught entering in Benguela with a slave coffle on which he did not pay taxes.⁸²

Portuguese authorities, especially those established in the interior, tended to apply some of the local customary laws –the *leis do gentio*– in order to benefit from them. There were attempts to enslave anyone who robbed or participated in attempts to pillage white traders. It is not clear if anyone had ever been enslaved under these circumstances, but the existence of an official letter from the governor of Angola prohibiting this practice indicates that this occurred.⁸³ As well, people under Portuguese jurisdiction could be punished under African law. The governor of Benguela signaled that these practices should not be tolerated, since there were express orders stressing that anyone living in any of the Portuguese *presidio* was under Portuguese laws.⁸⁴ A lieutenant serving as regent of Quilengue, for example,

⁸⁰ AHNA, Cod. 443, fl. 8, September 22, 1796.

⁸¹ AHNA, Cod. 446, fl. 10, January 31, 1817.

⁸² AHNA, Cod. 454, Fl. 79v, October 27, 1843.

⁸³ AHNA, Cod. 221, fl. 94, December 29, 1841.

⁸⁴ AHM, doc. 2-2-1-4, September 19, 1767

condemned a black resident to pay a fine of four slaves, two cows and 12 thousand *réis* for murdering a sorcerer. Threatened with martial court, the regent had to return everything.⁸⁵

The Portuguese attacks tended not to respect and differentiate hierarchies when raiding, enslaving common people and elites alike. The affected *sobas* eventually ended up petitioning for their people, especially their relatives to be returned to their villages, since they were enslaved illegally. Captives who were released from slavery usually belonged to the elite.⁸⁶ As in the case of the son of the soba Mulundu, who was among the slaves bought from the trader João Batista Benites from the soba Lubombe. The son of the soba was brought from Dombe Grande to Benguela in a slave coffle, but quickly freed when he arrived, after his father complained to the governor.⁸⁷ The nephew of the soba Kibanda was also set free after negotiations among the people involved, including the trader who brought him from the interior.⁸⁸ *Sobas* in conflict also targeted elite members for personal revenge or to profit from their ransom. The soba Joanes Gaspar, known for his constant conflicts with the Portuguese, captured

⁸⁵ AHNA, Cod. 463, fl 44-44v, January 4, 1848.

⁸⁶ See the case in Claude Meillassoux. “État et conditions des esclaves à Gumbu (Mali) au XIXe siècle”, in Claude Meillassoux (ed). *L’esclavage en Afrique Précoloniale*. Paris: François Maspero, 1975, pp. 221-250; and Curto, “Un butin illégitime”, pp. 321. For enslaved elite individuals, see Curto “Experiences of Enslavement in West-Central Africa”.

⁸⁷ AHNA, Cod. 445, fls. 97-97v., January 27, 1809.

⁸⁸ AHNA, Cod. 450, fl. 64-64v., July 19, 1837.

the son of the soba of Catumbela. Francisco Pedro de Moraes was later sold to a slave trader who brought him to Benguela. In 1846, after the appeals of the soba of Catumbela, Francisco Pedro de Moraes was freed and received a letter stating his freedom.⁸⁹

The profits of the slave trade were so tempting that officers risked being dismissed in order to enjoy the economic gains. Officials were poorly paid and constantly faced delays in their salary payments. Some captains argued that their salary was not enough for their basic needs and that they could not even afford buying paper to write letters to the Benguela authorities.⁹⁰ However, officials could receive penalties for involvement in the slave trade. There were few cases where this actually happened. As the case of Arsénio Pompílio Pompeu do Carpo demonstrates it was easier to arrest an official charged for other crimes than involvement in illegal slaving. Arsénio was a colonel in Bihé, where in fact there were no Portuguese troops stationed, and he was known as one of the greatest slaver in Angola. After a long life of continuous adventures and involvement in illicit businesses, Pompeu do Carpo, was convicted and received mild sentences for his crimes but he did not serve them. Finally in 1851 he was caught for his involvement in frauds and adulteration of documents.

⁸⁹ AHNA, Cod. 455. Fl. 241v., October 28, 1846. Cod. 455. fl. 272, December 1, 1846. Cod. 460. fl 22v, October 28, 1846.

⁹⁰ AHNA, Cod. 508. fl 6v., August 20, 1823. See also AHU, Angola, cx. 38, doc. 16. April 9, 1753. And AHU, Angola, cx. 39, doc. 32. June 8, 1754. AHU, Angola, CG, pasta 4, April 13, 1839.

By this time, he lost all his military benefits and medals and was condemned to spend 10 years in São Tomé, which he never did.⁹¹

If authorities were rarely punished for their involvement with the slave trade, *sobas* were aware that they had to comply with a series of obligations in order to guarantee good relationships and access to imported goods. It was common to send slaves and cattle to the authorities as personal gifts, beyond the regular payment of taxes and vassalage tributes. The payment of tributes usually included slaves, which eventually provoked more raids, kidnappings or any other mechanism to ensure the slave production. In one case, a *soba* dispatched 52 adult slaves, 11 children and 5 babies, plus cattle to the governor of Benguela to fulfill this requirement.⁹² Eventually gifts were sent to reinforce good relationships. Some governors refused the gifts in order not to compromise themselves, as happened with José Manoel Ruiz.⁹³ Others would take possession of the gifts without any moral condemnation. In 1794, for example, the *soba* of Bailundo sent 13 slaves and 12 cows to the governor of Benguela. One woman and two cows had perished during the journey, and the governor happily accepted the gifts expressing his satisfaction with the good shape of the slaves. Since he

⁹¹ AHU, Angola, mc, 785. “Documentos sobre o processo de Arsénio Pompílio Pompeu de Carpo, capitão do Bié”, November 30, 1852. For more on Arsénio’s adventurous see João Pedro Marques. “Arsénio Pompílio Pompeu de Carpo: um percurso negreiro no século XIX”, *Análise Social*, 36 (160), 2001, pp. 609-638.

⁹² AHU, Cx. 34, doc. 45.

⁹³ AHNA, Cod. 442, fl. 180v-181, August 7, 1801.

was used seeing the bad shape of slaves destined for the royal fifth, it was quite a surprise to him to see slaves coming from the interior in good physical condition. In return he sent textiles, swords, seven hats, socks, shirts, flags, alcohol, paper, stamps, guns, and gunpowder.⁹⁴ Motivated by the gifts, by the end of the year, the *soba* of Bailundu sent another 30 slaves.⁹⁵ Gift exchange was a common way to avoid future conflicts and gain some political and economic advantages. In 1770, the *soba* of Humbe sent gifts to the governor with his traders, who were transporting a slave coffle to negotiate a sale the port town. Although, the captain of Benguela mentioned that *pumbeiros* from Humbe entered Benguela everyday, they still felt obliged to offer gifts to the authorities in order to conduct business in peace.⁹⁶ Governors were not the only ones to receive gifts. Captains, regents, and soldiers also had access to *sobas'* presents. The regent of Caconda, for example received seven slaves from the *soba* of Galengue.⁹⁷ Another regent of the same *presídio* was presented one slave from the *soba* of Katoco.⁹⁸ Cases such as these demonstrate the involvement of the Portuguese in the slaving process and their role as an accelerator of the processes taking place in the interior.

⁹⁴ AHU, Angola, Cod. 1630, fl 148, July 5, 1794. AHU, Angola, cod. 1631. fl 153, August 1, 1795.

⁹⁵ And AHU, Angola, cod. 1631, fl 235v., December 14, 1795.

⁹⁶ Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro (BNRJ), I-28, 28, 28, "Informação que dá João Pilarta da Silva ao capitão mor de Benguela José Viera de Araújo da viagem que fez por terra a Cabo Negro em companhia de José dos Santos no Ano de 1770".

⁹⁷ AHU, Cx. 46, doc. 31. May 30, 1763.

⁹⁸ AHU, cx. 90, doc. 18. January 4, 1799.

“Illegal” enslavement strategies:

Another mechanism to force someone into slavery was kidnapping. Women, children, and anyone debilitated by a physical condition, such as injuries or malnourishment, were vulnerable to anybody with superior power. It is difficult to differentiate kidnapping from warfare, since in most cases people were violently seized and taken from their environment quickly in order to avoid retaliation. I separate warfare cases from kidnapped victims based on the enslavement experience: while in warfare usually large groups of people were seized, in kidnapping, groups were avoided, while individuals were targeted.

The case of Dona Leonor de Carvalho Fonseca and her two daughters illustrates how women could be easily forced into slavery. In 1811, Dona Leonor Fonseca, a mulatto woman, widow of an established Benguela trader, decided to visit the Bailundu kingdom. Confident that her skin colour and her position as a trader protected her from enslavement, she did not take any extra precautions before arriving at Bailundu. However, the soba of Bailundu did not consider her physical and economic characteristics important attributes in protecting her. He enslaved D. Leonor and her two daughters. The three women were later sold to *sertanejos* who transported them to Benguela, probably in a slave coffles like any other captive. Separated from her progeny, D. Leonor was sent to Luanda on a slave vessel, probably destined to Rio de Janeiro, where she finally claimed her freedom. After returning to

Benguela, she still had to fight legally to get her daughters back, who were serving as slaves in the governor's house.⁹⁹

D. Leonor was not the only mulatto enslaved in Angola, even though it was not common enslaving mulattoes. Portuguese agents resisted in slaving mulattoes, due to the fact that mulattoes were usually seen as descendents of whites, who by definition were free people.¹⁰⁰ A raid perpetrated by Kitata and Kaluquembe sobas, captured some people in Kilengues region. While other people had been seized, there was a specification that a mulatto woman was captured from the residence of a trader.¹⁰¹ As well as Catherine Mulgrave-Zimmerman, a mulatto woman born in 1827, sequestered in Luanda by the crew of a Brazilian ship and later captured by the British patrol on Jamaican shores.¹⁰² And in 1847, a young woman was seized Catumbela by an Ndombe man¹⁰³. Cases like these demonstrate that mulatto women were also in a

⁹⁹ For D. Leonor's odyssey see AHNA, Cod. 323, fl 28-29, August 19, 1811. And AHNA, Cod. 323, fl. 30-31, August 20, 1811. Curto also discusses Leonor's case on his "Experiences of Enslavement in West Central Africa".

¹⁰⁰ For more on skin colour and social status see C. R. Boxer. *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1415-1825*. London: Clarendon Press, 1963. A. J. R. Russel-Wood. "Iberian Expansion and the Issues of Black Slavery: Changing Portuguese Attitudes, 1440-1770", in *The American Historical Review*, 83, 1 (1978): 16-42. José Carlos Venâncio. *A Economia de Luanda e Hinterland no Século XVIII. Um estudo de Sociologia Histórica*. Lisbon: Estampa, 1996, pp. 46-48. David Eltis. *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Tensions of Empire: Colonial Control and Visions of Rule", *American Ethnologist*, 16 (4), 1989: 609-621.

¹⁰¹ AHNA, Cod. 442, fl. 223 -223v., May 10, 1803.

¹⁰² See Paul Lovejoy, "Daily Life in Western Africa during the era of the "Slave Route"", p. 14

¹⁰³ AHNA, Cod. 453, fl 33v., December 21, 1847.

very fragile situation, not too different from black women. Authorities draw attention to these cases because mulatto women were theoretically protected by their skin colour, their cultural affiliation (most probably fluent in Portuguese) and, not least, by their economic activity, which located them as residents in major cities. However, they, as well, could not escape the enslavement process.

The transformations taking place, motivating raids, and the constant use of violence threatened everyone's security. Loyalties changed overnight, alliances were disrupted and no one was safe, not even people already enslaved. A very rich documentation is located in the codice 440 at the AHNA. In this book, João de Alvelos Leiria, the governor of Benguela, listed appeals made directly to him by Benguela's residents or visitors. In his mandate, Leiria was very engaged in releasing people illegally enslaved and had the support of the Benguela traders.¹⁰⁴ Thanks to these records it is possible to know that Timóteo Carneiro Lopes intervened on behalf of his slave Roque to guarantee that a slave's complaint was heard by high-ranking authorities. According to Timoteo's request, a black woman named Andreza, resident in Catumbela, had kidnapped Roque's slave.¹⁰⁵ Roque, who was himself a slave, had at least two slaves: the seized woman and her child. Through the governor of Benguela, Roque and his slave owner hoped to recover his property. A similar case was presented

¹⁰⁴ See. AHU, Angola, cx. 125, doc. 22 and AHU, Angola, cx. 125, doc. 42. October 5, 1812.

¹⁰⁵ AHNA, Cod. 440, fl 26v. Requisition n. 64, August 3, 1812.

by Manoel Garcia Mendes, whose slave Manoel was killed in an assault on the road. He did not claim revenge for Manoel's death. Rather, he wanted to recuperate Manoel's slave and her children who were seized by the murderer.¹⁰⁶ It is not surprising that slave owner acted on behalf of their slaves. In the end, the property of their property, as Manoel's case demonstrates, also belonged to them. And insecurity was so high that even people already enslaved could be kidnapped and suffer further violence. Mariana Ruiz Machado, a black woman, reported that the *gentio* had seized her slave girl while raiding.¹⁰⁷ Paulo, a freed man, requested the return of three of his slaves who had been taken from him by Portuguese soldiers.¹⁰⁸

Free blacks were particularly vulnerable to enslavement and the Portuguese agents were aware of their vulnerability in this matter. Joaquim Pires Ribeiro, for example, who was Angolan born, had worked as a sailor and joined the army for 2 years, before he deserted and escaped to the interior. For some unknown reason, he was enslaved by one of the *makotas* of Bailundu *soba*. Sold to a Benguela trader, he was able to claim his freedom after his arrival in Benguela.¹⁰⁹ Another deserted soldier, Manoel Joaquim Pinto de Almeida, was sold in the interior to Vicente de Barros, a trader who brought him in a slave coffle to Benguela. After the baptism ceremony,

¹⁰⁶ AHNA, Cod. 440, fl 44v. Requisition n. 297. December 24, 1812.

¹⁰⁷ AHNA, Cod. 440, fl 66. Requisition n. 328 and 329. September 19, 1813.

¹⁰⁸ AHNA, Cod. 440, fl 53v. Requisition n. 138. March 18, 1813.

¹⁰⁹ AHNA, Cod. 442, fl. 143-145, October 19, 1800.

when the priest tried to brand him with the royal stamp, he identified himself as a free man.¹¹⁰ Maria, a freed woman, had her daughter seized from her arms while the Portuguese authorities visit the house where she lived. The officers went there to make an inventory of Francisco Jose Bandeira's belongings. During their activities, they apprehended Maria's daughter, as she was one of Bandeira's slaves. They did not take into consideration that they were freed people living as Bandeira's dependents.¹¹¹

Traders and *pumbeiros* were in extremely vulnerable positions. Their economic activities did not protect them from enslavement and during their journeys they carried valuable goods, such as textiles, and their personal guns. In 1817, four traders acting in the interior on behalf of a lieutenant had already received the royal stamp on their bodies when they finally managed to explain their stories. They explained that they were free Black men sent to the interior with orders to buy slaves when they were captured by the *gentio*. They had changed hands three times before arriving in Benguela, where they were ready to be embarked on a ship.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ AHNA, Cod. 508, fl. 74-74v., October 4, 1826. For the discussion on baptism and branding of slaves in Angola see Antônio Carreira, *Notas sobre o tráfico português de escravos*, p. 60. For an interesting report on this matter see AHU, Angola, cx. 40, doc. 25. March 21, 1755. Decades later, the Queen established that under doubt, the priest should not brand people claiming freedom and keep them in the prison until further investigation was concluded. This law was also valid for those claiming to be free porters. See AHU, Angola, cx 83, doc. 41. April 13, 1796.

¹¹¹ AHNA, Cod. 440, fl 54. Requisition n. 144. September 19, 1812.

¹¹² AHNA, Cod. 446, fl. 112v-113v., January 31, 1817. As well as fls. 136v., July 12, 1817. See also, AHU, Angola, cx. 132. doc. 30, January 31, 1817.

Ransoming someone who was seized in warfare was difficult. It was necessary to locate the destination of the person enslaved; the relatives had to have survived the war and also be able to economically afford a ransom and provide an attractive exchange good – in some cases exchanging their own slaves for relatives.¹¹³ Further, one of the first measures taken in transforming a captive into a slave was to remove him or her from his or her place of origin, cutting from their kinship network, and ethnic and linguistic affiliation. This also affected the ability to locate a particular person and hence offer a ransom.¹¹⁴ For economic reasons, ransom was limited to members of the elite. *Sobas*, for example, used Portuguese agents as intermediaries to claim the freedom of their relatives. In 1812, the *soba* Mlundu, established in Dombe Pequeno, demanded the release of his relative, the *soba* of Manca, seized by the commander of the Dombe Grande. According to the *soba* Mlundu, the *soba* of Kapito, motivated by personal revenge, ordered the apprehension of his relative.¹¹⁵ It is not clear why the commander of the Dombe Grande acted in favor of the *soba* Kapito. Maybe he received some kind of compensation with that or maybe, as like many of the

¹¹³ For the discussion on ransom as a mechanism of African resistance see Sylvane A. Diouf, “The Last Resort. Redeeming family and friends”, in Sylvane A. Diouf (ed) *Fighting the Slave Trade. West African Strategies*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003, pp.81-97. See also Patterson. *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 107 for the limitations of ransom

¹¹⁴ For the discussion on slaves as an outsider see Meillassoux. *The Anthropology of Slavery..* Paul Lovejoy, “Introduction”, *Ideology of Slavery in Africa*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1981. And David Eltis. *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

¹¹⁵ AHNA, Cod. 440, fl 23. Requisition n. 19. July 16, 1812.

African officers serving in the hinterland, he had personal links with the region. He could be subjected to one of the *sobas*, personally involved in the power clashes taking place in the interior.

In 1847, not knowing the destiny of his son, the *soba* of Bihé asked Portuguese authorities to locate his son, Katiabala, who had been seized on a journey.¹¹⁶ However, the Governor of Benguela asserted that Katiabala was not in Benguela, while his other son, Kaucia, had already escaped from Antonio Joaquim de Carvalho's house, where he was being "friendly" hosted by the trader.¹¹⁷ Portuguese officials, for strategic reasons, had to be subordinated to some of the *sobas* decisions. In order to survive in the interior, where Portuguese forces were not powerful and in large numbers, they counted on *soba*'s collaboration. Relatives had to act quickly, since cases of people seized and shipped to Brazil were common. Traders were not obliged to present slaves bought directly from the *gentio*. Trader only had to present slaves sent from the interior through a third party. In the case of buying captives from *sobas* or anyone in the hinterland and transporting the slave coffles in their journey, merchants were exempted from any obligation to present the captives to Portuguese authorities. Due to this legal space, people illegally enslaved in kidnappings or unjustified wars could easily be embarked on ships and dispatched to Brazil. To avoid cases like that, the

¹¹⁶ AHNA, Cod. 461. Fl 44v. October 22, 1847.

¹¹⁷ AHNA, Cod. 463. Fl 6v-7. October 25, 1847.

governor ordered strict vigilance and control over every ship leaving the coast.¹¹⁸ I was not able to locate any case of a person enslaved in Brazil requesting his/her return to Benguela region. There are cases of people seized in other parts of West Central Africa requesting to be returned home, like Fortunata Joaquina da Encarnacao da Costa Conde Faustina, one of the daughters of the ManiKongo. She had been kidnapped by her father's enemies and shipped to Brazil at a very young age. Established as a domestic slave in Porto Alegre, she was able to request her return to Kongo¹¹⁹. However, so far, no case is known of someone originally from Benguela region requesting his or her return to Africa.

If individuals were not kidnapped or seized in raids and warfare, family members or friends could still betray them, secretly organizing their sale. Cases of kidnapping and trickery usually overlap. Confident that a trustful person would not be able to enslave them, people were also susceptible to hoaxes. Katete, for example, a free black male established in Catumbela, requested the governor of Benguela's protection. After seeing his mother sold by her relatives, he was afraid he could have the same fate. Lacking any support in his community of origin, his option was to seek Portuguese protection¹²⁰. Less lucky was Albano who had been sold by his relatives to

¹¹⁸ AHU, Angola, cx. 159, doc. 55. August 9, 1828. For more on this legal space for the importation of slaves directly from the *gentio* see AHU, Angola, CG, Pasta 1B, September 12, 1837.

¹¹⁹ AHU, Angola, cx. 151, doc. 5. Prior to January 5, 1826.

¹²⁰ AHNA, Cod. 440, fl 29. Requisition n. 91. August 17, 1812.

a *sertanejo* in the hinterland. Already enslaved, he did not find any legal mechanism to win his freedom back, since he could not prove his original freedom. The trader, in this case, could not be blamed since his relatives sold him and no one supported him in Benguela. After having his request denied, he remained serving as a slave in Benguela.¹²¹

People of the same community took advantage of people who trusted them. This was particularly the case of Nbema, who was deceived by an old slave woman who asked her to help her with some task. After her arrival, the old woman took off, explaining to her master that she was too old to work but that she had found a replacement for her, Nbema. Caught by surprise, Nbema was kept in captivity by Antonio Leal do Sacramento, however, after two days, she ran away back to her village of origin. Months after, in a business trip to Benguela with her daughter, she was captured on Sacramento's order. On the same day she received a stamp and was sold to Joao de Oliveira Dias, the shipmaster of the slave vessel *Astrea*. Nbema and her daughter were shipped to Luanda. However, several witnesses from Katumbela, including the soba, went to see the governor of Benguela claiming Nbema was a free woman who had been illegally enslaved. The governor then ordered her return to Benguela to investigate the case.¹²² Even though her own people assured the authorities that Nbema was a free woman, she was kept under an official care for months.¹²³

¹²¹ AHNA, Cod. 440, fl 30. Requisition n. 107. August 25, 1812.

¹²² Curto, "The Story of Nbena, 1817-1820", pp. 43-64, has an interesting reconstruction and analysis of Nbena's case. For more on Nbena see also AHNA, Cod. 446. fl. 154v-155v.,

Nbema was not the only free person to suffer at Sacramento's hands. José Manoel, a free black soldier, serving under lieutenant Sacramento's at Catumbela fortress, was sent to the interior on Sacramento's order with 46 pieces of textiles. In his journey, a *soba* captured him and stole Sacramento's textiles. The *soba* presented him the possibility of regaining his freedom if he was able to pay another 46 textiles and a bottle of firewater. José Manoel then returned to Catumbela, hoping that Sacramento would offer these goods for his freedom. Sacramento sent everything the *soba* requested, but enslaved José Manoel, since he did not have the means to pay his debt. José Manoel served Sacramento as a porter for more than two years. After these two years, Sacramento tried to sell José Manoel to a trader, but by this time José Manoel's relatives offered a young woman as a ransom. Sacramento received the slave but did not release Jose. José Manoel only regained his freedom after the governor of Benguela interfered in the case.¹²⁴ Cases like these illustrate the fragility of people's freedom in the Benguela hinterland and the abuse of power by authorities who violently subjugated people. Captains could easily commit crimes, enslave entire families, and

December 11, 1817. AHNA, Cod. 446. fl. 154v-155v, December 11, 1817. AHNA, Cod. 447, fl 16-17, September 16, 1818. And fl. 25, November 3, 1818.

¹²³ AHNA, Cod. 447, fl 9v-10v., July 7, 1818.

¹²⁴ AHNA, Cod. 447, fl 30v-34, October 6, 1818. And AHNA, Cod. 507. fl 129v-132v., January 18, 1819.

capture sons and daughters of free people.¹²⁵ By the time that someone could complain about these actions, the captives could already have been sold.

D. Maria José de Barros, concubine of captain José Joaquim Domingues looked for legal help to have her apprentice returned. Jose Domingues not only physically abused her, but he also sold Quitéria, a free woman who was under her protection to transatlantic slave traders. Quitéria was originally from Caconda and her widowed mother had entrusted Maria de Barros to support and teach the young woman how to be a seamstress. José Joaquim was later arrested and sentenced to house arrest for six months. His crime, branding a free person, was considered a mild one. He was not condemned for selling a free person into slavery, since Maria de Barros rescued Quitéria before the ship took off. Maria de Barros was able to find Quitéria, already branded, on board of a slave vessel, and ransomed her with one of her domestic slaves of the same value.¹²⁶ Cases like this, illustrate that ransoming someone implied the enslavement of another person. In itself, ransoming was not a strategy to condemn slavery. It was rather the reprobation of enslavement of one specific person.

Trickery of any kind could be used in order to enslave free people. A trader, for example, could seize free porters and sell them as if they were captured in the interior. Porters from Bailundu were made available to the *sertanejo* Antônio José da

¹²⁵ This was particularly what happened in Benguela in 1829. See AHNA, cod. 449, fl. 160v-161. January 27, 1829.

¹²⁶ AHNA, Cod. 509. fl 215v, March 17, 1837. And AHNA, Cod. 450. Fl 49v-50, February 20, 1837.

Costa when he visited the region around 1789. After successful commercial exchanges, the soba offered him some porters to carry parts of his acquired goods to Benguela. Arriving in Benguela, the *sertanejo* not only sold the ivory, bee-wax and slaves bought in Bailundu, but he also sold the free porters who had been lent to him. The free porters were sold to a local trader who shipped them to Luanda. The governor of Benguela intervened in the case, demanding the release of the porters, fearing the soba of Bailundu's reaction.¹²⁷ In the same period, another trader seized eight people from Bailundu, justifying his actions with the fact that the soba owed him money. The traders of Benguela requested the intervention of the governor of Angola, afraid of the consequences that these types of actions could have on commercial relations with that *sobado*, one of the major markets for slaves and prosperous in other commodities such as bee-wax and ivory.¹²⁸

People could also be enslaved in order to pay tributes and taxes. In the case of an individual subjected to tax payment, he/she may use his/her own slave to pay a tribute, not producing a new slave *stricto senso* but releasing a local slave to the state. In the case of a tributary state, the rulers paid tributes in the form of slaves. In case of facing lack of slave labour, the solution was to engage in warfare, and stimulate the abduction of free people outside of the state limit. Under extreme conditions, rulers also handed out local free people. There are not many cases available in the Portuguese

¹²⁷ AHU, Angola, cx. 74, doc. 15. April 21, 1789.

¹²⁸ AHU, Angola, cx. 74, doc. 49. November 10, 1789.

documentation on the use of slaves or enslavement of free people for tribute and tax payments. However, reports from the mid-nineteenth century stress that it was common to offer slaves to the soba of Bihé to have a problem settled. *Sovetas*, tributaries, and *makotas* also provided slaves when they requested a better position. No trader could profit from slaves' sales without paying taxes to the rulers.¹²⁹ The Portuguese also accepted slaves as tribute payment, as is the case of the royal fifth. In any case, these slaves could be sold later to the transatlantic traders or be used locally; displaced from their regions of origin, they fulfilled any economic demand for labour.¹³⁰

In a specific case of enslavement of insiders there are cases of people enslaved because of debts. If a person could not fulfill the requirement of paying an annual tributes to the *soba* (the annual tributes corresponded to a part of someone agricultural production and hunting activities), the *soba* could force people into slavery. Since the *soba* was the administrator of the land, he could impose enslavement on the person in debt as well as on his wives, offspring, and brothers and other dependents, such as slaves. They would become slaves of the state and could not be sold outside of the community. However, if any of the states' slaves were caught in treason, conspiracy or witchcraft activities, the *soba* had the jurisdiction to sell his own people to traders or

¹²⁹ IHGB, Lata 29 Pasta 17. "Notícia Geral dos Costumes do Bié". Fl. 6v

¹³⁰ As in the case of the two "Benguela" males sent to Calumbo, in 1787, as a tax payment. AHNA, Cod. 82, fl 81, October 11, 1787.

any other interested buyer.¹³¹ As in the case of judicial condemnation, there was also a legal space for *sobas* to sell their own people in case of intense demand.

The Portuguese agents, however, tried to regulate this aspect of enslavement. In 1770, a *bando* (a collection of rules imposed by the Portuguese authorities, in accordance with Lisbon rulers) was established in order to avoid enslavement through debts. The intention was to protect the people who were vassals of the Portuguese crown. According to this law no free black person could be placed as a pawn or a mortgage on someone else's behalf in case of debt. However, people seized in warfare or enslaved through judicial mechanisms could still be pawned.¹³² Silva Porto also highlights that enslavement due to debts was common among the *gentio*. He, in different instances, reported the case of four women who proposed to be his slaves. However, according to the local law whites could not accept slaves through this mechanism, known as “tumbicar”.¹³³

There are few references in the Portuguese correspondence of people enslaved through judicial mechanism. However, observers in the late eighteenth century and mid-nineteenth century Bihé, argued that some of the judicial cases made against local

¹³¹ For the description of the process by which sobas could enslave their own people please see IHGB, Lata 29 Pasta 17. “Notícia Geral dos Costumes do Bie”. Fl. 7v.

¹³² AHNA, Cod. 80, fl 1-1v., November, 12, 1771.

¹³³ SGL. Res 1-E-2. Silva Porto, “Memorial dos Mucanos, 1841-1885”. January 15, 1845. And also September 10, 1847. See as well Magyar comments on “tumbikar”. Magyar. *Reisen in Sud-Afrika in Den Jahren 1849 Bis 1857*. p. 7, p. 24-27.

people were in most of the cases a fraud, a deliberate attempt to force someone into enslavement.¹³⁴ Nineteenth century reports offer glimpses on the processes by which the soba of Bihé could enslave his own subjects. According to these reports, anyone accused of seducing the soba's wife could be condemned to death and his relatives enslaved. There is no restriction about maintaining the new slaves locally. They could be sold to traders by their own soba. Women adultery was certainly a taboo among the Bienos, especially among the elite. While the soba's wife infidelity was worth death of her lover and the enslavement of a whole set of relatives, in case of seducing one of the *sekulos'* wives, the perpetrator had to pay 200 pieces of textile to compensate for his crime. In case that the "criminal" could not afford this price, he faced enslavement. Silva Porto witnessed cases like these and reported them in his *Memorial dos Mucanos*, which he kept in order to keep track of his expenses. In one case, one of his slaves, named Felipe, had an affair with one of the *sekulo's* concubines. Later, Felipe had another affair but this time with a concubine of a *sobeta*. In consequence of his slave's relationship, Silva Porto received an edict to pay for both crimes. It cost him 120 and 130 pieces of textiles respectively. After the second case, Felipe ran away and found asylum at soba of Quipupire's land, where he offered himself as a slave.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ IHGB, Lata 29 Pasta 17. "Noticia Geral dos Costumes do Bie". Fl 6. And Magyar. Op. Cit. ch. 7 p. 24-25.

¹³⁵ SGL, Res 1-E-2. Silva Porto, "Memorial dos Mucanos, 1841-1885". July 10, 1848 and August 17, 1851. For other cases, see also August 13, 1857; January 25, 1858; April 10, 1858; December 13, 1860.

Magyar also reported cases of female infidelity punished with slavery. If the unfaithful wife denounced her “lover”, she was not punished. However, the lover had to pay compensation to the betrayed husband and, according to Magyar, if the man was from a wealthy family, his family would be enslaved. It is not clear why slavery was related to wealth, but it is likely it could represent elevated ransoms.¹³⁶

Murder cases were also punished in Bihé with enslavement. Individuals could be sentenced to the payment of 300 textiles, four slaves, a cow and a goat. As in the previous case, difficulties to pay the fine could result in enslavement.¹³⁷ It is important to highlight that these were mechanisms from mid-19th century. It is problematic to assume that by early 1800's or even earlier, people could be enslaved for the same motives. If the punishment may have changed through time, penalization was also subject to the person who committed the crime, to the location of where it happened and other circumstances. In 1845, for example, Silva Porto beat one of his slaves who tried to run away. Ten days after his public punishment, the slave died. The soba of Bihé demanded this crime to be punished, considering that Silva Porto had killed one person in the soba's territory. In order to avoid a direct conflict with the soba, Silva Porto restituted for the crime with 1553 pieces of textiles, one *ancoreta* (36 liters) of

¹³⁶ Magyar. *Reisen in Sud-Afrika in Den Jahren 1849 Bis 1857*, ch.7, p. 18. See also ch. 8 on Crimes and punishment.

¹³⁷ AHNA, Cod. 462, fl. 31-32. Francisco Xavier Lopes [Interim Governor of Benguela] to Pedro Alexandrino da Cunha [Governor of Angola]. November 4, 1847.

alcohol, one barrel of gunpowder, one weapon and one cow.¹³⁸ While textiles and alcohol were highly appreciated for the social status they could provide, plus the effects of the alcohol, gunpowder was valued because it not only made hunting easier, but also facilitated the mechanism through which slaves were produced: warfare.¹³⁹

Conclusion:

The cases presented in this chapter represent a small portion of individuals' experiences in the Benguela hinterland. Most of the people exported through the port of Benguela did not leave a trace in the registers. Few of them found legal strategies to fight against enslavement, and only those who acquired enough knowledge of the system were able to recover their freedom. This however was not the case for most of the people exported to the Americas. Ransoming and legal remedies were not available to everyone. These mechanisms implied connections, relationships, power and prestige, attributes not accessible in most of the cases.

¹³⁸ SGL, Res 1-E-2. Silva Porto, "Memorial dos Mucanos, 1841-1885". May 7, 1845.

¹³⁹ Among the interesting reports about gunpowder dependency see, AHU, Angola, cx. 61, doc. 55. October, 1777. AHU, Angola, cx 62, doc. 4. May 22, 1779. AHU, Angola, cx 63, doc. 7. February 22, 1780. And. AHU, Angola, cx. 115, doc. 24. February 14, 1806. AHU, Angola, cx. 129, doc. 23. August 5, 1814. For the authorities concern with the number of guns available in the interior see AHU, Angola, cx. 76, doc. 15. Also AHU, Cod. 549. "Instrucao para Joseph Goncalo Camara", June 22, 1779. There are also attempts to make inventory of the number of guns available with the gentio. See: AHU, Angola, cx. 71, doc. 60. November 15, 1786. On the implication of gunpowder trade see R. A. Kea. "Firearms and Warfare on the Gold Slave Coast from the XVth to the XIXth Century", *Journal of African History*, 12 (2), 1971, pp. 185-213.

The documentation itself has its own limitations – it is limited to cases that draw the attention of Portuguese authorities or travellers and were considered worthy to be registered. It is also limited in scope, neglecting information for some regions while favouring others. Still it offers interesting perspectives on the slaving processes of a region where not too much is known. Through the cases located, which by no means include all the cases of enslavement, it is possible to argue that slavery was endemic, in a sense that no one was safe from enslavement. The region was in violent turmoil throughout the period studied, which provoked constant cycles of internal raids and warfare. Rather than chaotic, the levels of insecurity were controlled in certain extent by African rulers.

Women and children were extremely vulnerable to illegal enslavement, demonstrating that while there was no demand for women and children during most of the transatlantic slave trade period, there was internal demand for them. Another conclusion that comes from the cases is that Africans and Portuguese had different conceptions of who could or could not be enslaved. While the Portuguese tended not to enslave mulattos, African traders and rulers did not recognize their skin colour as a barrier to enslavement. Mulattos and free blacks were vulnerable when acting in regions where they were not familiarized.

The cases presented also challenge the idea of a single enslaving frontier moving eastward. Only understanding frontiers in a fluid way can we explain the large number of people constantly seized in regions close to the coast, which in theory

was inside of the frontier, and in this sense “protected”. Frontiers were definitely not static and were under constant reconfiguration by groups engaged in slaving activities, not only by the Portuguese agents. All the groups involved had their own frontier established, which did not correspond necessarily with the physical space, but rather with the idea of insider/outsider. Anyone who did not share the same language, religion, habits, and political affiliation was an outsider, *i.e.* potential subjects for enslavement.

Finally, self-enslavement and the selling of relatives, which is portrayed as common in this region,¹⁴⁰ seldom appear in documents I consulted. I was able to locate only few reports of people offering themselves as slaves, and all of these cases were located in a very specific time period – after 1840s- and to a specific kind of people – European traders. Even though traders’ accounts are as valid as any other source, there is no doubt that European traders had a different political agenda than other Portuguese agents. This might reflect on their approach and interpretation of self-enslavement. Furthermore, the lack of information on self-enslavement in official correspondence can also shed light on Portuguese and European traders’ conceptions of slavery, dependency and the end of slave trade. These two traders were in the interior while the transatlantic slave trade was coming to an end. Perhaps the only way the traders could morally justify the existence of these slaves was arguing that they had

¹⁴⁰ Patrick Manning. *Slavery and African Life. Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Joseph Miller. “The Significance of Drought, Disease and Famine in the Agriculturally Marginal Zones of West Central Africa”, *Journal of African History*, 23 (1), 1982.

voluntarily offered themselves as slaves. As well, the only mention in the documentation of cases of people selling their own relatives is list of the reasons why people were sent to Brazil.

By no means, the cases exposed are exhaustive and they did not represent what happened with the majority of people enslaved, but beyond doubt they raise questions about the enslaving mechanisms operating within this region.