

Lourenço da Silva Mendonça and the Black Atlantic Abolitionist Movement in the Seventeenth Century

This groundbreaking study tells the story of the highly organised, international legal court case for the abolition of slavery spearheaded by Prince Lourenço da Silva Mendonça in the seventeenth century. The case, presented before the Vatican, called for the freedom of all enslaved people and other oppressed groups. This included New Christians (Jews converted to Christianity) and Indigenous Americans in the Atlantic World, and Black Christians from confraternities in Angola, Brazil, Portugal and Spain. Abolition debate is generally believed to have been dominated by white Europeans in the eighteenth century. By centring African agency, José Lingna Nafafé offers a new perspective on the abolition movement, showing, for the first time, how the legal debate was begun not by Europeans, but by Africans. In the first book of its kind, Lingna Nafafé underscores the exceptionally complex nature of the African liberation struggle, and demystifies the common knowledge and accepted wisdom surrounding African slavery.

José Lingna Nafafé is a senior lecturer in Portuguese and Lusophone Studies at the University of Bristol.

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Lourenço da Silva Mendonça and the Black
Atlantic Abolitionist Movement in the
Seventeenth Century

JOSÉ LINGNA NAFAFÉ

University of Bristol



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Introduction

In 1684, Lourenço da Silva de Mendonça from the kingdom of Kongo in the Indies¹ ‘arrived in Rome to take up an important role for Black peoples’.² That role was to bring an ethical and criminal *kufunda*³ (case) before the Vatican court, which accused the nations involved in Atlantic slavery, including the Vatican, Italy,⁴ Spain and Portugal, of committing

¹ See Archivio della Propaganda Fide (Archives of Propaganda Fide, hereafter APF), Scrittura Original Riferite Nelle Congregazioni Generali, Vatican, Rome, Italy (hereafter SOCG), SOCG, vol. 495a, folio (fl.) 393, ‘Lourenzo deSilva de Mendonza delReyno diCongo nell’Inde venuto à Roma’. What was known as the kingdom of Kongo then was situated in West Central Africa in what is today part of northern Angola. The territory also makes up the western part of the modern Democratic Republic of Kongo as well as the southern part of Gabon. For detailed studies of the kingdom of Kongo, see John Thornton, ‘The Origins and Early History of the Kingdom of Kongo, c. 1350–1550,’ *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 34(1), 2001, pp. 89–120. See Marina de Melo e Souza, ‘Congo in the Americas and Brazil’, Oxford Encyclopedia, 2020: <https://oxfordre.com/africanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-430>. The spelling of ‘Congo’ with ‘C’ is kept when there is a direct quote in both Portuguese and Italian sources of the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries to maintain the sense of originality of these sources.

² See APF, SOCG, vol. 495a, fl. 392.

³ *Kufunda*, *maka* or *maca* are Kimbundu words (Mbundu is one of the ethnic groups in the Angolan population), meaning a case to be heard in court or a case taken to court, a court case or talk; see António de Oliveira Cadornega, *História Geral das Guerras Angolanas 1680*, vol. I, Lisbon: Agência Geral das Colónias, 1972, p. 614 and p. 616. Kimbundu was Mendonça’s mother tongue. He may also have spoken Portuguese, Spanish and Italian, considering his education, travels to and stay in Portugal, Spain and Italy. The Portuguese language would have been natural to him, because of his family connections to Portugal.

⁴ Italy here refers to northern Italy, that is, Mantua, which was ruled by the duchess of Mantua and Montferrat of the Gonzagas family. Mantua was a protectorate of Spain in the seventeenth century. The Gonzagas family intermarried with Spanish nobility. Mantua’s

crimes against humanity. It detailed the ‘tyrannical sale of human beings . . . the diabolic abuse of this kind of slavery . . . which they committed against any Divine or Human law’.⁵ Mendonça was a member of the Ndongo royal family, rulers of Pedras (Stones)⁶ of Pungo-Andongo, situated in what is now modern Angola.⁷ He carried with him the hopes of enslaved Africans and other oppressed groups in what was a remarkable moment that, I would argue, challenges the established interpretation of the history of abolition.⁸

Legal, moral, ethical and political debate on the abolition of slavery has traditionally been understood to have been initiated by Europeans in the eighteenth century – figures such as Thomas Buxton, Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, David Livingstone and William Wilberforce.⁹ To the

links with Spain in the seventeenth century connected to the Atlantic world. Mantua joined the kingdom of Italy in 1866. There is also, of course, plenty of literature on the involvement of Italian merchants from for example Florence and Genoa in the Atlantic slave trade. See Luís L. de Cadamosto, *Navegações de Luís de Cadamosto, Texto Italiano, e Tradução Portuguesa*, Lisbon: Instituto para a Alta Cultura (1507), 1944; Trevor P. Hall, *Before Middle Passage: Translated Portuguese Manuscripts of Atlantic Slave Trading from West Africa to Iberian Territories, 1513–26*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2015; and Sergio Tognetti, ‘Trade in Black African Slaves in Fifteenth-Century Florence’, in Tom F. Earle and Kate J. P. Lowe (eds.), *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 213–224.

⁵ See APF, SOCG, vol. 490, fl. 140r, ‘che da tal tirannica vendita d’ humano . . . dall’ abuso diabolico di tal schiavitù . . . usano contro ogni legge Divina, et Humana’.

⁶ See Cadornega, *História Geral*, vol. III, p. 156 and p. 167, where a note by José Matias Delgado states that Pungo-Andongo, prior to becoming the seat of King Philipe Hari I, was called Matadi Maupungo or Matadi ma Unpungu (Pedras Altas ou Pedras de Altura) [High Stones].

⁷ Angola is in fact the Portuguese version of the precolonial name Ngola, which was the name of a king who reigned over that kingdom. See Cadornega, *História Geral*, vol. I, p. 167. The kings of Ndongo were subordinated to the kingdom of Kongo, and so Ndongo was technically one of its provinces. I will use the term Angola to refer to both people groups that inhabited the region, the Mbundu and the Ovimbundu. All the Portuguese governors sent to the region were called governors of Angola in the seventeenth century, even though the country obviously did not exist as the modern nation state we know today. See ‘Carta de Doação a Paulo Dias de Novais’ [Letter of Grant to Paulo Dias de Novais] Arquivo da Torre do Tombo (here after ATT), Chancelaria de D. Sebastião (Doações), livro [liv.] 26, fls. 295–299, 19 September 1571, pp. 36–51.

⁸ I will not attempt to modernise spelling, punctuation or capitalisation in all quotations from primary sources from the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries in order to maintain a sense of the originality of the work I have used.

⁹ Thomas F. Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy*, London: J. Murray, 1839; Thomas Clarkson, ‘A Summary View of the Slave Trade and of the Probable Consequences of its Abolition’, London: J. Philips, 1787; Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species: Particularly the African, Translated from a Latin Dissertation, Which Was Honoured with the First Prize in the University of Cambridge, for*

extent that Africans are recognised as having played any role in ending slavery, especially in the seventeenth century, their efforts are typically confined to sporadic and impulsive cases of resistance, involving ‘shipboard revolts’, ‘maroon communities’, ‘individual fugitive slaves’ and ‘household revolts’.¹⁰ Studies of these cases have never gone beyond the obvious economic disruptions caused by enslaved people resorting to poisoning, murder and attacks on plantations and their masters’ household properties. Even those former enslaved Africans who gained their

the Year 1785, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1808; Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-trade by the British Parliament* (1808), New York: John S. Taylor, 1836; Prince Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp*, London: Henry Colbourn, 1828; Granville Sharp, *A Short Sketch of Temporary Regulations, (until Better Shall Be Proposed) for the Intended Settlement on the Grain Coast of Africa, Near Sierra Leona*, London: H. Baldwin Publication, 1786; Granville Sharp, *The Law of Retribution: Or, a Serious Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies, Founded On Unquestionable Examples of God’s Temporal Vengeance Against Tyrants, Slave-holders and Oppressors*, London, 1776. For discussion of Livingstone, see Tim Jeal, *Livingstone*, London: Heinemann, 1973; David Livingstone and James I. Macnair (ed.), *Livingstone’s Travels*, London: J. M. Dent, 1954; George Seaver, *David Livingstone: His Life and Letters*, New York: Lutterworth Press, 1957. For a detailed discussion of Wilberforce, see Wayne Ackerson, *The African Institution (1807–1827) and the Antislavery Movement in Great Britain*, Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 2005; Peter Bayne, *Men Worthy to Lead; Being Lives of John Howard, William Wilberforce, Thomas Chalmers, Thomas Arnold, Samuel Budgett, John Foster*, London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co. Ltd, Reprinted by Bibliolife, 1890; and Kevin Belmonte, *Hero for Humanity: A Biography of William Wilberforce*, Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress Publishing Group, 2002. On other abolitionists see Leslie Bethell and Murilo de Carvalho (eds.), *Joaquim Nabuco, British Abolitionists, and the End of Slavery in Brazil: Correspondence, 1880–1905*, London: University of London Press, 2009; and Carolina Nabuco, *The Life of Joaquim Nabuco*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1950; Padre Antônio Vieira, *Obras Escolhidas*, Lisbon: Sá da Costa, 1951–1954; Padre Antônio Vieira, *Sermões* (15 vols., Lisbon, 1679–1748), 2nd ed., Lisbon: Editorial Comunicação, 1982.

¹⁰ See David Richardson, ‘Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 58(1), 2001, pp. 69–92; for discussion of maroon, see Flávio dos Santos Gomes, *Histórias de Quilombolas: Mocambos e Comunidades de Senzalas no Rio de Janeiro, Século XIX*, Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 1995; see also slaves’ revolt in São Tomé, Gerhard Seibert, ‘São Tomé’s Great Slave Revolt of 1595: Background, Consequences and Misperceptions of One of the Largest Slave Uprisings in Atlantic History’, *Portuguese Studies Review*, 201, 18(2), pp. 29–50; on fugitive slaves, see Ivana Lima Stolze and Laura Carmo (eds.), *História Social da Língua Nacional, Diápora Africana*, Rio de Janeiro: FAPERU, 2014, and for household revolts, Harold Livermore, ‘Padre Oliveira’s Outburst’, *Portuguese Studies*, 17, 2001, pp. 22–41; and Antonio Andreoni (ou André João Antonil), *Cultura e Opulência do Brazil por suas Drogas, e Minas, com Varias Noticias Curiosas do modo de fazer o Assucar; Plantar, & Beneficiar o Tabaco; Tirar Ouro das Minas & Descobrir as da Prata; e dos grandes Emolumentos, que esta Conquista da America Meridional dá ao Reyno de Portugal com estes, et Outros Generos, et Contratos Reaes*, Lisbon: Conselho Nacional de Geografi, [1717] 1963.

freedom through sheer endeavour and subsequently argued in the strongest terms for the abolition of slavery in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoano, were seen as limited in scope, without international impact and reliant on their European counterparts.¹¹ Curiously, to date, no historians of slavery of West Central Africa, Africanists or Atlanticists have researched the Black Atlantic abolition movement in the seventeenth century; and those who have attempted to engage with the debate often conclude that any action driven by Africans was a localised endeavour.¹² No historian has yet provided an in-depth study of the highly organised, international-scale, legal court case for liberation and

¹¹ Gunn recently argues that Cugoano's biblical rhetoric on abolition of the enslaved Africans is standard within the abolitionist tradition. See Jeffrey Gunn, 'Creating a Paradox: Quobna Ottobah Cugoano and the Slave Trade's Violation of the Principles of Christianity, Reason, and Property Ownership', *Journal of World History*, 21(4), 2010, pp. 629–656; see also Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*, vol. I, London: Printed and folded for the Author, by T. Wilkine, 1789, online: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-%20life-of-olaudah-equiano>.

Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (1791), New York: Penguin, 1999. See also Randy J. Sparks, 'The Two Princes of Calabar: An Atlantic Odyssey from Slavery to Freedom', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 59(3), 2002, pp. 555–584.

¹² See Richard Gray, 'The Papacy and the Atlantic Slave Trade: Lourenço da Silva, the Capuchins and the Decisions of the Holy Office', *Past and Present*, 115, 1987, pp. 52–68. Gray provides an erudite examination of Mendonça in the Vatican but does not see it as a legal case. Ferreira's recent analysis of individuals working for the abolition of the slave trade focuses on challenges to the institution of slavery in the nineteenth century in West Central Africa and does not address the international abolition that Mendonça fought for in the seventeenth century: see Roquinaldo Ferreira, *The Costs of Freedom: Central Africa in the Age of Abolition, 1820 ca.–1880 ca.*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (forthcoming). Research on cases of individuals challenging their own enslavement in the West Central Africa, see also José C. Curto, 'The Story of Nbená, 1817–20: Unlawful Enslavement and the Concept of "Original Freedom" in Angola', in Paul E. Lovejoy and David Trotman (eds.), *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*, New York: Continuum, 2003, pp. 43–64; José C. Curto, 'Un Butin Illégitime: Razzias d'esclaves et relations luso-africaines dans la région des fleuves Kwanza et Kwango en 1805', in *Déraison, Esclavage et Droit: Les fondements idéologiques et juridiques de la traite négrière et de l'esclavage*, ed. Isabel de Castro Henriques and Louis Sala-Molins, Paris: Unesco, 2002, pp. 315–327; Vanessa Oliveira, 'Donas, Escravas e Pretas Livres em Luanda (séc. XIX)', *Estudos Ibero-Americanos*, 44(3), 2018, pp. 447–456; Mariana P. Candido, 'The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Vulnerability of Free Blacks in Benguela, Angola, 1780–1830', in Mark Meuwese and Jeffrey A. Fortin (eds.), *Atlantic Biographies: Individuals and Peoples in the Atlantic World*, Leiden: Brill, 2013, pp. 193–210, and Mariana P. Candido, 'O Limite Tênu entre a Liberdade e Escravidão em Benguela durante a Era do Comércio Transatlântico', *Afro-Ásia*, 47, 2013, pp. 239–268.

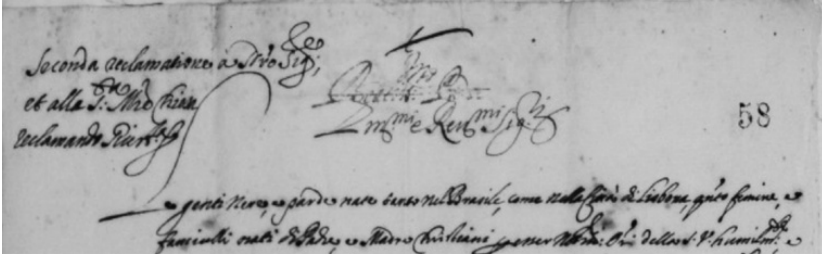


FIGURE 1 Mendonça's Second Legal Challenge 'Second Complaint' – [Seconda Reclamazione] APF, SOCG. vol. 495a, fl. 58. Photograph taken by the author.

abolition spearheaded by Lourenço da Silva Mendonça¹³ (see Figure 1), or as Mendonça called it the 'complaint (*reclamazione*)'¹⁴ ... complaining about Justice (*reclamando Giustitia*).'¹⁵

The letter (Figure 1) clearly indicates that Mendonça's first legal challenge was a court case, and that he presented the case again, as the 'second complaint' demanding justice ('Requesting Justice') to the Office of

¹³ See the letter, SOCG, vol. 495a, fl. 54. ¹⁴ APF, SOCG. vol. 495a, fl. 58.

¹⁵ See the following documents: SOCG, vol. 495a; 'Indie Orientali, Sig. Card. Azzolino; Indie Orientali, Die 19 Januarij 1686, Signitures', 19 January 1686, folio 58, 'Seconda reclamazione à N'ro Sig.^{re}, et alla S.^{ma} Mad. Chiesa Reclamando Giustitia', 'Beatist.^{mo} Pd.^{re} Em.^{mic} Rev.^{mi} Sig.^{ris}' – [Second complaint to Our Lord, and Saint Mother Church claiming Justice], [Most Blessed Fathers, Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords]. Terms such as 'complaint' (*reclamazione* ... *Reclamando*), '*doghaãze*' and '*nicorhi*' (complaints and appeals) referred to a court case. Folios 54, 55, 56, 57, 58 60, 62 were kept in the file signed as C. 'Alla Sacra Congregato.^{ne} d. Propaganda Fide Per la Gente Nere e Parde natè nel Brazile, Portugalle, e Spagna' ['to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide for the Black People and dual heritage born in Brazil, Portugal, and Spain'], was the name given to folio 59. However, folios 54, 55, 56 and 62 dealt with the method deployed for capturing Africans to enslave them, and folio 62 gave the solution to end the enslavement of the Africans. This was the solution adopted by the Vatican. Folio 62 was fundamental to ending slavery. The confraternities wrote folio 62 to express their frustrations with the Vatican, as they argued strongly for an end to slavery. Before this, the folio was kept in the file. Hence, it did not draw the attention of those dealing with the issues of slavery. I have given great attention to the documentation to highlight the importance of the folios as they are often misunderstood because they are inconsistently arranged in the file. It makes it easy for the reader to miss some of the folios. Folios 56r, 57, 58, 59, 60r and 60v are put in between 60 and 62. This might have prevented researchers such as Gray from piecing together their analyses. Thus, Gray missed out on the legal argument of the confraternities. Moreover, folio 56, which was a letter from Madrid detailing the conversation between Cardinal Milini, the Marquise of Astorga and the Prince of Gonzaga, dated 20 April 1684, was misplaced in the file. Likewise, folios 57r and 57v dated 1 May 1684, were another letter from the Vatican Nuncio in Lisbon, misplaced in the file. Folio 58 contains the appeal to the case, as seen in Figure 1.

Propaganda Fide, or ‘General Congregation’, which was charged with dealing with any issues arising overseas.¹⁶ The document is undated, but it is clear that it was a continuation of his earlier legal challenge. It reads: ‘S:^{ma} Mad. Chiesa Reclamando Giustitia’ ‘Beatist:^{mo} Pd:^{re} Em.^{mi} e Rev.^{mi} Sig.^{ri}’ [Second appeal to Our Lord and to Saint Mother Church Requesting Justice], ‘Beatist:^{mo} Pd:^{re} Em.^{mic} Rev.^{mi} Sig.^{ri}’ [Most Blessed Fathers, Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords].

In this book, I examine in detail how Mendonça and the historical actors with whom he was involved – such as Black Christians from confraternities in Angola, Brazil, Caribbean, Portugal and Spain – argued for the complete abolition of the Atlantic slave trade well before Wilberforce and his generation of abolitionists.¹⁷ Providing an in-depth analysis of Mendonça’s abolition movement, this book offers new perspectives on the abolition history of the seventeenth century and the associated debates that re-emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁸ It reveals, for the first time, how legal debates were headed not by Europeans, but by Africans.

Drawing on new data uncovered in a variety of archives around the world and never before used by historians of the Lusophone Atlantic, this book links Mendonça’s activity to that of New Christians (Jews converted to Christianity, also known as the ‘Hebrew Nation’) and the Indigenous Americans (an Indigenous people who inhabited what is today known as Brazil before the Portuguese arrival).¹⁹

I argue that there is an important and previously overlooked connection between Africans seeking the abolition of slavery and the New Christians and Indigenous Americans in their common search for liberty and understanding of how the denial of religious freedom was connected

¹⁶ For further discussion of the topic, see Oskar Garstein, *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia: Until the Establishment of the S. Congregatio de Propaganda Fide in 1622, Based on Source Material in the Kolsrud Collection*, vol. 1, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1963; see also Pius Malekandathil, ‘Cross, Sword and Conflicts: A Study of the Political Meanings of the Struggle between the Padroado Real and the Propaganda Fide’, *Studies in History*, 27(2), 2011, pp. 251–267.

¹⁷ See on the internationalisation of Confraternities’ pledge to abolish the Atlantic slavery, see APF, SOCG, Series America Meridionale, fl. 309, and see SOCG, vol. 495a, fl. 62.

¹⁸ See Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, and Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments*.

¹⁹ On the Hebrew Nation, see Florbela Veiga Frade and Sandra Neves Silva, ‘Medicina e Política em dois Físicos Judeus Portugueses de Hamburgo, Rodrigo de Castro e o Medicus Politicus (1614), e Manuel Bocarro Rosales e o Status Astrologicus (1644)’, *Sefarad*, 71(1), 2011, pp. 51–94; and also Sandra Neves Silva, ‘A “Obra ao Rubro” na Cultura Portuguesa de Seiscentos: o Cristão-Novo Manuel Bocarro Francês e seus Versos Alquímicos de 1624’, *Cadernos de Estudos Sefarditas*, (8), 2008, pp. 217–244.

with the denial of enslaved Africans' humanity.²⁰ I also contend that by allying himself with these different constituencies in the Atlantic, Mendonça carried his abolitionist message of freedom far beyond Africa.²¹ His claim for liberty was universal: it went beyond the predicament of enslaved Africans to include other oppressed groups in Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean, Portugal and Spain.²²

To fully comprehend Mendonça's work, it is crucial that we understand from the outset that the enslavement of Africans was part of the Portuguese conquest of West Central Africa, where Mendonça was born.²³ Slavery went hand in hand with conquest in Portugal's encounter with Central or West Africa, and the enslavement of Angolans was inseparable from Portuguese military aggression in the region.²⁴ From the

²⁰ See Freire de Oliveira, *Elementos para a História do Município de Lisboa*, Lisbon, 1885, and John Ford Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church: Teaching Concerning the Moral Legitimacy of the Institution of Slavery*, London: Rose [for] the Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights, 1975, and A. C. de C. M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen in Portugal 1441–1555*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. See Gray, 'The Papacy', and the discussion of Brazil by Andreoni (Antonil), *Cultura e Opulência*.

²¹ See 'Carta de Giacinto Rogio Monzon' [Letter by Giacinto Rogio Monzon], APF, Scrittura Riferite nei Congressi, Series Africa, Angola, Congo, Senegal, Isole dell' Oceano Atlantico Dar, Vatican, Rome, Italy, 1645 al 1685, [S.C. Africa], vol. 1, fl. 487, Madrid, 23 September 1682. See also Stuart B. Schwartz, *Blacks and Indians: Common Cause and Confrontation in Colonial Brazil*, Yale University, no date.

²² On the Caribbean's involvement see SOCG, vol. 495a, fl. 62.

²³ See 'Carta de António da Costa de Sousa a Manuel Barreto de S. Paio' [A Letter of António da Costa to Manuel Barreto de S. Paio], Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino de Belém (hereafter AHU), AHU_CU_001, cx. 11, d. 1326, Lisboa, fl. 678v, 24 August 1673. See also Beatrix Heintze and Katja Rieck 'The Extraordinary Journey of the Jaga Through the Centuries: Critical Approaches to Precolonial Angolan Historical Sources', *History in Africa*, 34, 2007, pp. 67–101 and Jan Vansina, 'Ambaca Society and the Slave Trade c. 1760–1845', *Journal of African History* 46(1), 2005, pp. 1–27.

²⁴ See Cadornega, *História Geral*, vols. I–III. My understanding of the conquest differs from a new wave of Brazilian-born scholars, who have been emphatic about using the term 'colonialism' and stressing territorial conquest, taxation and enslavement as part of the colonial expansion. See Mariana P. Candido, *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World: Benguela and Its Hinterland*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013; Flávia Maria de Carvalho, *Sobas e Homens do Rei. Relações de Poder e Escravidão em Angola (séculos XVII e XVIII)*, Maceió, Alagoas: Edufal, 2015; Crislayne Alfagali, *Ferreiros e fundidores da Ilamba: uma história social da fabricação do ferro e da Real Fábrica de Nova Oeiras* (Angola, segunda metade do século XVIII), Luanda: Fundação Agostinho Neto, 2018. I am using the term in the Anglo-Saxon and Luso-African way, as argued by Walter Rodney, that colonialism was a total domination and did not start before the end of the nineteenth century; see Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London; Brooklyn, New York: Verso, 2018; and *History of the Upper Guinea Coast: 1545–1800*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970. See also Amílcar Cabral, *Return to the Source: Selected*

beginning of Portuguese settlement there in the mid-sixteenth century, war was waged against the West Central African people.²⁵ This was the catalyst for the enslavement of ordinary civilians.²⁶

If we are to grasp the rationale behind the capture of enslaved people²⁷ in the region and understand how they were obtained, it is crucial to recognise the role played by the Municipal City Council of Luanda, which regulated the shipment of the enslaved Angolans sent to Brazil.²⁸ Indeed, it is impossible to understand the significance of Mendonça's court case without taking account of the involvement of the Municipal City Council of Luanda in the slave trade. Central to the argument of this book, then, is the story of the destruction of Pungo-Andongo and the death of its last king, João (John) Hari II, who was Mendonça's uncle.²⁹ Exiled as prisoners of war, Ndongo's

Speeches of Amilcar Cabral, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973; and *Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writings of Amilcar Cabral*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979; and José Lingna Nafafé, *Colonial Encounters: Issues of Culture, Hybridity and Creolisation, Portuguese Mercantile Settlers in West Africa*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007.

²⁵ I am employing the term West Central Africa (WCA), which has been used by historians of the region or Africanists, but of course this was not a designation at the time. WCA is a subregion that includes the African Coast between Cape Lopes and the Southern part of the African continent, comprising the Angolan, Kongolese and Loanguese ports. For detailed information see A. M. Caldeira, 'Formação de uma cidade afro-atlântica: Luanda no século XVII', *Revista Tempo, Espaço, Linguagem*, 5(3), 2014, pp. 12–39. The region was called Libia Inferior or Ethiopia Menor. See 'D. António Nigrita, Embaixador do Rei do Congo', AV – Fando Borghhe, Série I, vol. 721. (DIARIORUM CAEREMONIALIVM / IOANNIS PAVLI MVCANTII ROMANI i. V. D. / APOSTOLICARVM CJEREMONIARVM / MAGISTRI, 2 January 1608, MMA, p. 393 'Aethiopia inferior' (pp. 393–403).

²⁶ See Mário Martins de Freitas, *Reino Negro de Palmares* [1954], Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 2nd ed., 1988. See also Heintze and Rieck, 'The Extraordinary Journey of the Jaga'; Vansina, 'Ambaca Society'; and David Birmingham, *Trade and Conquest in Angola*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966. All these authors have analysed at length how Portuguese conquest in Angola provided enslaved people.

²⁷ I use the term 'enslaved people' instead of 'slave' to indicate the process of enslaving the Africans and support the argument that there were no pre-existing slaves in Africa before the arrival of the Europeans. The term 'enslaved people' is already being used in Brazil by the Black Movement, as well as in philosophy and history by various authors in the Anglo-Saxon context.

²⁸ There may have been some enslaved Angolans who ended up in Brazil as contraband or who were smuggled illegally from the Portuguese point of view of tax payment. However, the Municipal City Council of Luanda controlled and managed the trade.

²⁹ See *Relaçam/ Do FELICE SVCCESSO, QUE / confeguiroã as armas do Sereniffimo Principe D. Pedro N. S. governadas por Francisco de Tauora, Governador, & Capitam General do Reyno de Angola contra a Rebeliaõ de Dom Ioaõ Rey das Pedras, & Dongo, no mez de Dezembro de 1671*, Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Reservado, 903, pp. 1–11; Cadornega, *História Geral*, vols. I and II; and Delgado's note in Cadornega, *História Geral*, vol. II, pp. 548–549.

royals, including Mendonça, his brothers, uncles, aunts and cousins, were sent first to Salvador in Bahia, then to Rio de Janeiro and other captaincies in what is nowadays Brazil, and finally to Portugal.³⁰ Crucially, to fully understand the involvement of *sobas* (Angolan local rulers) in the slave trade in Angola and perhaps elsewhere in Africa, I contend that it is necessary to take into account the introduction in 1626 by Fernão de Sousa, the Portuguese governor in Angola, of *baculamento*, a tax payment of enslaved people, in place of *encombros*, a tax payment in produce.³¹ This is a piece of new data that has not been used by historians of West Central Africa, Africanists and Atlanticists. I argue that it had far-reaching consequences for the historiography of the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Unaware of this legislation, West Central African historiography on ‘taxation’, ‘wars’, ‘debt’ and ‘legal practices’ has unwittingly been prevented from truly understanding the reasons for and methods of enslavement.³² These historians of West Central Africa have remained ignorant of Sousa’s introduction of the *baculamento*. Subsequent governors and their captains in the *presidio* (Portuguese outpost) in Angola used the *baculamento* for centuries to naturalise the Atlantic slave trade. And the *baculamento* has remained obscure until now; most West Central African historians have taken it as accepted wisdom that slavery was an African practice,³³ and the idea that Africans colluded in Atlantic slavery has never been challenged.³⁴ Generations of scholars have studied systems of ‘taxation’, ‘wars’, ‘debt’ and ‘legal practices’ without interrogating the the Portuguese institution of *baculamento*, which overrode local practices; instead, blame has been placed on the Angolan institutions. All Angolan *soba* allies of the Portuguese conquest were obliged to make a payment of 100 enslaved people annually to Portugal. This Portuguese taxation, which was named after the local *baculamento*

³⁰ See Delgado’s note in Cadornega, *História Geral*, vol. II, pp. 546–547.

³¹ *Encombros* were tributes paid by *sobas* to the Portuguese; tribute included produce, such as cows, timbers, palm oil and chickens. See ‘Informação de Fernão de Sousa a El-Rei’ (Information by Fernão de Sousa to the King), BAL, ms. 51–VIII-31, fls. 5–9 v, 7 December 1631. *Sobas* were noblemen responsible for the districts into which the kingdom of Ndongo was divided.

³² See Charles R. Boxer (ed.), *South China in the Sixteenth Century: Being the Narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar da Cruz, O.P. [and] Fr. Martín de Rada, O.E.S.A. (1550–1575)*, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 152. For the original work of Gaspar da Cruz, see Gaspar da Cruz (O.P.), *Tractado em que se Co[m]tam Muito por Este[n]so as Cousas da China, co[n] suas Particularidades, [e] assi do Reyno Dormuz*, Madrid: Em Casa de Andre de Burgos, 1569.

³³ See Eugénio Ferreira, *Feiras e Presídios: Esboço de Interpretação Materialista da Colonização de Angola*, Lisbon: Edições 70, 1979.

³⁴ See Boxer (ed.), *South China in the Sixteenth Century*.

practice³⁵ – a tribute system – profoundly disrupted the Angolan socio-political and legal system and resulted in social upheaval. Communities and their rulers were turned against each other, a new local judicial procedure was imposed that served the interests of the Atlantic slave trade, putting judicial officers in local courts in Angola to adjudicate local cases in their own interest – what Kimbwandende K. B. Fu-Kiau called a turning point in African governance and leadership in West Central Africa.³⁶

Following from this, I scrutinise the history of runaways to gain an understanding of how those who escaped enslavement in Angola, São Tomé and Brazil conceived their plight. Many enslaved peoples ran away in these regions because they rebelled against a system that dehumanised them, which Portugal had imposed upon them. While in Brazil, Mendonça may have had contact with communities there of such runaways, come to understand their suffering and connected his experience with theirs, especially those who joined *Quilombo dos Palmares*, one of the earliest, largest and most successful maroon communities in Brazil.³⁷

³⁵ *Baculamento* is a Kimbundu term that means ‘tribute’. For a detailed discussion of *baculamento* as a tribute, but not as a tax in human beings, see Aida Freudenthal and Selma Pantoja, *Livro dos Baculamentos que os Sobas Deste Reino de Angola Pagam a Sua Majestade 1630*, Luanda: Arquivo Nacional de Angola, D.L., 2013; Beatrix Heintze, ‘The Angolan Vassal Tributes of the 17th Century’, *Revista de História Económica e Social*, 6, 1980, pp. 57–78; Beatrix Heintze, ‘Luso-African Feudalism in Angola? The Vassal Treaties of the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century’, *Revista Portuguesa de História*, 18, 1980, pp. 111–131; Beatrix Heintze, *Angola nos Séculos XVI e XVII. Estudo Sobre Fontes, Métodos e História*, Luanda: Kilombelombe, 2007; and Beatrix Heintze, ‘Angola nas Garras do Tráfico de Escravos: As Guerras Angolanas do Ndongo (1611–1630)’, *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, 1, 1984, pp. 11–59; and Toby Green, ‘Baculamento or Encomienda?: Legal Pluralisms and the Contestation of Power in Pan-Atlantic World of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, *Journal of Global Slavery*, 2, 2017, pp. 310–336; Mariana P. Candido, ‘Conquest, Occupation, Colonialism and Exclusion: Land Disputes in Angola’, in *Property Rights, Land and Territory in the European Overseas Empires*, ed. José Vicente Serrão et al., Lisbon: CEHC-IUL, 2014, pp. 223–233; Mariana P. Candido, ‘O Limite Tênué’ entre a Liberdade e Escravidão em Benguela durante a Era do Comércio Transatlântico’, *Afro-Ásia*, 47 (2013), pp. 239–268.

³⁶ See Overseas Council edit of 1698. For a detailed discussion of the evil of slavery brought by the Portuguese in Angola, see Vansina, ‘Ambaca Society’. Even though the author’s analysis is that of the eighteenth century, it is worth noting that the process of slavery in the region has been of *longue durée* (the process of history is a long-lasting one). A crucial author to understand the changes in the conceptions of law and crime is Kimbwandende K. B. Fu-Kiau, *African Cosmology of the Bantu-Kongo – Principles of Live and Living*. Poland Sp. 20.0.; Wrocław: African Tree Press, 2001.

³⁷ For literature on Palmares, see Edison Carneiro, *O Quilombo dos Palmares* [1947] 2nd ed., São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1958; de Freitas, *Reino Negro de Palmares*. See also Glenn Alan Cheney, *Quilombo dos Palmares: Brazil’s Lost Nation of Fugitive Slaves*, Hanover, CT: New London Librarium, 2014.

Looking at Mendonça's later life and journey to Portugal, I argue that his stay in Braga and Lisbon helped him to form an alliance with the family of the apostolic notary in Lisbon, Gaspar da Costa de Mesquita, and the New Christians in Portugal.³⁸ Then I examine his journey, undertaken with the support of the papal nuncio in Portugal, to Toledo – where he formed a network with Indigenous Americans at the Royal Court of Madrid.³⁹ I argue that to understand Mendonça's court case one must understand his family, who were coerced by the Portuguese into becoming involved in the slave trade. The weight of this history and the resulting psychological burden constituted one of the most compelling reasons for Mendonça's journey to the Vatican and his deep desire to see the Atlantic slave trade abolished. He wanted the Atlantic slave trade to be *tánuka*, a term in his language, Kimbundu, meaning 'to be torn, destroyed or shattered'.⁴⁰ Equally, he wanted all the other ill-treated constituencies such as the New Christians and the Indigenous Americans freed, due to 'Pan-Atlantic' solidarity.⁴¹

This book thus explores for the first time how enslaved Africans were part of a wider Atlantic economic network in the seventeenth century, encompassing Africa, Brazil, the Caribbean, Portugal and Spain. It examines how they used transatlantic connections to join with other oppressed groups so as to fashion a league of confederation to achieve freedom. In the following pages and before engaging with this account in detail, I briefly introduce the historical context of Mendonça's court case by giving a first overview of the Portuguese Empire operation in Angola and Mendonça's family tree and life story. I go on to discuss the studies and sources that I have used to analyse Mendonça's work and historical context. I then explain the book's methodology. This is followed by a detailed breakdown of the book's chapters.

0.1 THE PORTUGUESE EMPIRE OPERATION IN ANGOLA: KINGS, GOVERNORS, COUNCILS AND LOCAL RULERS

The Municipal Council of Luanda was founded on 11 February 1575 by Paulo Dias de Novais, a nobleman who was appointed as a captain and the

³⁸ See 'Carta de Giacinto Rogio Monzon'. ³⁹ See APF, SOCG, fl. 486.

⁴⁰ For a detailed discussion on Kimbundu family language on West Central Africa, see Patrício Batsíkama, 'As Origens do Reino do Kôngo Segundo a Tradição Oral', *Sankofa, Revista de História da África e de Estudos da Diáspora Africana*, 3(5), 2010, p. 24, *tánuka* 'ser rasgado, destruir, usar ou pôr em pedaços'.

⁴¹ See Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300–1500*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

first governor of Angola by the Portuguese Crown on 19 September 1571.⁴² The council was the governing authority that ran the affairs of the Portuguese enclave in Luanda. Executive power in the Municipal City Council of Luanda lay with its governors, members, a senior crown judge, scribes, judges and war council (which had the power to veto wars in the region). The head of the council was the governor, directly appointed by the Crown in Lisbon. Aside from the executive body, the council had other functionaries, such as the apostolic notary.

Conquered, and subjected to Portuguese rule, Angolan kings and *sobas* loyal to the king of Portugal were made subject to annual tax payment in human beings in 1626, thus turning people into a currency.⁴³ This was particularly the case for Angolan kings, because ‘native’ soldiers were recruited directly from the region where the Portuguese had established control and maintained fairs (markets).⁴⁴ The Municipal Council of Luanda was charged with dividing land already conquered from the Angolans between the Portuguese and African war captains, so-called *guerra preta*.⁴⁵ The council was also responsible for paying the salaries of the governors, the soldiers and secular priests, and regulating trade and

⁴² See ‘Carta de Doação a Paulo Dias de Novais’. See also Ilídio do Amaral, *O Consulado de Paulo Dias de Novais: Angola no Último Quartel do Século XVI e Primeiro do Século XVII*, Lisbon: Ministério da Ciência e da Tecnologia, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 2000, and Linda M. Heywood, *Njinga of Angola: Africa’s Warrior Queen*, Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.

⁴³ All loyal *sobas* in both Angola and Kongo were conquered by the Portuguese and forced to give obedience to the Portuguese Crown in five areas: (1) pay annual tax in enslaved people to the Crown; (2) allow recruitment of soldiers for war to fight alongside the Portuguese contingent of soldiers stationed in Angola or Kongo against fellow Angolans or Kongolese; (3) open local and regional markets for the Portuguese to freely trade and impose their rule; (4) allow Portuguese priests to build churches and carry out Christian mission activities in the area; (5) allow land to be alienated for the Portuguese use. In return, *sobas* were granted protection from their Angolan enemies, and their children offered Portuguese education. See BAL, cód. 51-IX-20, fl. 241 v, MMA, pp. 1624–1630. For further discussion of *undar* or *under* in Angola, see Heintze, *Angola nos Séculos XVI e XVII*; Carvalho, *Sobas e Homens do Rei*; Green, ‘Baculamento or Encomienda?’ and for discussion of vassalship, see Candido, *An African Slaving Port*.

⁴⁴ See Birmingham, *Trade and Conquest*.

⁴⁵ *Guerra preta* was a term used to refer to Angolan soldiers who were recruited by force from the Portuguese-controlled or -conquered region of Angola. Portugal recruited in these areas as part of the agreements they had with *sobas*. *Sobas* allied to Portugal were obliged by force to allow, (1) their territory to be used for commerce by the Portuguese; (2) recruitment of soldiers; and (3) to make payment of tax in enslaved people. *Guerra preta* is used interchangeably with *quilamba*: the term *quilambas* or *kilambas* designated captains of *guerra preta*; In the Kimbundu language *quilamba* or *ilamba* means ‘war captains’. See ‘Carta de Constantino Cadena a Fernão de Sousa’ [A letter of Constantino Cadena to Fernão de Sousa], AHU – Angola, cx. 2., 16 September 1626; MMA pp. 479–481 and

tax revenues.⁴⁶ On 19 November 1664, members of the Municipal Council of Luanda showed their power by lodging a complaint with the Crown that was adjudicated by the Portuguese Overseas Council, which dealt with all overseas affairs:

That the trade of the same Kingdom [Angola] consists only in the enslaved that is carried out in the lands of Soba's vassals of His Majesty, that is, from presidios such as Lobolo, Dembos, Benguella, and from those that are mostly conquered by that government . . . that the most important thing that there is in that kingdom, which is in need of maintaining, is the Royal standard tax duty in slaves that they dispatch from the factory of Your Majesty. It is not that its profit is great, but also for being used for sustaining the Infantry, and to pay governors' salaries of five presidios of hinterland, of secular priests in Kongo, and of other clergy of that kingdom, and other salaries, and budgets.⁴⁷

This clearly demonstrates that the City Council's budget depended entirely on revenues from enslavement.⁴⁸ The slave trade in Angola was the lifeblood of the council and maintained the Portuguese project of conquest; without it, there was no Portuguese Empire. Hospitals in Angola were dependent on the slave trade for their existence, and so were education and missionary activities in the region.⁴⁹ The council

'Carta do governador de Angola a El-Rei de Portugal' [A letter of the governor of Angola to the king of Portugal] AHU – Angola, cx. 2., 9 de Março de 1643; MMA, pp. 28–38.

⁴⁶ See 'Relação de Antonio Bezerra Fajardo' [High Court of Appeal of, Antonio Bezerra Fajardo] BAL, Manuscrito [ms.] 51-VIII-25, fls. 29–32, 24 February 1624, pp. 205–214. See also 'Consulta ao Conselho Ultramarino', AHU, cód. 16, fl. 135v, MMA, 19 November 1664, pp. 509–510.

⁴⁷ See 'Consulta ao Conselho Ultramarino', AHU, Códice 16, folio, 135v., 19 November 1664, MMA, pp. 509–510, 'que o comercio do mesmo Reino cõsiste só no resgate dos escrauos, que se faz nas terras dos souas vassallos de V. Magestade, assy dos prezidios, como do Lobolo, Dembos, Benguella, e nos mais sogeitos àquele gouerno . . . que a cousa de maior importância que tem aquele Reino, e em que consiste a sua conseruação, hé o direito Real dos escrauos, que se despachão na feitoria de V. Magestade, não porque seu rendimento seja muito grande, mas porque com elle se sustenta a Infantaria, e paga o ordenado dos gouernadores de cinco presídios do certão, dos Cónegos de Congo, e do mais clero daquele Reino, e outras ordinárias, e despesas. E se faltarem aqueles direitos, todos estes Ministros, e officiaes padecerão grandíssima falta, e aquela praça correrá muito risco, faltandolhe a Infantaria, por falta de pagas'.

⁴⁸ See Manuel Seuerim de Faria, 'Sobre a Fundação de Seminários para a Guiné', [On the Foundation of the Seminars in Guinea], Academia Real de la Historia, Madrid, [ARHM], Salazar y Castro, ms. B-4, fls. 95–105 v; MMA, January 1622, pp. 666–690.

⁴⁹ On 29 January 1695, the hospital in Luanda, Angola, requested permission from the Portuguese Crown to sell 500 enslaved Angolans per year to meet the cost of its staff, which included '*sirurgião, medico, e barbeiro*' (a surgeon, a doctor and a barber), '*medicamentos*' (medicines). See AHU., Angola, cx. 15, doc. 65. The hospital 'was granted its wish by the Crown' [S. Magestade fez mercê] on 13 February 1695. See the same document: Angola, cx. 15, doc. 65. A formal letter was again issued to Luanda hospital

interfered in local politics and elections, and particularly in the role of the local *ngola* (kings).⁵⁰

The Council of Luanda, which was composed mainly of Portuguese merchants and some retired soldiers who had fought wars in Angola, also exerted undue pressure on the *sobas*' governance of their provinces.⁵¹ They controlled the market and charged their *pombeiros* (local conquered traders, including enslaved people owned by the Portuguese) to carry trading into hinterland markets.⁵² The City Council's interests were often at odd with those of governors, the Portuguese Overseas Council and the Portuguese Crown.⁵³ Let us look now at the ruling royal family from which the City Council drew its influence and also at where Mendonça came from and his family tree.

Prince Lourenço da Silva Mendonça was probably born in the kingdom of Pedras of Pungo-Andongo, and certainly in Angola, but his date of birth and place of death remain unknown. He may have been twenty-two or twenty-three years old when he left Angola in 1671. He was a member of the Mbundu, one of the people groups in Angola.⁵⁴ Beyond this, not much is known for certain about his early life.

a month later on 5 March 1695. See AHU., Cód. 554, fl. 82: – Caixa 15, 5 March 1695. Almost a century earlier, in 1515, King Manuel issued an edict allowing every ship arriving in Lisbon from the West and West Central Africa to donate one enslaved person to the 'Hospital de Todos-os-Santos' [Hospital of All Saints in Lisbon] in order to meet its expenses. See ATT – Gavetas, II-2-62, 17 September 1515; MMA, pp. 118–119. Similarly, on 3 May 1504, King Manuel offered six enslaved Africans to help with subsistence and expenses *pera ajuda do sostimêto e despeesas* for the hospital in the Portuguese settlement of São Tomé. For detailed discussion of Portuguese expenditure in the Atlantic in the seventeenth century, see Faria, 'Sobre a Fundação de Seminários'. Faria's work is important for understanding the economic logic of the Atlantic slave trade and how the profit accrued from sale of the enslaved African people enabled the Portuguese to reach India and build its empire.

⁵⁰ See BAL., Cód. 51-IX-20, fl. 241 v, 1624–1630, MMA. See also 'Relação de Antonio Bezerra Fajardo' and 'Carta de João Correia de Sousa ao Marquês de Freilha' (Letter of João Correia de Sousa to the Count of Freilha), AHM – 9 – 1 – 6/B-4, fls. 130–133, MMA, 3 June 1622, p. 21.

⁵¹ See Heywood, *Njinga of Angola*; Heintze and Rieck, 'The Extraordinary Journey of the Jaga'; Vansina, 'Ambaca Society'; and Birmingham, *Trade and Conquest*.

⁵² See Birmingham, *Trade and Conquest*, p. 78.

⁵³ See Cadornega, *História Geral*, vol. II, p. 533.

⁵⁴ I use the term 'people group' in this book instead of 'tribe', a term introduced by the Portuguese that does not do justice to the people or African nations. Almada in the sixteenth century used the term 'nation' rather than tribe to refer to people he encountered on the West Coast of Africa. Each group had their own language, culture and political organisation, independent of others. See André Á Almada, 'Tratados Breue dos Reinos de guine docaboverde' [Treaty of the Kingdoms of Guiné and Cape Verde], BNL, 1594.

Pedras of Pungo-Andongo was the seat of the first Angolan allied to the king of Portugal, Philippe de Sousa, or Philippe Hari I (Ngola Aiidi), or Dom Henrique Rei do Pungo-Andongo, known in Angola also as Samba a Ndumba. He ruled for thirty-eight years.⁵⁵ Mendonça's father was Dom Ignácio da Silva,⁵⁶ the son of King Philippe Hari I; his mother's name is unknown. He had three brothers: Simão, Ignacio and Ignacio (the two latter shared a name).⁵⁷

Within Angola, I have traced the royal family of Pungo-Andongo back to the celebrated Queen Njinga (1624–1663). Ngola Aiidi (Philippe Hari I) was her half-brother on his father's side, as well as half-brother to King Ngola Mbandi; Cadornega's work confirms this.⁵⁸ His mother was the third wife (Mocama or Mukama) of King Ngola Kiluanje Kia Ndambi.⁵⁹ However, a letter I discovered in the Arquivo historico Ultramarino de Bélem, from the former governor of Angola, Salvador Correia de Sá e Benavides (1648–1651), states that Philippe Hari I was Queen Njinga's uncle; we know for certain that they were relatives.⁶⁰ Her brother, King Ngola Mbandi, died in mysterious circumstances, and writings from that time suggest that Queen Njinga killed him in order to take over the throne of Ndongo and rule the Mbundu people. However, after Philippe Hari I was elected king of Ndongo with the aid of the Portuguese on 12 October 1626, Njinga's rule was confined to Matamba, east of Ndongo. Philippe Hari I and Njinga ruled for thirty-eight and thirty-nine years, respectively.

⁵⁵ Ngola Aiidi or Philippe Hari I was a conquered *soba* prior to being elected as King of Ndongo by the Portuguese. See BAL, cód. 51-IX-20, fl. 241 v, MMA, pp. 1624–1630 and See D. Frei Francisco do Soveral, 'Relatório de D. Frei Francisco do Soveral na visita "Ad Sacra Limina"', 'Jnfra scriptam relationem de statu Cathedralis ecclesiae Sancti Saluatoris transmittit ad Sanctissimum D. N. Vrbánú Papam Octaum et Sacram Congregationem Concilli Tridentini Prater Pranciscus de Soveral, Episcopus. Anno Domini de 1631' (Friar Francisco de Soveral, Bishop, transmits the following written report on the state of the Cathedral church of São Salvador to the Most Holy Our Lord Urban Pope Eighth and to the Holy Congregation of the Council of Trent. Year of the Lord 1631.), ARSI – Goa, vol. 40, doc. IV, 1 April 1631, and see also MMA, pp. 121–125.

⁵⁶ See AHU_CU_001, cx. 11, d. 1326, fl. 678v, Lisboa, 24 August 1673. See also Cardonega, *História Geral*, vols. I, II and III.

⁵⁷ Both brothers have the same name.

⁵⁸ See Cadornega, *História Geral*, vol. I, p. 164. See 'Carta de Salvador Correia de Sá e Benavides' [A Letter by Salvador Correia de Sá e Benavides], AHU_CU_001, cx. 11, d. 1272, 21 August 1672. What we know for certain is that they were relatives.

⁵⁹ See Cadornega, *História Geral*, vol. I, p. 164. Mocama was a third wife. For detail study on lineages, see Vansina, 'Ambaca Society'.

⁶⁰ See 'Carta de Salvador Correia de Sá'.

Mendonça's family tree (see [Figure 2](#) and [Figure 3](#))⁶¹ demonstrates that he was descended from the kings of Kongo who ruled over what is today known as West Central Africa and were the first royals to adopt Christianity in the region. Afonso I (1509–1543),⁶² the king of Kongo, is said to have been related to Mendonça's great-grandfather, Ngola Kiluanji Kia Samba (1515–1556), king of Ndongo and Matamba.⁶³ It was not a far-fetched statement, therefore, when Mendonça made the claim in the Vatican that he was descended from the 'royal blood of the kings of Kongo and Angola'.⁶⁴

Given Mendonça's origins in Kongo and Angola, Africans were demonstrably the prime campaigners for the abolition of African enslavement in the seventeenth century. In presenting his court case in the Vatican about the plight of enslaved Africans in Africa and in the Atlantic, and the oppression of Natives and New Christians in Portugal,⁶⁵ he put forward a universal message of freedom – all these groups included people whose humanity was being denied. This challenges the accepted view that 'the conduct of the slave-trade involved the active participation of the African chiefs'.⁶⁶ There were, indeed, many within Africa who refused to accept and actively opposed the Atlantic slave trade, and who abhorred its ideology and practice. Mendonça represented those constituencies from his own family – his grandfather, Philippe Hari I, and father, Igação da Silva – who were coerced into the slave trade by the Portuguese regime in Angola.⁶⁷

⁶¹ The family tree is based on the following sources: 'Carta de António da Costa de Sousa a Manuel Barreto de S. Paio'; SOCG, vol. 490, folios, 140r-v, Cadornega, *História Geral*, vols. I and II, and secondary sources. It covers the period 1506–1673.

⁶² Mvemba a Nzinga or Nzinga Mbemba was Afonso I's African name before he converted to Catholicism. Name changes were an important tool of the Portuguese in ensuring that African royals felt allegiance. See AHU, Guiné. 1a Secção, Caixa 3, doc. 95, 1694; and L. Silveira (ed.), *Peregrinação de André de Faro à Terra dos Gentios*, Lisbon: Na Officina Tipographia Portugal – Brasil, 1945.

⁶³ Guida M Jackson, *Women Who Ruled: A Biographical Encyclopedia*, Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1990. See also SOCG. 490, folios, 140r.

⁶⁴ SOCG. 490, folios, 140r, 'Lorenzo deSilva, é Mendoza della RegioStirpe de' i Re diCongo, et Angola' [Lorenzo de Silva e Mendoza of the Royal Blood of the Kings of Kongo and Angola]. I have constructed his family tree using archival documents housed in 'Carta de António da Costa de Sousa a Manuel Barreto de S. Paio'; and SOCG vol. 490, folios, 140r-v. and Cadornega, *História Geral*, vols. I and II and secondary sources.

⁶⁵ I am using the term Natives and Indigenous interchangeably in the book because of my sources.

⁶⁶ See C. R. Boxer, *Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, London: Hutchinson, 1969, p. 31.

⁶⁷ See 'Carta de Antonio da Costa de Sousa a Manuel Barreto de S. Paio' [A Letter of Antonio da Costa de Sousa to Manuel Barreto de S. Paio], Angola, cx. 10, 24 August 1673, and 'Sobre os Principes Negros do Dongo Unidos no Navio Sao Verissimo'. The names Ngola Aidi, Philippe I de Sousa and D. Henrique Rei do Pungo-Andongo all refer to the same person: Philippe Hari I.

MENDONÇA'S FAMILY TREE

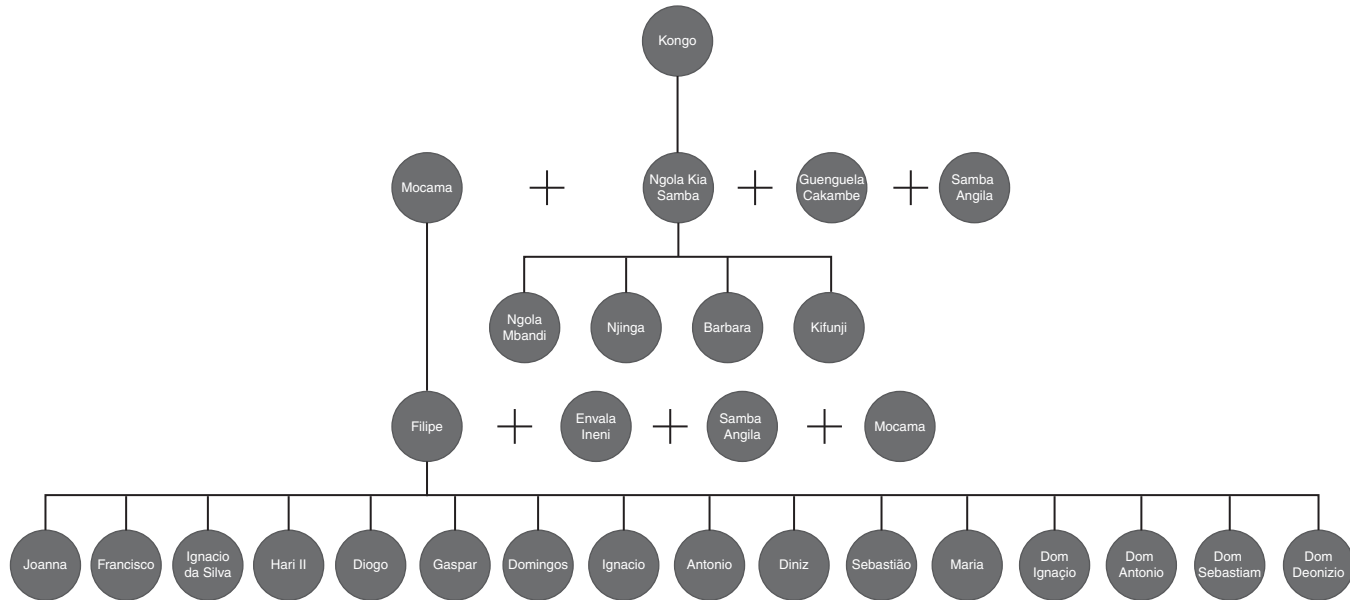


FIGURE 2 Lourenço da Silva Mendonça's family tree, part 1. By the author, based on manuscripts.

MENDONÇA'S FAMILY TREE

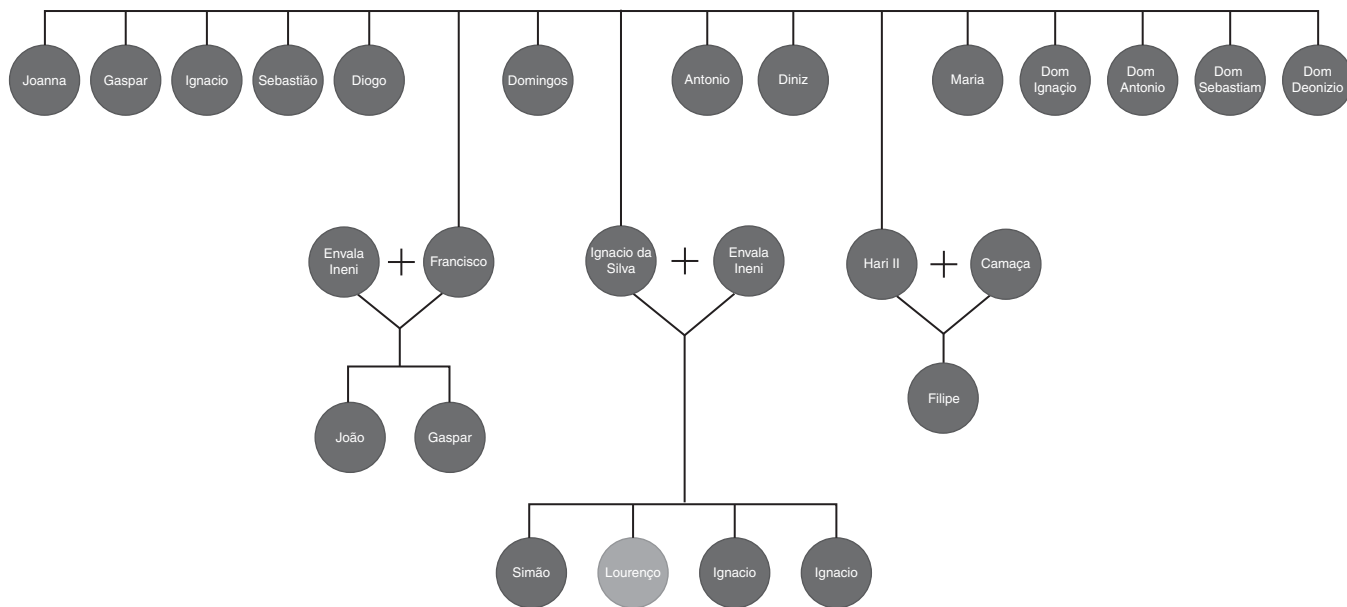


FIGURE 3 Lourenço da Silva Mendonça's family tree, part 2. By the author, based on manuscripts.

In my view, and in accordance with the documentary sources used in this book, it was unquestionably Ignacio da Silva's son Lourenço who went to Rome to present the case for abolition there on 6 March 1684; he took his father's surname to become Lourenço da Silva e Mendonça, or, in some documents, Lourenço da Silva de Mendonça.⁶⁸ It is possible that Lourenço may have been given the surname Mendonça by the governor of Bahia, Afonso Furtado de Castro do Rio de Mendonça, with whom the Angolan royals stayed for sixteenth months of their stay in Salvador.⁶⁹ The uncertainty about Lourenço's surname stems from the fact that only his first name appears in the original documents in the Portuguese archives.⁷⁰ In fact, only the first names of his brothers, uncles, aunts and cousins were recorded.⁷¹ There is a second possibility in that he could have used the surname Mendonça at home, in Ndongo, as this was not unusual. Mendonça's uncle, a Portuguese captain, António Teixeira de Mendonça, who had lived with his aunt (Philippe Hari I's daughter) for more than 10 years, also had the same surname.⁷² It would not be far-fetched to suggest that Mendonça was so named in his honour.⁷³ He may have also received the surname Mendonça, if António Teixeira de Mendonça was his godfather, at his baptism. Such was the case with Mendonça's grandfather, Ngola Aiidi, who was given the name Dom Philippe de Sousa when he was baptised in Luanda on 29 June 1627 in

⁶⁸ The doubts surrounding the identification of Lourenço da Silva Mendonça stem from his court case presentation in the Vatican, in which he stated that he descended from 'Kings of Kongo and Angola' without further explanation. Gray has assumed that he came from the Kongo. However, the archival evidence I have recently found in the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino de Bélem, Portugal, shows that he came from Pungo-Andongo and not from the Kongo. His line of descent, however, goes back to the Kongo, as he claimed in the Vatican. In the Portuguese original letter from Madrid, his name appears as Lourenço da Silva Mendonça, without the preposition 'de'. See Gaspar da Costa de Mesquita, Archives of Propaganda Fide, Rome, Scrittura Riferite nei Congressi, Series Africa, Angola, Congo, SC Africa, fl. 486, Lisbon, 15 February 1681. Mesquita was an apostolic notary in Lisbon and a New Christian.

⁶⁹ See 'Carta de António da Costa de Sousa a Manuel Barreto de S. Paio'; and 'Sobre os Principes Negros do Dongo Unidos no Navio Sao Verissimo' [Concerning the Black Princes from Dongo United on the Saint Verissimo Ship Fleet Captain], cód. 97, A.H.U, cód. 17, fls. 129-130, 1670-1686, Lisbon, 9 November 1673.

⁷⁰ See 'Carta de António da Costa de Sousa a Manuel Barreto de S. Paio'.

⁷¹ See 'Carta de António da Costa de Sousa a Manuel Barreto de S. Paio'.

⁷² António Teixeira de Mendonça was made captain major by Salvador Correia de Sá e Benevides on 8 April 1649. He was one of the heroes of the war in Angola, and served in many posts from 1623 onwards.

⁷³ Antonio de Teixeira Mendonça was his brother-in-law, see 'Carta de Salvador Correia de Sá'.

honour of Dom Philippe III of Portugal and Philippe II of Spain, and Sousa in honour of his godfather, Fernão de Sousa, the governor of Angola.⁷⁴

As mentioned, towards the end of 1671, after the war of Pungo-Andongo,⁷⁵ Mendonça, his brothers, uncles, aunts and cousins were sent to Salvador, Bahia, by the governor of Luanda, Francisco de Távora 'Cajanda' (1669–1676); they lived there for eighteen months.⁷⁶ In 1673, Mendonça was then taken to Rio de Janeiro, where he lived for, possibly, six months.⁷⁷ After spending two years in Brazil, he was sent to Portugal in August 1673. In Portugal, he stayed at the Convent of Vilar de Frades, Braga, by order of the Portuguese Crown. His three brothers were sent to Braga, too, but to different monasteries: Basto, Moreira and Selzedas.⁷⁸ Mendonça probably studied law and theology in Braga for three or four years, from 1673 to 1676 or 1677, before returning to Lisbon, where he stayed for perhaps four years from 1677 to 1681.⁷⁹ The exact details of Mendonça's life over the next five years are unclear, though a few details are discernible from a recommendation letter that he carried with him from the apostolic notary in Lisbon, Gaspar da Costa de Mesquita. In 1682 he departed for Madrid.

It is intriguing that the family name Mendonça [Mendoza], according to Lope de Barrientos, was a Jewish surname.⁸⁰ The aristocratic Mendoza family 'originated from the town of Mendoza in the province of Álava in the Basque countries' in Spain. The Mendoza family in Spain wielded considerable power and influence when Álava joined the kingdom of Castile

⁷⁴ See Cadornega, *História Geral*, vol. III, p. 447. If this was the case, when Mendonça arrived in Brazil, he might have been twenty-two or twenty-three years of age. António Teixeira de Mendonça might have died at the end of Sá's governance in 1651 or during the governance of Rodrigo de Miranda Henriques (1652–1653); see Cadornega, *História Geral*, vol. II, pp. 577–578.

⁷⁵ For the war of Pungo-Andongo, see *Relaçam/ Do FELICE SVCCESSO*.

⁷⁶ Távora was questioned by the Overseas Council on his return to Portugal, see 'Consulta do Conselho Ultramarino Sobre os familiares do Rei do Dongo' [Overseas Council Minute on the Family of the King of Dongo], AHU, cód. 17, Consultas Mixtas, vol. 13, fl. 301, 18 July 1679; see also MMA, vol. 13, pp. 507–508 (Palmares is being mentioned, rather than Mocambo, p. 507). His surname Távora is used here in conjunction with his second and African surname 'Cajanda', which was given to him by the Mbundu people of Luanda, meaning 'someone who walks with the centre of gravity in the body'.

⁷⁷ He was sent to Rio de Janeiro in 1673, but the exact date is uncertain. Afonso Furtado de Castro de Mendonça's letter of 18 August 1673 does not specify the time of his journey.

⁷⁸ See 'Carta de António da Costa de Sousa a Manuel Barreto de S. Paio'.

⁷⁹ See 'Sobre os Príncipes Negros do Dongo Unidos no Navio São Verissimo'; and Monzon, S.C. Africa, vol. I, fl. 486.

⁸⁰ See the Geni Genealogy family tree: <https://www.geni.com/projects/Mendoza-Ancestors-Research/243> (obtained on 12 September 2018). I am indebted to Professor Madge Dresser for providing me the link.

during the reign of Alfonso XI (1312–1350). The surname's history might not have any direct bearing on Mendonça's own name, nor on his alliance with Jewish descendants, the New Christians, in Portugal. Nonetheless, it is significant for my argument in this book as far as Mendonça's dialogue with and the support he gained from Gaspar da Costa de Mesquita, the apostolic notary in Lisbon, in the 1680s is concerned. The Mendonça name is suggestive, as there might be a link to the New Christians in Angola. There is, indeed, evidence that New Christians in the Kongo, Angola and Cacheu [in modern Guinea-Bissau] were marrying into the ruling class and forming alliances in order to gain political influence and protection in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁸¹ Some of the New Christians helped the African kings with intelligence information on Luso-Hispanic operations in Africa. The Crown in Madrid was very unhappy with this situation and accused the Vatican of turning a blind eye to what was happening. This may sound trivial to Mendonça's family and personal history, but it is important to his case as it demonstrates the existence of a ready-forged network between the New Christians and the élite classes in West Central Africa, to whom Mendonça belonged.⁸² A royal letter from Madrid, dated 28 August 1618, stated that:

The complaints from the King of Kongo are fostered by some restless people from the Hebrew Nation⁸³ who, out of fear of the Inquisition Tribunal, left Portugal and now live in that part of the world. For that, they see themselves as having a place with the King. They helped him with writing letters and provided him with intelligences together with others from the same Hebrew Nation that reside in this Curia.⁸⁴

The conviviality that existed between the New Christians and the Africans in West Central Africa and in West Africa moved beyond inter-group

⁸¹ 'Carta Régia ao Cardeal de Borja' [Royal Letter to the Cardinal Borja], Archive of Spain Embassy in the Vatican Maço, 56, fl. 471, 28 August 1618; see also MMA, pp. 323–325. For a discussion of the New Christians' marriages with Africans in the seventeenth century, see Lingna Nafafé, *Colonial Encounters*.

⁸² For further discussion about Jews and Africans living together in Africa, see Tudor Parfitt, *Black Jews in Africa and the Americas*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013; Toby Green, 'Masters of Difference: Creolization and the Jewish Presence in Cabo Verde, 1497–1672', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 2006; Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* and Lingna Nafafé, *Colonial Encounters*.

⁸³ 'Hebrew Nation' here refers to Jews converted to Christianity; they are also called the New Christians.

⁸⁴ 'Carta Régia ao Cardeal de Borja', pp. 323–325, 'as queixas d'ElRey de Congo, são fomentadas de alguãs pessoas da nação hebreia inquietas, que com temor do castigo do S.º Officio, se ausentarão de Portugal, e uiuem naquellas partes, as quaes por estes me[i]os trattaõ de ter lugar com o Rey, e se ajudaõ da correspondência, e inteligencias de outros da mesma nação que residem nessa Curia'.

solidarity to infiltrate the highest-level institutions such as the Curia Vaticana. It would not be far-fetched to assume that Mendonça tapped into this existing network.

The letter of recommendation that Mendonça carried with him from Lisbon to the Vatican, dated 15 February 1681, raises questions over Mendonça's racial heritage. In the letter, Mendonça was described as a *homen pardo*. This translates in Italian as *morrate*, which in Spanish could have been translated as *moreno* – that is, a dual-heritage person;⁸⁵ Richard Gray translates it as 'mulatto'.⁸⁶ However, according to Hebe Mattos, the term '*pardo*' in the seventeenth century could mean both 'Black' and 'mulatto'.⁸⁷ In seventeenth-century Spanish America, the term *pardo* could mean someone who is born free,⁸⁸ and I favour this latter meaning, 'born free', when referring to Mendonça's identity. Mixed marriages in seventeenth-century Angola were not unusual, and King Philippe Hari I could well have married dual-heritage or Portuguese women. The Portuguese Crown decreed in the sixteenth century that any allied African king's daughter should marry within the Portuguese royal family, or, if there were no royal heir, marry into the Portuguese nobility. In the sixteenth century, the king of Caio (in modern Guinea-Bissau) travelled to Cape Verde with his nobility, and declared that his daughter, who was of marriageable age, was expected to marry Portuguese nobility. When he arrived in Cape Verde, he sent a message to the Portuguese Crown that a marriage to his daughter should be contracted.⁸⁹ Among the Peniche group (the brothers of Mendonça who were not sent to Brazil with him, but who instead were despatched directly to Portugal and on to Peniche town) was 'Francisco the Black', which

⁸⁵ See Mesquita, S.C. Africa vol. I, fl. 486. ⁸⁶ Gray, 'The Papacy', p. 53.

⁸⁷ See Hebe Mattos, "Pretos" and "Pardos" between the Cross and the Sword: Racial Categories in Seventeenth Century Brazil', *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 80, 2006, pp. 43–55. Even in the sixteenth century, *pardo* means both 'Black' and 'Mulatto'. See ATT – Legitimações de D. Sebastião, liv. 26, fl. 136v., 11 September 1566; see also ATT – CC-II- 2 40-22, 25 April 1545.

⁸⁸ See Kathryn Joy McKnight and Leo J. Carofalo (eds.), *Afro-Latino Voices: Narratives from the Early Modern Ibero-Atlantic World, 1550–1812*, Indianapolis, IN/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2009, p. 334; 'Moreno in colonial Spanish America, a person of African descent, possibly enslaved, but usually signifying a person who has freed herself or himself', p. 334; '*pardo/a*, brown, mulatto; can also refer to a zambo. In mid-colonial Spanish America, a person of colour born or raised as a free person', p. 335.

⁸⁹ See 'Mensagem de Rei Caio para El'Rei' [Message of the King of Caio to El'Rei], Arquivo Vaticano (AV), Fondo Confalonieri, vol. 15, fls. 297–298v, 'treslacio da carta que mandarão ao Bispo de Cabo Verde, estante em Lisboa', 10 June 1596. See also MMA, pp. 390–394.

indicates that Mendonça and his relatives may have been of dual heritage. Francisco was the servant ('free' servant or subordinated rank and not a chattel enslaved person)⁹⁰ of Ignacio, the illegitimate son of King Philippe Hari I.⁹¹ The Portuguese decree could be viewed as contradicting the purity of blood doctrine that was sacrosanct at the time. However, more research is needed in order to come to a definitive conclusion here.

Ultimately, there may have been many Lourenço da Silva Mendonças in Angola, Kongo or Brazil. However, according to our documentary sources, few would have been princes and had a bloodline going back to the kings of Kongo and Angola, as Mendonça's did. Situating Mendonça in his political landscape in West Central Africa is pivotal to our understanding of his court case, since only in this way can we rethink the historiography of Atlantic slavery with regard to so-called African slavery.

0.2 STUDIES AND SOURCES FOR MENDONÇA'S WORK AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Richard Gray was the first historian to bring Mendonça's work in the Vatican into the public domain. In his pioneering article, 'The Papacy and the Atlantic Slave Trade: Lourenço da Silva, the Capuchins and the Decisions of the Holy Office', Gray argues that Mendonça's presentation in the Vatican was a petition in which he appealed to the Holy Office to deal with the suffering of enslaved Africans in the Atlantic.⁹² In Gray's

⁹⁰ For further discussion of the meaning of the term, see B. J. Sokol, *Shakespeare and Tolerance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 144–160. On how northern Europeans classify their southern European neighbours in terms of intellectual ability, see Giovanni Botero, *Relations, of the Most Famous Kingdoms and Commonweals, Through the World Discoursing of Their Situations, Religions, Languages, Manners, Customs, Strengths, Greatnesse, and Policies*, London: Printed by Iohn Hauiland, and are to be sold by Iohn Patridge at the signe of the Sunne in Pauls Church-yard, 1630.

⁹¹ See 'Carta de António da Costa de Sousa a Manuel Barreto de S. Paio', 'negro Francisco se lhe dê hum vestido de parrilha' (Francisco the Black be given saragoça gown).

⁹² Gray uses the term 'petition' in Mendonça's case to identify it as a request to seek a solution to alleviate the plight of the enslaved Africans; he takes no account of the legal argument embedded in the case. This is where I differ from him. According to Roman law there were different types of petition: 'private petitions to the Roman emperor' and 'subscriptions of legal sources'. The first were issued to make a case for clarifying the law on behalf of private individual petitioners who had questions about it. Generally, the 'petitioners had no interest in legal matters at all; they wanted honours, jobs, and financial concessions'. The 'subscriptions of legal sources' on the other hand 'contained formulations of principle . . . they were a response not to intellectual difficulties, but to practical ones. Petitioners went to the imperial government to get action, not advice.' Normally, they were written by legal professionals or lawyers. The presentation Mendonça delivered

view, Mendonça did not argue for the universal condemnation of slavery, but rather for the liberation of enslaved African Christians and their offspring. Gray's findings centred on the Vatican archives and did not include data on Mendonça from Spain, Portugal and Brazil. He was well aware of this limitation and, in fact, kindly recommended that I carry out research in those countries' archives.⁹³

In an attempt to widen the scope of Gray's research into the Black Atlantic, a Brazilian historian, Hebe Mattos, has published a comparative study on Mendonça and Dias entitled "“Pretos” and “Pardos” between the Cross and the Sword: Racial Categories in Seventeenth Century Brazil’.⁹⁴ Her main interest is to look at categories of *pretos* (Blacks) and *pardos* (mulattos or free people), and their emergence in Brazil. She argues that ‘the two cases presented here appear to suggest a more central role for the early demographic impact of access to manumission in colonial society and the possibilities for social mobility among the free peoples of African descent’.⁹⁵ Mattos employs these categories to unpick the roles played by both Henrique Dias, governor of Crioulos and commander of the *Terço da Gente Preta*,⁹⁶ in Brazil in the mid-seventeenth century, and

contained a statement of principles. For this reason, it cannot have been a petition in the first sense: it was not simply a request to end the suffering of the enslaved Africans in the Atlantic, but was a legal claim, supported by legal argument. I am indebted here to William Turpin, ‘Imperial Subscriptions and the Administration of Justice’, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 81, 1991, pp. 101–118. Mendonça's court case was inclusive of five principles of law: human, natural, divine, civil and canon law. For a detailed study of petitions see J. L. White, *The Form and Structure of the Official Petition: A Study in Greek Epistolography*, Missoula, MT: Society for Biblical Literature, 1972; J. E. G. Whitehorne, ‘Petitions to the Centurion: A Question of Locality?’ *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 41, 2004, pp. 155–170. See also John Finlay, ‘The Petition in the Court of Session in Early Modern Scotland’, *Parliaments, Estates & Representation*, 38(3), 2018, pp. 337–349.

⁹³ I met Gray at a conference on *Lusophonia* organised by Professor Newitt at King's College London in 2002. We had a long fruitful conversation about Mendonça's work. His recommendation to me at the time was that I needed to look for data on Mendonça in Portugal and Brazil, which he could not do, because he did not speak Portuguese at the time. He was adamant that there was data on Mendonça in those archives. However, little did he know that Mendonça came from modern Angola. After working on the archives in Brazil, Portugal, Spain and the Vatican, I returned to London in 2016, eager to share my findings with Professor Gray, only to be told by Professor Newitt that he had sadly passed away.

⁹⁴ Mattos, ““Pretos” and “Pardos””, pp. 43–55.

⁹⁵ Mattos, ““Pretos” and “Pardos””, p. 44.

⁹⁶ *Terço da Gente Preta* was ‘a regiment of enslaved and freed enslaved people that played a decisive role in the battles against the Dutch’ – see Mattos, ““Pretos” and “Pardos””, p. 45.

Lourenço da Silva Mendonça, a procurator general from the confraternities of Black Brotherhood. However, Mattos does not include Mendonça's network in Brazil in her study, nor explore his connection with Indigenous Brazilians. Most importantly, Mendonça's Vatican court case does not feature at all in her work. She acknowledges Gray's research but does not detect that Mendonça's intervention is a court case nor that his abolition message was for all Africans, across the Atlantic region – and not only in Brazil but in the entire American continent; nor does she recognise his interconnection with Black confraternities in Portuguese America, Brazil and Spain. This was not through lack of interest, but simply because of a lack of data to support a more in-depth analysis of the debate about the abolition of slavery in the Atlantic in the seventeenth century. Gray and Mattos are the only two contemporary scholars to have focused on Mendonça.

When it comes to historical sources, in 1682 the Jesuit missionaries Francisco José de Jaca and Epifanio de Moirans, who knew and supported Mendonça's court case, completed their work *Servi Liberi Seu Naturalis Mancipiorum Libertatis Iusta Defensio* (Freed Slaves or the Just Defence of the Natural Freedom of the Emancipated).⁹⁷ Both also offered a critique of the capture of Africans in Africa who were then taken to the Americas as enslaved people. While renowned Spanish Jesuit Bartolomé De las Casas (1484–1566)⁹⁸ defended the Indigenous Americans against slavery, the lesser-known Jaca and Moirans also spoke out against the enslavement of Africans using the legal arguments of the time. Their work, however, did not come to the fore in the debate on the Atlantic slave trade until the beginning of the 1980s, when their defence was translated from Latin to Spanish by José Tomas López García as *Dos Defensores de los Esclavos Negros en el Siglo XVII* (Two Defenders of the Black Slaves in the Seventeenth Century). Neither Jaca nor Moirans went to Africa as missionaries, but they both worked as Jesuit priests in Venezuela and Cuba, where they met. Their defence is a major work on the injustice of African

⁹⁷ See Francisco José de Jaca and Epifanio de Moirans, Order of Friars Minor Capuchin (Ordo Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum) [OFM Cap.], *Servi Liberi Seu Naturalis Mancipiorum Libertatis Iusta Defensio* (Freed Slaves or the Just Defence of the Natural Freedom of the Emancipated), Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, Legajo 527, 1682, in José Tomas López García, *Dos Defensores de los Esclavos Negros en el Siglo XVII*, Maracaibo, Caracas: Biblioteca Corpozulia, 1982.

⁹⁸ See Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Brevisima Relacion de la Destrucion de Africa* (1556) (estudo preliminar, edição e notas de Isacio Perez Fernandez), Salamanca, San Estéban, 1989.

enslavement in the Americas, and on the abolition of slavery in the Atlantic, yet it is almost unknown. They analysed in great depth the same legal terms that were used by Mendonça in the Vatican, such as ‘natural’, ‘human’, ‘divine’, ‘civil’ and ‘canon law (*jus canonico*)’, challenging why Atlantic slavery was being practised against these laws.⁹⁹ They argued that the Atlantic slave trade was illegal, stating that ‘when we begin with natural law, all men are born free’.¹⁰⁰ They contended that the responsibility for those enslaved Africans in the Americas lay with the pope, because ‘the lords of blind slaves with their ambition to impress the Governor (the governors in the Indies are subject to the Catholic King and the kings are subject to the Pope)’.¹⁰¹ This chain of responsibility made it necessary for the pope to punish the guilty parties committing such crimes, particularly the Portuguese governing authorities in Africa, Brazil and the Americas. And this obligation also implicated the pope in a crime against humanity: the Atlantic slave trade. Indeed, Jaca and Moirans stood in the witness box in the Vatican to testify on behalf of Mendonça’s court case, arguing that each ‘person is free by natural law’.¹⁰²

In their thesis, Jaca and Moirans also asked uncomfortable questions as to why Christians bought enslaved Africans, who were captured using force, fraud, intimidation, kidnapping and theft. They argued that the transaction carried out and the value of the things exchanged for human beings were worthless in comparison to the human beings bought. For them, such exchanges should never have taken place. They asked:

Would Christians like this to be done on their lands and in their regions? Would they like to be made slaves and be bought? Would they like to be captured with violence and fraud and tied up and transported? How can they commit such lawless things and how could they harden their hearts to the evil, the force of sins against *natural*, *positive*, and *divine* laws?¹⁰³

They used their knowledge of the Americas and their experience with enslaved Africans to strongly support Mendonça in the Vatican.

⁹⁹ See SOCG vol. 490, fls., 140r-v ‘usano contra ogni legge Divina, et Hummana . . . legge naturale’ [‘they practised slavery against every Divine and Human law . . . Natural law’], see also folio 62 ‘*jus canonico*’.

¹⁰⁰ See Cap. Iur. Civ. Dig., 50, 17, 32, fl. 36, p. 12, ‘iure enim naturali ab initio omnes homines liben nascebantur’, Jaca and Moirans, OFM Cap., *Servi Liberi*, p. 200.

¹⁰¹ Jaca and Moirans OFM Cap., *Servi Liberi*, p. 181, ‘los señores de los esclavos ciegos de ambición impresionaron al Gobernador (los gobernadores en las Indias están sujetos al Rey católico y los reyes están sujetos al Papa)’.

¹⁰² See Jaca and Moirans, OFM Cap., *Servi Liberi*.

¹⁰³ See Jaca and Moirans, OFM Cap., *Servi Liberi*, p. 209.

Furthermore, they openly criticised the Atlantic slave trade and demanded that the enslaved Africans' owners pay back what they owed the enslaved for their work and release them from bondage.¹⁰⁴ For them, as for Mendonça, *natural, human, divine* and *civil* laws were universal, and had been broken by the enslavement of Africans.

Dating from the same time, the three-volume history of the Angolan wars completed by Antonio de Oliveira Cadornega in 1681 is fundamental to understanding the socio-political and cultural circumstances surrounding Mendonça's court case, the context of the Portuguese conquest and the wars waged on the Ndongo kingdom.¹⁰⁵ Cardonega came to Angola with Governor Pedro Cesar de Menezes in 1639, serving in the military. He initially became a captain, but then followed a civil and subsequently political career, becoming ordinary judge in 1660 and municipal councillor of the City Council in Luanda in 1671. Not only does he give details on the wars, but he also offers ethnographic and geographic insights into the period.

Two and a half centuries later, in 1944, Father António Brásio, a Portuguese priest, missionary and historian, compiled his vast collection *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, an account of the activities of Portuguese missionaries in Africa. The text covers the period from the arrival of the Portuguese in Africa in 1446 to 1700. While he included documents on Mendonça, he did not know of his role and does not mention Mendonça's work in the Vatican at all. He also wrote a book, entitled *Os Pretos em Portugal* (Blacks in Portugal), about the freedom of enslaved Africans in Portugal.¹⁰⁶ He examined historical documents on the existence of Black Brotherhoods in Lisbon and described how some members had gained their freedom within the law using the rights conferred on them in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, this work does not extend much beyond Portugal, since the only mention of another Black Brotherhood in the Atlantic sphere is the confraternity of Massangano in Angola.¹⁰⁷ Brásio uses his work on Black Brotherhoods in Portugal to argue that the treatment of enslaved people in Portugal was not as brutal as many people might have been led to believe. Writing in the twentieth century, he used the freedom of the enslaved Africans in sixteenth-century Portugal to deny that Portuguese society was racist, using it

¹⁰⁴ See Jaca and Moirans, OFM Cap., *Servi Liberi*.

¹⁰⁵ Cardonega, *História Geral*, I, II and III.

¹⁰⁶ António Brásio, *Os Pretos em Portugal*, Lisbon: Agência Geral das Colônia, 1944.

¹⁰⁷ See António Brásio, 'As Misericórdias de Angola', *Studia* 4, 1959, pp. 106–149.

as a defence against charges levelled at Portugal in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and at colonialism in general.¹⁰⁸ For Brásio, enslaved Africans in Portugal were treated humanely. He argues that the country had no equal in its civilising mission and race relations in any part of the world, and was – for that reason – superior to the United States of America.¹⁰⁹

French historian Didier Lahon, who has continued the work begun by Brásio on Black Brotherhoods¹¹⁰ in Portugal, is more aware of Mendonça but argues that his achievement with these confraternities was limited because of the social and political constraints of the time.¹¹¹ Brásio and Lahon stand for one of two key arguments used to sanitise slavery and colonialism: firstly, that they were part of a greater civilizing mission and secondly, that slavery was already in existence and widely practised by Africans in Africa. For Lahon, the presence of African confraternities in Portugal somehow diluted and contradicted Portugal's ideology as an enslaving society. However, the author does not recognise the African agency and fight for freedom through the Black Brotherhoods because he does not conceive of them as possible in this historical moment.

Like Lahon, Brazilian scholar Lucilene Reginaldo, who works on Brazilian and Angolan Black Brotherhoods and the circulation of Black men in the Atlantic world,¹¹² does not engage with Mendonça's work. However, her work is important in understanding confraternities of Black

¹⁰⁸ For more detailed discussion, see George J. Fonseca, 'A Historiografia Sobre os Escravos em Portugal', *Cultura*, 33, 2014, pp. 1–22.

¹⁰⁹ Gilberto Freyre's work could be in this light. See Jeffrey D. Needell, 'Identity, Race, Gender, and Modernity in the Origins of Gilberto Freyre's Oeuvre', *The American Historical Review*, 100(1), 1995, pp. 51–77.

¹¹⁰ I will use the term Black Brotherhood and confraternity of Black Men (*homens pretos* in the original) interchangeably throughout the book. Confraternities were guilds within churches. They began as organizations for white members but were extended to include African Christian members of the Church. Later on, churches were built that had emerged from Black Brotherhoods and carried the title in the Church's name.

¹¹¹ See Didier Lahon, 'Da Redução da Alteridade à Consagração da Diferença: as Irmandades Negras em Portugal (Séculos XVI–XVIII)', *Projecto História*, São Paulo, 44, 2012, pp. 53–83.

¹¹² See Lucilene Reginaldo, 'André do Couto Godinho: Homem preto, formado em Coimbra, missionário no Congo em fins do século XVIII', *Revista História*, 173, 2015, pp. 141–174; and Lucilene Reginaldo "'Não tem Informação": Mulatos, Pardos e Pretos na Universidade de Coimbra (1700–1771)', *Estudos Ibero-Americanos*, 44/3, 2018, pp. 421–434. Reginaldo in her work on André do Couto Godinho shows the struggle of the African élites resistant to the Portuguese discriminatory educational process in the eighteenth century. However, Godinho's work was a struggle for personal freedom, whilst Mendonça's case demonstrated an effort to gain freedom for many.

Brotherhood in Brazil, particularly in Salvador, Bahia, where Mendonça received great support for his court case in the Vatican.¹¹³ For Reginaldo, Black confraternities in Bahia were Africanised through practices they brought from Kongo and Angola.¹¹⁴ They preserved their tradition with the memory of the king of Kongo. According to Reginaldo ‘the King of Kongo represented the triumph of continued strategies to preserve links with Africa’.¹¹⁵ She argues that the Angolans were the first to form brotherhoods in Bahia. They used them as a space in which to overcome their daily challenges and as a legal support for themselves.¹¹⁶ For Reginaldo, confraternities were ‘channel[s] of expression and integration of the Black people in the colonial period’.¹¹⁷ She pointed out that Angolans made up the great majority of Bahian confraternity members and dominated the groups’ leadership.

With regard to the question of slavery in Africa, in the nineteenth century Pedro de Carvalho, Portuguese secretary to the governor in Angola between 1862 and 1863, stated in his book *Das Origens da Escravidão Moderna em Portugal* (Origins of Modern Slavery in Portugal), that ‘Africa is a land of slavery by definition. Black is a slave by birth.’¹¹⁸ Contrary to the lone voice of Portuguese priest Father Oliveira, who in *Elementos Para a História do Município de Lisboa*¹¹⁹ criticised Portugal as an enslaving society by seeing it as the only country responsible for Atlantic slavery, Carvalho argued that ‘we [the Portuguese] did not invent Negroes’ slavery; we have found it there, which was the foundation of those imperfect societies’.¹²⁰ Other Portuguese historians have also defended Portugal’s involvement in the Atlantic slave trade by echoing sentiments expressed by both Carvalho and Brasília.¹²¹ Among them is the nineteenth-century writer and patriarch

¹¹³ See Lucilene Reginaldo, *Os Rosários dos Angolas – Irmandades de Africanos e Crioulos na Bahia Setecentista*, São Paulo: Alameda, 2011.

¹¹⁴ Reginaldo, *Os Rosários dos Angolas*, p. 69.

¹¹⁵ Reginaldo, *Os Rosários dos Angolas*, p. 226, ‘o Rei do Congo representava o triunfo das estratégias contínuas para preservar as ligações com a África’.

¹¹⁶ Reginaldo, *Os Rosários dos Angolas*, pp. 240–241.

¹¹⁷ Reginaldo, *Os Rosários dos Angolas*, p. 345, ‘canal de expressão e integração da população negra no período colonial’.

¹¹⁸ António Pedro de Carvalho, *Das Origens da Escravidão Moderna em Portugal*, Lisbon: Tipografia Universal, 1877, p. 45, ‘A África é por essência a terra da escravidão. O preto é escravo por Nascimento’.

¹¹⁹ See Oliveira, *Elementos para a História do Município de Lisboa*.

¹²⁰ Carvalho, *Das Origens da Escravidão*, p. 45, ‘não inventámos a escravidão dos Negros; encontrámo-la formando a base daquelas sociedades imperfeitas’.

¹²¹ For full discussion of the Portuguese historiography, see Fonseca, ‘A Historiografia Sobre os Escravos’.

of Lisbon, Father Francisco de S. Luís. In *Nota Sobre a Origem da Escravidão e Tráfico dos Negros* (Reflection on the Origin of the Slavery and the Traffic of Enslaved Black Africans) – an answer to French authors Christophe de Koch and Frédéric Schoell, who had accused Portugal of being responsible for the slave trade¹²² – Luís contributed to the invention of the seductive and misleading narrative that Arabs and Africans were already trading in enslaved people in Africa before Portugal became involved in the Atlantic slave trade. This has become the dominant version of the history of slavery in the region and is intended above all to shift responsibility and guilt from Europeans to Africans.¹²³

The historiography of West Central Africa initially focused on *ita*¹²⁴ – ‘war’ – as an enslavement method. Historians working with this focus have included John Thornton, David Birmingham, Beatrix Heintz, José C. Curto and Mariana P. Candido;¹²⁵ others such as James Walvin, Paul E. Lovejoy and Patrick Manning have focused on *ita* but for Africa as a whole rather than West Central Africa.¹²⁶ Away from the focus on ‘war’,¹²⁷ historians have paid particular attention to *xicacos* (tributes of vassalship) – or ‘taxation’.¹²⁸ Both Beatrix Heintze and Mariana P. Candido have considered these two elements

¹²² Christophe G. de Koch and Frédéric Schoell, *Histoire Abrégée des Traités de Paix entre les Puissances de l’Europe Depuis la paix de Westphalie*, vol. XI, Paris: Nabu Press, 1817–1818, p. 171.

¹²³ See Boxer (ed.), *South China in the Sixteenth Century*; see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1680*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992, and Boxer, *Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, p. 31.

¹²⁴ *Ita* or *kita* is a word for war and plural *kita* in Kimbundu language. See Cadornega, *História Geral*, I, p. 615.

¹²⁵ See Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, p. 99 and John Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641–1718*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983; Birmingham, *Trade and Conquest*; Beatrix Heintze, ‘Ngonga a Mwiza: um Sobado Angolano sob Domínio Português no Século XVII’, *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, 8–9, 1988, pp. 221–234; Heintze, *Angola nos Séculos XVI e XVII*; and Heintze, ‘Angola nas Garras do Tráfico de Escravos’; José C. Curto, ‘Experiences of Enslavement in West Central Africa’, *Social History*, 41(82), 2008, pp. 381–415; Candido, ‘Conquest, Occupation, Colonialism and Exclusion’; Candido, ‘O Limite Tênué’.

¹²⁶ James Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery*, London: Harper Collins, 1992; Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 60–148; Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 140–245.

¹²⁷ See also Ariane Carvalho, ‘Guerras nos sertões de Angola: Sobas, Guerra Preta e Escravização (1749–1797)’, unpublished PhD thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2020.

¹²⁸ See Cadornega, *História Geral*, I, p. 621: *xicacos* are tributes of vassalship, vassalage. However, these are different from the Portuguese taxation system, which was obligatory. *Xicacos* were tributes in kind.

together and engaged with the significance of the fact that ‘raiding’ and ‘taxation’ were important as a source of income to cover the Portuguese administration’s expenditure in seventeenth-century Angola. Subsequently, the focus on ‘war’, ‘raiding’ and ‘taxation’ has given way to an emphasis on ‘debt’. Historians such as Joseph Miller, Jan Vansina, José Curto and Roquinaldo Ferreira¹²⁹ have used this as a focus in their analysis of the ways in which Africans were enslaved in West Central Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Alongside ‘debt’, historians have also examined ‘judicial proceedings’¹³⁰ – the *tribunal de mucanos* (*mucanos* tribunal). A tribunal of *mucanos* means ‘legal verbal proceedings in their disputes and demands’ in the Angolan language Kimbundu.¹³¹ *Mucanos* were local courts, indigenous to West Central Africa, used to deal with legal cases. The above-mentioned historians have used these local legal structures to argue that the enslavement of Angolans was part of the West Central Africans’ culture, and that enslavement was used as a punishment for those found guilty of breaking the law. Ferreira argues that civil and criminal cases were used by *sobas* to enslave the guilty in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹³² He challenges West Central African historiography that views enslaved Africans in the region as war captives and calls for its revision, deploying individual cases to reveal that enslavement was carried out through acts of kidnapping and betrayal. In a similar vein, Candido has demonstrated that in Benguela the Portuguese governing authorities were not only waging war as a method of capturing Angolans but also using debt and judicial practices to enslave them.¹³³ Similarly, Joseph Calder Miller in his work *Way of Death* has argued that the Portuguese used the judicial system to obtain enslaved Africans in the region by enforcing debt recovery as a method in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For Miller, the enslavement of Angolans was carried out in regions far away from areas of Portuguese settlement.¹³⁴ Alongside historiography on *ita*, Curto has demonstrated the problem of social conflict that was

¹²⁹ See Roquinaldo Amaral Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil During the Era of the Slave Trade*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014; and Candido, *An African Slaving Port*. Judith Spicksley has argued that the Portuguese in Angola were somehow morally superior to the Angolans in their dealing in enslaved people. However, this interpretation is contradicted by Sousa’s argument. See Judith Spicksley ‘Contested Enslavement: The Portuguese in Angola and the Problem of Debt, c. 1600–1800’, *Itinerario*, 39(2), 2015, pp. 247–275.

¹³⁰ See Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange*. ¹³¹ Cadornega, *História Geral*, I, p. 618.

¹³² See Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange*.

¹³³ See Candido, *African Slaving Port*, p. 195.

¹³⁴ Joseph Calder Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, p. 268.