

Resistance and Struggles

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For three decades, studies of the African slave trade and the system of slavery have proliferated. Conferences have been held one after another: in Copenhagen (1974), New York (1978), Port-au-Prince (1978), Washington, Harvard University (1979), Manchester (1982), Nantes (1985), Madrid (1988), Paris, Port-au-Prince, Saint-Louis, Dakar (all in 1989), Nantes (1993), and Nouakchott (1995). Numerous specialists from universities in Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and the Americas (Brazil, the United States, and Canada) have convened to compare the results of their research. Year after year, archival records have been brought to bear and the bibliography has grown ever longer. A number of studies of oral tradition have been undertaken in Africa.¹

Why, then, should there be such reservations, such reticence, such reluctance to be persuaded by the cumulative results of all this research – and particularly with regard to the question of resistance on the part of captives and slaves? In truth, a certain restraint is called for, given the vast spatial dimensions of the subject: resistance movements, which spread over land and sea alike, developed in Africa, the Caribbean, North and South America, across the Atlantic Ocean, and in Asia. The main difficulty lies in problems of methodology. How can we escape the silences and taboos that still surround the slave trade and slavery? African, European, Caribbean, and American historians all have different pressure points, and they are drawn to different research questions.

In 1974, Jean Mettas complained: “An overly exclusive European perspective, along with an ignorance of African realities: these are the ills that have too long afflicted studies of the African slave trade.”² Shortly before his death, Mettas spoke of “a history that has yet to be written.”³

How are we to understand resistance mounted by Africans where the slave trade was practiced, resistance by captives, revolts on board slave ships? Insurrections on land or at sea and revolts by captives or slaves cannot be dissociated from the historical context as a whole, in all its depth and complexity. Historical research on the African slave trade, the system of slavery, the colonial system interwoven with the broader histories of Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe – must seek to embrace nothing less than a history of the world if we are to fully understand the resistance movements recorded by primary sources.

African Resistance

A number of questions arise in this connection: what were the social and ethnic origins of the captives? the conditions in which they were held? the places where the trade was carried out? How did African societies react? How can we sort out the Africans who participated actively in the slave trade and those who were its victims? All of these questions have to do with African history as a whole. It is impossible to fathom resistance by Africans without, for example, becoming familiar with Africa's internal slave trade and domestic slavery. In his book *L'Afrique et l'esclavage: une étude sur la traite négrière*,⁴ Mbaye Guéye of the University of Dakar sheds light from within Africa on the effects and consequences of the Atlantic slave trade. Such research needs to be extended to all of Africa and to Madagascar, in order to better distinguish the "hut captives" from those Africans captured for the Atlantic trade. Who were those who resisted? Is it consistently true that captives who were prisoners of war or those born into slavery resigned themselves to accepting their new fate,⁵ whereas free men, Africans of noble origin, would opt for suicide or revolt to regain their freedom?⁶

Another problem is the difficulty and complexity of the concept of resistance when it is applied to Africa. The slave trade led to profound transformations in African societies. It sowed and propagated fear and insecurity. African kings attacked their neighbors in order to obtain prisoners; the sale of these captives to European

slave traders enabled the kings to grow rich and acquire firearms. Chiefdoms formed and regrouped, surrounding themselves with armies of slaves who defended them.⁷ Local monarchies consolidated their power and tightened social control over the populations. How can the struggles for freedom or liberation be defined given these conditions within a complex history?⁸ The historians of Anglophone Africa have, for their part, emphasized the importance of taking into account all the various dimensions of history – political, economic, and social.

The study of resistance movements goes hand in glove with studies undertaken to answer the fundamental historical questions. What capacities for resistance could be found within the African societies subjected to the slave trade? How did they experience the population drain effected by the deportations? How did they participate in this ravage? What means did they possess for responding to the aggressive intrusions of the Europeans? How did the state, the agent of power, face up to what these African societies were undergoing? How did these societies change as the European slave traders extended and reinforced their sway?

The Africans who were captured by Portuguese slave traders around 1440 – 1445 were the first travelers thrust along a path of no return, propelled towards an impasse in which the African slave trade, the system of slavery, and the colonial system were inextricably intertwined. These African captives initiated a multi-dimensional resistance process that was to unfurl throughout the long period from the fifteenth to the twentieth century.

Increasingly precise research in African history has brought to light the existence of organized coastal defense systems established in a zones including the Cape Verde region, Sierra Leone, the Bijagos archipelago, the gulf of Guinea, the Congo, and Angola. Here and there we find faint traces of certain secret brotherhoods that operated at sea and on land, thwarting the development of the Portuguese slave trade by attacking slave traders and setting their ships on fire.⁹ I have already underlined the role, early in the sixteenth century, of the maritime sorties of a naval brotherhood that patrolled the gulf of Guinea.¹⁰ Alphonse de Saintonge, master pilot to François I, described the resistance operations of these naval forces in a log written in 1510: “And on this

island of Fernando, there are large dugouts, each of which holds around sixty men who approach the ships to attack using bows and arrows for weapons." Some local chiefs defended their territory with great determination, as in the case of Caramansa who with his troops harassed the Portuguese engaged in building the fortress São Jorge da Mina. After granting them permission to construct the fort, he regretted his decision; he had his men cut off the water supplies and try to repel the invaders back to sea.¹¹ Notwithstanding the gifts brought to win him over, as well as repressive measures (such as torched villages), Caramansa was unyielding. Like him, a number of African chiefs were later to refuse to grant foreigners such permission and would be subjected to attacks by ships patrolling along the coasts. A flotilla of galleys destroyed and burned the houses of recalcitrant Africans, taking prisoners who were then sold as slaves. This resistance forced the Portuguese to construct a series of forts on the Atlantic coast to protect their slave trade. All of these forts were under the command of São Jorge da Mina, and their officers reported to the governor of the Citadel. These fortresses were attacked not only by Africans but also by the slave-trading privateers of the French and later by the English.

More serious, because of their severer consequences, were the attacks upon the *mani* Congo Alvaro (1568 – 1587) and his court, in 1568. Were these attacks internal rebellions or invasions by the Jaga or the Imbangala? According to some authors, the rebels came from provinces in the interior – Matamba, Nsundi, Mbata – and were aided by the Tyo.¹² The new arrivals possessed a remarkable political, military, and religious organization. In military terms, they perfected a strategy of surprise attacks and strongholds within fortified camps, known as *Kilombo*. The *Kilombo* type of camp consisted of seven sections, according to Father João Antonio Cavazzi de Montecuccolo.¹³

- 1 – in the center of the camp, the dwelling of the High Chief, essentially a king, and those of his close counselors, were surrounded by palisades;
- 2 – the quarters of the *Ngola Mbole*, the commander in chief of the guards, also known as the *Mutue-a-Ita* (war chief) or *Mutue-a-*

Ilungo (war captain), the highest-ranking officer after the Chief. He led assaults and group marches. Accompanied by a *Xinguila* (seer), he chose the site for the *Kilombo* and oversaw its construction;

- 3 – the quarters of the *Tandala*, commander of the rear guard. He would assume leadership of the *Kilombo* during an interregnum;
- 4 – the *Mutunda*, facing west, housed the *Mani-lumbu*, specialized in the construction of defensive walls and ditches around the *Kilombo* and the centrally located dwellings. He was the only person authorized to enter the king's chamber and speak to the king "without being checked by anyone";
- 5 – at the opposite side, facing west, the quarters of the loyal and discreet Minister of Secret Affairs;
- 6 – the *Ki-Kumba* or *Ilunda*, who reported to the *Ngola-Mbole* and took charge of weapons, prisoners, metals, and forges;
- 7 – another *Ilunda*, who was responsible for protecting the great chief and his wealth. Only the most trustworthy individuals – nearly always members of the chief's family – held this post.

Other military and religious leaders also lived within the *Kilombo*. Among the most important were the *Mani-Kudia* (intendant), who had under his command a large number of guards and a series of officiants for rituals:

Nganga-ya-Ita	Nganga-ya-mulaji
Nganga-ya-Kimbanda	Nganga-ya-xili
Nganga-ya-nzumbi	Nganga Itiqui
Nganga-ya-nzumba	Nganga mbungula
Nganga-ya-ngombo	Nganga mwene
Nganga-ya-Imvula	Nganga-ngudi-a-nambua
Nganga-ya-muloco	Nganga nzi ¹⁴

The actions of these warriors unstrung the Portuguese slave trading networks. In 1575, Paulo Diaz de Navais started the cycle of *Angolanas* wars, waged against the *Ngola* with the sole end of capturing prisoners for the slave trade. A missionary wrote in 1583:

This year, the Portuguese have conquered half of the kingdom of Angola and defeated four of the king's armies. Thousands of [his] vassals were killed and [the victors] seized the salt mines, which represented the greatest

loss, since they use salt as their currency. Countless slaves were captured From one army, 619 noses were brought back from decapitated heads, and another had so many victims that their corpses covered the ground Every war they wage makes the Portuguese richer, because they seize slaves, cattle, sheep, salt, palm oil, pigs, the raffia mats that are used for beds, and crockery.¹⁵

After Navais's death in 1589, his successor, Luis Serrão, was defeated in 1591 by an African army combining the forces of the Ndongo, the Congo, and the Matambo. Later, with the assistance of the United Provinces, the Queen of Ndongo, Anne Nzinga, formed an alliance with the Congo rebels and repelled the Portuguese who had settled in Luanda. A Dutch fleet seized Luanda in August, 1645. After the arrival of a Portuguese fleet commanded by Salvador de Sa Correa in 1648, who forced the Dutch to surrender, the African chiefs tried desperately to defend themselves with no outside assistance. In the vicinity of Luanda and Bengo, they joined forces, but were beaten, massacred, or captured as prisoners and shipped to Brazil. After 1665, the civil wars in the Congo and in Angola led to the destruction of local resistance movements.

Numerous rebels from the provinces of Congo and Ndongo were seized as prisoners and sold to the Portuguese, who loaded them onto slave ships and deported them first to the gulf islands of Guinea (São Tomé and Príncipe) and then to Brazil.

Since 1842, colonial Portuguese historiography has taken an interest in the *Angolares* of São Tomé, who posed a true puzzle for the historians who discovered them in the nineteenth century. The *Angolares* are thought to have originated in Ndongo. According to historiographical tradition, a ship with a cargo of Angolese captives, en route towards Brazil, was shipwrecked to the southwest of São Tomé between 1540 and 1550. The survivors supposedly settled in a mountainous region, living in secrecy until 1574, when they surfaced and invaded all the agricultural holdings, bringing other Africans with them. They sacked, pillaged, and destroyed the sugar mills and Povoação, the principal city of the island. They continued their series of raids and attacks until the eighteenth century. The entire sixteenth century witnessed the *guerras do mato*, revolts by São Tomé slaves who left their *Kilombo* to attack and destroy the sugar plantations, as confirmed by the *Monumenta*

Missionaria Africana, a collection of documents gathered together by Antonio Brasio. These slaves succeeded in occupying the entire island between 1595 and 1596. Amador, chief of the *Angolares*, assumed the title of king of the island. The war of the *Angolares* brought a halt to the economic and social growth of São Tomé, which was gradually abandoned by the settlers; during the entire seventeenth century, until 1709, the colonial economy was dealt one harsh blow after another by the rampaging *Angolares*. The uprisings continued, and in 1693 there occurred a picturesque episode known as “the rape of the Sabines,” in which some of the colonists’ wives were abducted. The planters organized a raid (*entrada*) to recover their wives, but met with failure. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, in 1709, the *guerras do mato* continued with a violent explosion of *Angolares* underground fighters. A slave revolt seconded the struggles carried out by mutinous soldiers in 1734 and 1736. The island of São Tomé had by then become an *armazém vazio* (an empty warehouse) whose forests and mountains were occupied by the unassailable *Angolares*. Through the end of the nineteenth century they remained a source of unending worry for the *fazendeiros* (land and slave owners). In 1878, a military occupation of the *Angolares*’ main camp was of little more than symbolic import, posing no real threat to them. Indifferent to this act of force, the *Angolares* obtained letters patent recognizing a certain degree of autonomy. The community of *Angolares* had a population of about 2000 individuals at the time.

Revolts at Sea

The analysis of historical sources brings to the fore the presence of resistance at every stage in the process of the slave trade. Let us recall briefly the various phases of this trade:

- 1 – the taking of captives by various means (as prisoners of war, through acquisition in the internal markets of Africa);
- 2 – convoys of captives (caravans) sent towards the seacoast;
- 3 – stocking of captives in barracoons;
- 4 – sales transactions and the loading of captives into slave ships;

- 5 – the Middle Passage;
- 6 – disembarkation and readying for market;
- 7 – sale on the Caribbean slave market.¹⁶

At what point did the African captive become a Negro commodity? Between the time he was captured and the time he was placed on board a slave ship. When he was shackled and the ship began its voyage across the ocean, the captive could react in one of three ways: he could opt for suicide, accommodation, or revolt.

Why is information on revolts at sea so difficult to come by? One author observes: "Naturally, the torturers were not at pains to record their exploits. As a result, documents describing exactly what happened on board the slave ships are in scarce supply. However, we do know that, despite all the precautions that were taken, occasional revolts were inevitable."¹⁷ Another historian confirms the scarcity of these sources: "Only the logs of the slave traders' ships provide us with any certainty, but, as already stated, these documents are rare: three in Nantes, with one revolt mentioned in each; around forty in Paris, with revolts in a third of these cases. These revolts took place despite the surveillance, despite the irons (for men), despite the risks."¹⁸

Ship captains did not like to record in writing the insurrections for which they were responsible. Thus when the *Hector*, a ship sailing out of Nantes, returned to its home port in 1751, no mention was made of the revolt that took place on board, which left three Africans dead; the information we have comes from the log of the *Cybèle*, a ship of the India Company. Nor were most captains eager to take extreme measures to repress the revolts, as happened in 1724:

On the mere suspicion that a revolt of his African captives was imminent, a captain condemned two of them to death. The first had his throat slit in front of all the rest; the captain had the heart, liver and entrails ripped out, ordered that they be split into three hundred pieces, and forced each of his slaves to eat a piece, threatening anyone who refused with the same punishment. The second was a woman. She was hung from a mast and whipped until she bled; then over a hundred pieces of her flesh were removed with knives, until her bones were bared and she expired.¹⁹

Attempts at insurrection were common even before the ship had left the African coast. In 1532, the eighty captives transported

on the *Misericordia*, a Portuguese slave ship, managed to get free and to regain the Benin coast. The entire crew was killed, except for the pilot and two sailors who were wounded but managed to escape and reach Mina after six days in a dinghy.²⁰

In Guinea, Paul Erdman Isert (1756 – 1789), a Brandenburger employed in the service of Denmark from 1783 to his death, was a rare witness to the operations of the African slave trade. He described a revolt that took place in 1787 on a Dutch ship as it was being fitted out. More than five hundred African captives, after being freed from their shackles, took over the ship and blew it up. On one English slave ship, the freed Africans jumped into the sea and swam to shore. They were recaptured and sold once again to Europeans. A similar end awaited the rebel captives of the ship *La Marie Galère* from Saint-Malo on 18 February and 20 August 1722, and the *Diane*, also from Nantes, on 15 September 1774. The *Galatée*, a slave ship from La Rochelle, “was blown sky-high” after the uprising on 11 May 1738, when the ship was three leagues from Cap Sainte-Apolonnie. The ship *Le Nécessaire* from La Rochelle ended up foundering in the Bijagos. The fifty-two captives taken on board between Sierra Leone and Cap de Monte succeeded in taking over the ship on 16 October 1771 and dispatching the crew.

On the high seas, a dozen rebel captives were heaved overboard on 1 March 1743 by the crew of the slave ship *Notre-Dame de Bonne Garde* from Nantes.

Often, captives who gained their freedom at sea were doomed to die in any case. Though the waters of the Juda harbour where slave ships lay at anchor were teeming with sharks in 1724 – 1725²¹, men and women captives alike jumped into the water rather than accept their internment. The captives aboard the Dutch ship *Guineese Vriendschap* came close to mounting a successful revolt in 1770, but were thwarted by the advent of the *Castor*, a war ship that crushed the insurgents. The presumed leader of the rebels, an Ashanti named Essjerrie Ettin – this is one of the few cases where the captive has been identified – was brutally executed by the crew. Having already lost his left hand in combat, he had his right hand cut off and was then hung by a rope and lynched to death. In 1780, the captives of another Dutch ship, the *Vigilantie*, were more fortu-

nate. They revolted shortly before arriving at the Guyanese coast. The two hundred captives dispatched the crew and abandoned the ship. What became of these African rebels is not unknown. The captain of the slave ship returned to Holland safe and sound as a passenger on another Dutch slave ship.²²

These suicidal insurrections during the Middle Passage were frequent occurrences. On the high seas, such revolts occurred with an impressive frequency. Thus, out of the 3,343 sailings recorded in French sources from 1714 to 1793 and the 717 recorded from 1814 to 1850,²³ a list of insurrections at sea shows 141 in the eighteenth century and 4 in the nineteenth century.²⁴ The possibility of doctored books when the revolts resulted in African deaths must be kept in mind, whereas the deaths of officers or of sailors during slaving expeditions most likely called for more convincing explanations.

On their ships the Dutch slave traders made use of multilingual Africans to keep the captives under surveillance and uncover any plans to mutiny.²⁵ The French slave traders also had their spies, as attested by French documentation.

Sources that might shed light on the Dutch slave trade are sorely lacking, particularly in the archives of the *West-Indische Compagnie*. More than eleven revolts have been counted out of the fifty-eight slave-trading expeditions undertaken by the *Middleburgsche Commercie Compagnie*, including three revolts during a single voyage of the *Vigilantie*. This represents an average of one revolt for every five expeditions. If these figures are extrapolated for all Dutch slaving expeditions, we arrive at a total of over three hundred revolts.²⁶

The history of the African slave trade is studded with countless insurrections, both successful and failed. Many revolts by African captives on European, Brazilian, and North American slave ships left not a trace. For example, what can be said about the revolts that took place on board Portuguese, Spanish, and English slave ships? The slaving captain Théophile Canot (whose real name is Conneau), whose well-known logbook was published in English in 1853, describes one such revolt, for which no official sources have been found. He was sailing on the *Vénus*, a 120-ton ship from New York which had left the Gold Coast with 460 captives. En

route to the Caribbean, after twenty-one days at sea in 1831 – during the period when the slave trade was illegal – about fifty captives revolted. The crew defended itself by firing buckshot, which killed and wounded several of the rebels.²⁷

Colonial planters, seconded by colonial historiography, have deemed the contribution of African and Asian manpower in the period *after* the abolition of slavery to be essential. The *Centre de Recherches Caraïbes-Amériques* (CERCAM) group has stigmatized this “second slavery” and the surreptitious slave trade carried on to supply the colonies after 1848.²⁸ One example of a revolt mounted in 1858 on board a French ship clearly shows that not all of the “new captives” were amenable to leaving their native land.²⁹

Some authors have emphasized the behavior of certain captives as a function of their specific African origin. Thus they note the propensity of the Bijagos, the Djolas, and the Balantas to resist and to commit suicide when they are captured.³⁰ The same also applies to captives from Senegal, Gambia, and northern Nigeria belonging to the Woloff, Peul, or Krou nations.³¹ Certainly other factors enter into the picture, but in the absence of accounts by the Africans who resisted, we are left in ignorance as to what these factors might be.

Resistance Movements in the Caribbean: The System of Slavery and Colonization

After Africa and its archipelagos, the next areas to experience the “benefits” of the European slave trade were the Americas. The Portuguese began the systematic pillaging of Africa, awakening a process of resistance that spread to São Tomé and then to Brazil. The arrival of African captives in Brazil in the decade from 1616 to 1626 was paralleled by the beginnings of the sugar-based economy.³² Starting in the mid-sixteenth century, resistance by runaway slaves (maroons, from the indigenous *cimarron*) crystallized around the *Quilombos*, the most famous of which was the *Quilombo dos Palmares*. Located in the forests of Alagoas, in the *capitania* of Pernambuco, Palmares succeeded until the end of the seventeenth century in fighting off all the Portuguese and Dutch expeditions

that were sent to destroy it. One Portuguese document written in 1677 numbers twenty-five military expeditions against the *Palmares*. To this list must be added eight other *entradas* or incursions known to have occurred between 1679 and 1694. A Jesuit, Pero Rodrigues, observed in 1597 that "the first enemies of the colonists are the rebel Negroes of Guinea who inhabit some of the mountainous regions, from where they launch their attacks. The time will soon come when they will destroy the farms as their fathers did the island of São Tomé."³³ Governor Diogo Botelho (1602 – 1608), having learned of the *Quilombo's* existence, charged an indigenous chief, Zorobabe, with destroying it. Another expedition led by Bartolomeu Bezerra, organized shortly before the governor's departure, did not succeed in dislodging the runaways.

During their occupation of Brazil, the Dutch undertook to rid the country of this *Quilombo*, which according to a *morador* in Pernambuco had by 1634 become "a great calamity." They began in 1640 by sending a reconnaissance mission entrusted to Bartholomeus Lintz, a Dutch adventurer who had a thorough knowledge of the virgin forest. He brought back information that enabled the colonial authorities to organize a military expedition. The governor, the Count of Nassau, and his counselors were shocked to learn that the *Palmares* was no simple encampment of maroons. The complex extended over a vast area and the Negroes' defense system was organized around several defensive villages, or *mocambos* (*mu-kambo*), and around two enormous military structures (*Palmares*) erected in the Sierra Barriga mountains. Nearly five thousand Negroes lived in the *mokambos* and over six thousand in the two great *Palmares*. In January 1643, the West Indische Compagnie (W.I.C.) sent a party comprised of indigenous Tapuyas and Dutch soldiers, led by the *Amerindian* interpreter Roelox Baro. Baro came back alone, having left his men who two months later were found with some thirty prisoners, including seven indigenous individuals and a few children. This less than overwhelming outcome spurred the Dutch colonial government to make a second attempt. Captain Jan Blaer left Salgado (Pilar) on 26 February 1645 with a troop of heavily armed soldiers. A month later, the captain, having taken ill, was replaced by Lieutenant Jürgens Reijmbach. The goal was to destroy the two great *Palmares*. On 18

March, Reijmbach reached the first of these and found it abandoned by its defenders. Three days later, he entered the second, meeting no resistance here either. He counted two hundred twenty *casas* around a chapel, four forges, and a vast "council chamber." The *Palmarino* Negroes, warned of the oncoming Dutch forces by spies hidden in Alagoas, had developed a defensive system that had already worked wonders in Africa.

Despite another attempted attack by colonists in 1667, the *Quilombo dos Palmares* endured until 1672, when it counted 20,000 inhabitants and seemed invincible to the *moradores* of Pernambuco, who complained constantly to the colonial administration. The period from 1672 to 1694 saw continual fighting. Fernão Carriho's campaigns in the years 1676 and 1677 brought a better knowledge of the *Quilombo* and its defenders: the Portuguese realized that the complex of fortifications extended over an area of more than 120 square kilometers and contained not merely two, but ten great *Palmares*. The supreme chief (Nganga-Nzumba) of this gigantic *Quilombo* was named Ganga-Zumba, according to Portuguese sources. He lived with his family in his capital the *Cerca Real do Macaco* (the royal enclosure of Macaco), which included over 1500 huts. Centered around the capital were the other quarters of the *Quilombo*: to the north, the *mocambo de Acotirene*; to the east two *mocambos* known as Tabocas; to the northwest the *mocambo of Dambrabanga*; to the north the *Cerca de Subpira*, the residence of Gana-Zona, the chief's brother; to the west the *mocambo of Osenga*; to the northeast, the *Palmar de Andalaquituche* and farther out the *mocambo of Aqualtune*.

The military strategy of the *Palmarino* Negroes involved abandoning the besieged *mocambos* and erecting new *mocambos* to fill the breach. While at times they carried out carefully deliberated counter-attacks, they never engaged in prolonged resistance. In this way they crushed the Portuguese columns led by Jacome Bezerra in 1672 and seized a large quantity of firearms.

The Dutch had already noticed in 1645 that all the huts in the *mocambos* that they had visited "always had secret exits which, in case of danger, allowed the Negroes to flee and hide in the bush."³⁴ The fortifications of the *Quilombo* included several rows of palisades reinforced by tree trunks, ditches, and a large number

of traps bristling with sharp stakes planted in the ground. Inside the *Quilombo*, blacksmiths and craftsmen worked night and day, burning the midnight oil in order to provide warriors with various weapons: guns and artillery, bows and arrows, wooden maces, and fittings for the traps.

In 1677, the great chief Ganga-Zumba was surrounded by a council that included his brother Gana-Zona, Pedro Capaca, Amaro, Acotirene, Osenga, Andalaquituche, and Zumbi, the chief's nephew. The commander in chief (*mestre de campo*) of the *Palmarino* warriors in 1678 was named Ganga Muiça. In February of that year, the Portuguese colonial authorities opened negotiations with a view to concluding a peace treaty with Ganga-Zumba. The *Palmarinos* refused to cede and deposed their chief, who apparently died of poisoning. His nephew Zumbi, took his place at the head of the *Quilombo* and continued the war until his death in 1695.

The Portuguese government, which continued to balk at financing military expeditions unless their primary goal was conquest and pillaging, as in Angola, authorized governor Soutomaior to request aid from the *bandeirantes* of São Paulo. In December 1692, a troop of 645 *Paulistas* led by Domingos Jorge Velho attempted to lay siege to the *Palmares*. When they failed, the soldiers, particularly *moradores* and infantry armed with artillery, pitched camp in the region for ten months. Approximately 3000 *Paulistas* relaunched the offensive on 23 January 1694. Far away from Macaco, they found themselves up against strong fortifications that had been built by a Moor who, according to accounts by governor Caeto de Melo e Castro, had taken refuge in the *Palmares*. During the night of 5-6 February, Zumbi attempted to free himself by opening a breach. The Cerca of Macaco fell on 26 February. Zumbi was wounded and captured, and on 20 November 1695 he was beheaded.

Several *Quilombos* left an indelible mark on the history of Brazil: those of the Bahia region, around 1575 and 1601, and those of Rio de Janeiro in 1650. *Mocambos* inhabited by Negroes and indigenous people were observed in 1704 in Bahia and in 1707 in the mountains of Jacobina and Carinhanha. A *Quilombo* near São Paulo endured from 1737 to 1787. In Minas Gerais, close to 20,000 Negroes took refuge in the fortified villages, where they resisted

until the nineteenth century. In Mato Grosso, the Carlotta *Quilombo* held out from 1770 to 1784. However, the *Quilombos* of Brazil, forever on a war footing, were severely marked by the system of slavery. Moreover, some scholars have sought to distinguish between different forms of resistance: the *Quilombos* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the revolts of the nineteenth century. This distinction is erroneous. The insurrections of the *negros cimarrones* and the *Quilombos* merged in a common process of resistance that began in the sixteenth century.

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The development of the system of slavery and the colonial system in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, perfected by the Dutch in Brazil, was accompanied by growth in the forces of resistance in the Caribbean. On the continent and in the islands, the indigenous Karibs banded together with the *cimarrones* to fight the Spanish, the English, the Dutch, and the French. Karibs and Africans joined forces to form the Black Karibs of the eastern arc. Solidly holed up in the "neutral islands" (Dominica, Grenada, Saint-Lucia and Saint-Vincent) until 1763, and subsequently in Saint-Vincent, the Black Karibs opposed the British; the first Karib war was fought from 1763 to 1773. In 1797, during the second Karib war (1795 – 1805), the English deported massive numbers of Black Karibs to the continent in the Bay of Honduras.³⁵

On the island of Jamaica (its indigenous name was Yemaya) the *negros cimarrones*, freed from Spanish domination in 1655, took refuge in *Palenques* and on their own waged a war against the new occupiers, the English. This first war of the "Maroons" lasted until 1740. The military and administrative authorities of the island were forced to negotiate peace with the rebel chiefs of two groups of armed *cimarrons*. On 1 March 1738, a treaty was signed with the Leeward group (Trelawny Town) led by Cudjoe (Kodjo), Accompong, Johnny (Gyani), Cuffee (Kofi), and Quaw; a treaty with the Windward group, led by Quao, Thomboy, Apong, Blackwall, and Clash, was signed on 23 June 1739 and ratified in 1740. Governor Edward Trelawny, appointed by London in 1736, had arrived on the island in 1738 with the mission of emancipating the insurgent Negroes and granting them use of an autonomous territory.³⁶

A twofold process spelling the destruction of the system of slavery and the colonial system was inaugurated in the Caribbean during the decade from 1760 to 1770. Several hotbeds of revolution arose in the "Caribbean Mediterranean": Louisiana, Jamaica, Cuba, Surinam, Guadeloupe, Saint-Domingue, Venezuela, and Mexico.³⁷

The French government tried to quash the insurrection mounted in August 1791 by the slaves of the northern plain of Saint-Domingue, which marked the beginning of the long war of Haitian independence (1791 – 1804). In 1794, the French revolutionary convention confirmed the decrees abolishing slavery that had been pronounced in Saint-Domingue in 1793. In 1802, two expeditionary forces left France: one of these, commanded by General Leclerc, was sent to Saint-Domingue; the other, under the command of General Richepanse, intervened in Guadeloupe. After defeating the French troops, the Haitians wrested their independence on 1 January 1804; in Guadeloupe, the regime of slavery was restored and French colonization solidified.³⁸

In this climate of revolution, war broke out once again in Jamaica in July 1795 between the colonial authorities and the *cimarrons* of Trelawny Town. Fearing that the revolutionary fever would spread from Saint-Domingue, the governor, the Comte de Balcarres, arrived on the island in April 1795 and led a troop of 1500 soldiers against the *cimarrons*. From Cuba he brought a hundred specially trained dogs for the purpose of tracking down fugitive Negroes, along with fifty or so dog handlers. Led by their chiefs – Johnson, James Palmer, and Leonard Parkinson – the *cimarrons* taking refuge in the Cockpits region harassed the English troops until the signing of a treaty in March 1796. The English deported 568 men, women, and children to Canada (Nova Scotia).³⁹

The Spanish possessions, both insular and continental, suffered the repercussions of this twofold process of destruction. In Venezuela, from 1795 to 1799, several insurgency movements inflamed the coastal regions of Coro, Barlovento, and the vicinity of Caracas. The May 1795 revolt led by José Leonardo Chirino openly proclaimed its objectives: the emancipation of the slaves, the abolition of slavery, the founding of a democratic republic, and the elimination of the white aristocracy. The uprisings spread between 1812 and 1815. Simón Bolívar, who was defeated by the

Spanish in June 1814, sought refuge in Curaçao and then Jamaica and Haiti, where he stayed from January to March and from September to December of 1816. President Alexandre Pétion provided him with military assistance (men, money, ships, printing equipment and materials, weapons and ammunition) to enable him to start up the war of independence again. Pétion accepted this assistance on the sole condition that all the slaves be freed; Bolivar agreed to the emancipation of the slaves on condition that they enlist in his army (decrees of 23 May and 2 June 1816). These measures granting limited freedom attracted thousands of soldiers and tipped the balance in favor of the patriots. The *Libertador*, however, had to reassure the slave-owners by explaining that these military measures were not to be confused with a general emancipation. After having several Negro officers executed – including Manuel Carlos Piar (on 16 October 1817), Colonel Leonardo Infante (in 1825), and Admiral José Prudencio Padilla (in 1829) – Bolivar set out to consolidate the institution of slavery. A reconstruction of the system had already been outlined in 1818 by the Congress of Angostura, in 1812 by the Congress of Cucuta, and in 1827 by the famous decree on slavery. Thus was Haiti dealt the crowning blow. Bolivar did not invite Haiti to the Congress of Panama in 1826.⁴⁰

The wars of independence in South America (Argentina, Bolivia, Chili, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay) also appealed to the Negro slaves for help. In Argentina, as everywhere else, the slaves constituted “the front lines of the patriotic infantry, the cannon fodder” for the cause, and consequently, “for them, the only true freedom was in death.”⁴¹ The Afro-Argentine and Afro-Chilean communities disappeared rapidly once the civil wars were over and the promised abolition measures often proved to be mirages, as in Colombia in 1854, Peru in 1855, Bolivia in 1861, and Paraguay in 1869. Slavery persisted in Buenos Aires between 1853 and 1860, despite the fact that the fifth article of the Argentine national constitution had proclaimed abolition in 1852.⁴²

The French colonization of Guadeloupe was consolidated after the emancipation of the slaves. Alongside the abolition act of 1848 was an attempt by a group of Guadeloupians, organized around the black Léonard Sénécal, to bring down the colonial system. The

French administration took harsh measures to repress this movement of freedom and independence, which first found expression between 1848 and 1851. In the wake of the abolitionist Victor Schoelcher, the authorities pursued a colonial policy of assimilation, attempting to stifle the Guadeloupien identity. Other attempts at liberalization, in Jamaica in 1865 and in Martinique in 1870, foundered in the face of armed repression by the colonial powers.

In contrast, in Cuba, the twofold process of destruction aimed at slavery⁴³ and colonization was on the verge of succeeding. The Ten Years War (1868 – 1878) and the following decade saw the gradual dismantling of slavery and colonial structures with the emergence of military leaders such as General Antonio Maceo (1845 – 1895) and his brother José. On the other side, the patriots who had won the Hispano-Cuban War from 1895 – 1898 saw their hopes of independence dashed in the wake of the 1898 war between Spain and the United States. Having thrown off the Spanish yoke, they came under the domination of the North American federal State.⁴⁴

* * *

It is impossible to analyze here – an entire book would be required – all of these insurrections by Negro slaves and the continual resistance efforts by *negros cimarrones*, the actors who took center stage in my research in 1971 (*De l'Atlantique à l'aire des Caraïbes: nègres cimarrons et révoltes d'esclaves, XVIIe – XVIIIe siècles*) and in 1991 (*Caraïbes en construction: espace, colonisation, résistance*). These Negro resisters wrote the essential lines of a history that still resonates today among the people of Saint-Domingue, Cuba, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Panama, and the Guyanas. Toussaint Louverture, Dessalines, Léonard Sénécal (Guadeloupe, 1848)⁴⁵ – these are but the best known of a long list of Negroes who never accepted submission to the concentration system of slave owners.

The Nazis built “death factories” during World War II: Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka These camps, run for the purpose of “extermination without a trace,” came on the scene with their “locked universe” and the “organized terror” imposed by an “absolute power.”⁴⁶ Concentration camps, an invention of the twentieth century? When we look at them, how can we not see

in their margins those “floating coffins,” the slave ships and their cargoes of African captives that criss-crossed the Atlantic for over five centuries? How can we avoid the memory of all the forms of extermination that were invented and practiced within their private domains by the slave-owning planters – Spanish and Portuguese, English, French, Dutch, Danish and Swedish, North American and Brazilian? An embarrassment of punishments, ranging from unimaginably cruel tortures inflicted without quarter, to the incineration of Negro slave and women thrown live into the ovens of that era?

Refuting Baron Pierre Victor Malouet’s arguments in favor of slavery, the Haitian Pompée Valentin Vastey (1781 – 1820), councillor to King Henri, in 1814 censured the behavior of French colonists as follows:

Have these colonists, like you, strung men up by the feet; have they drowned them, stuffed them into sacks, crucified them on planks, buried them alive, pulverized them in mortars? Have they forced them to eat human feces? And after tearing their bodies to shreds with the whip, have they thrown them to the worms to be devoured alive, or onto a teeming anthill, or have they tethered them to piles in lagoons so that they would be devoured by mosquitoes? Have they tossed them still living into cauldrons of boiling sugar? Have they shut up men and women in iron maidens, ... rolled them up to a mountain peak in order to jettison them into the abyss with other wretched victims? Have they had these poor souls set upon by man-eating dogs, until these dogs, sated with human flesh, stupefied with horror or overcome with remorse, refused to serve any longer as instruments of vengeance for these torturers, who would finish off the half-consumed victims with knives and bayonets?⁴⁷

What can be said of those sugar plantation owners who “ordered pregnant slaves to be burned alive in the sugar mill ovens, so that they would give birth in the inferno of flames?”⁴⁸

Revolts by Negro slaves in the Caribbean and in the Americas from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries cannot, as historians must recognize, be completely dissociated from the 1943 rebellion of the *Sonderkommandos* of Treblinka and Sobibor.

This history, this long-term force of resistance, must not be allowed to fade from memory and consciousness.

Translated from the French by Jennifer Curtiss Gage.

Notes

1. See *Table ronde sur les origines de Kong* (Université Nationale de Côte-d'Ivoire, IHAAA, 1977).
2. Jean Mettas, *La Traite des Noirs par l'Atlantique: nouvelles approches* (Paris, 1976), p. 22.
3. After Mettas, some authors were content to reel off statistics, names, and tonnage figures for ships leaving Europe and crossing the Atlantic with their cargo of "ebony wood." Of course we must take into account the numbers of slave ships that left French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish ports from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. To this long list must be added the departures of armed ships for trade in Brazil, the Caribbean and North America.
4. Mbaye Guéye, *L'Afrique et l'esclavage: une étude sur la traite négrière* (Paris, 1983).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
8. And upon what history are we to base our research on resistance to the black slave trade? An example could be the history of Africa as approached by Mbaye Guéye, Boubacar Barry, Christophe Wondji, Yoro K. Fall, Walter Rodney, and Oruno D. Lara in "Résistance et esclavage: de l'Afrique aux Amériques noires," in *La traite négrière du XVe au XIXe siècle, Histoire générale de l'Afrique, Etudes et documents 2* (Paris, 1979).
9. Diogo Gomes, *De prima inventione Guiné*.
10. See Oruno D. Lara, "Traite négrière et résistance africaine," (Paris, 1975).
11. Oruno D. Lara, *De l'Atlantique à l'aire des Caraïbes: nègres cimarrons et révoltes d'esclaves, XVIe – XVIIe siècles*, vol. 2 (Doctoral thesis in history, Université Paris VII, 1971), p. 247.
12. David Birmingham, "Traditions, Migrations and Cannibalism: An Entertainment on the Problems of Historical Evidence" (unpublished paper presented to the History Seminar, University of East Africa, Dar Es-Salaam, 1971); and Joseph C. Miller, "Requiem for the 'Jaga'," in *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 49, vol. XIII (1973), pp. 121-149.
13. Padre J. A. Cavazzi de Montecuccolo, *Descrição Histórica dos três Reinos do Congo, Matamba e Angola*, vol. I (Lisbon, 1965).
14. Oruno D. Lara, "Resistance to Slavery: From Africa to Black America," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, vol. 292 (1977), pp. 464-480.
15. Padre Antonio Brasio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, vol. III (document dated 1583), p. 248.
16. On arrival in the Caribbean, once sold, the African captive (Negro commodity) became a negro slave. He was no longer a part of the slave trade but entered the system of slavery and the colonial system.
17. Lucien Peytraud, *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789*, p. 109.
18. Jean Mettas, *La Traite des Noirs par l'Atlantique*, (see note 2 above), p. 41.
19. Lucien Peytraud, *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789*, pp. 109-110.
20. *Arquivo Nacional de Torre de Tombo*, Lisbon, c. II, pp. 181, 78.
21. Paris, Archives Nationales, Marine 4 JJ 66, 4 JJ 69.

22. Johannes Menne Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1600 – 1815* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 167; and L. R. Priester, “De Nederlandse houding ten aanzien van de slavenhandel en slavernij, 1596 – 1863” (M.A. Thesis, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, 1986), p. 120.
23. Jean Mettas, *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises au XVIIIe siècle, I. Nantes; II. Ports autres que Nantes* (Paris, 1978, 1984); and Serge Daget, *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises à la traite illégale (1814 – 1850)* (Centre de recherche sur l’histoire du monde atlantique, Université de Nantes, 1988).
24. See the revolts described by the two above-cited authors, who are only two of the many sources on the subject.
25. J. M. Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 165.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167; and L. R. Priester, “De Nederlandse houding,” p. 165.
27. Théophile Conneau, *A Slaver’s Logbook: or 20 Years’ Residence in Africa. The Original [1853] Manuscript* (London, 1976), pp. 208-210.
28. See Oruno D. Lara, *Caraïbes en construction: espace, colonisation, résistance*, 2 vols. (Epinay, France, 1992); and Nelly Schmidt, *L’engrenage de la liberté. Caraïbes – XIXe siècle*. (l’Université de Provence, 1995).
29. Emmanuel Maugat, “La révolte des Noirs du ‘Regina-Coeli,’” in *Cahiers des Salorges* 18 (Nantes, Musée des Salorges).
30. Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545 to 1800* (Oxford, 1970), p. 109.
31. Mbaye Guéye, *L’Afrique et l’esclavage*, p. 61.
32. M. Goulart, *Escravidão Africana no Brasil*, 2d ed. (São Paulo), p. 95.
33. Oruno D. Lara, *De l’Atlantique à l’aire des Caraïbes: nègres cimarrons et révoltes d’esclaves, XVIe – XVIIIe siècles*, vol. 4, p. 950 and vol. 2, p. 346.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 363.
35. See Oruno D. Lara, *Caraïbes en construction*, vol. I, pp. 303 ff.; and Oruno D. Lara, “Guerres des Karib et Cimarrons aux Caraïbes,” paper delivered at the conference “La Guerre folle” (The Madness of War), (Collège de France, Laboratoire d’anthropologie sociale, September 1997).
36. See preceding note.
37. Oruno D. Lara, “Le soulèvement de 1791 et ses répercussions dans la Méditerranée des Caraïbes,” in *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, 28, 1991.
38. Oruno D. Lara, *Caraïbes en construction*.
39. *Ibid.* and “Guerres des Karib et Cimarrons aux Caraïbes.”
40. Oruno D. Lara, “Le soulèvement de 1791 et ses répercussions”; and Oruno D. Lara, “La place de Simon Bolivar dans le procès de destruction du système esclavagiste aux Caraïbes,” in *Cahiers des Amériques*, “Bolivar et son temps” (Paris, 1984).
41. Miguel Angel Rosal, “Negros y pardos en Buenos Aires, 1811-1860,” in *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, LI, I, 1994, Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, Sevilla, España.
42. Miguel Angel Rosal, “Negros y pardos en Buenos Aires,” p. 181.
43. The abolition of slavery came late to Cuba (1886) as it did to Brazil (1888).
44. See Oruno D. Lara, *Lutte armée à Cuba, 1868 – 1898* (Institut Caraïbe de Recherches Internationales en Sciences Humaines et Sociales [ICRISHS, Guadeloupe], 1979); and Oruno D. Lara, *Caraïbes en construction*.

45. See Inez Fischer-Blanchet, "Troubles paysans en Guadeloupe en 1848: l'affaire Sénécal," in *Cimarrons*, I (Guadeloupe/Paris, 1981). See also Oruno D. Lara, *Les Caraïbes* no. 2267 (Paris, 1986; 2d. ed., 1997).
46. Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp*, trans. William Templer (Princeton, 1997).
47. "Note à M. le Baron V. P. Malouet," Cap Henry, 1814. See also Oruno D. Lara, *Caraïbes en construction*, vol. I, pp. 286-287.
48. Oruno D. Lara, *Caraïbes en construction*, pp. 287-288. This work may be consulted for a more in-depth analysis of the movements of insurrection and resistance among slaves in the Caribbean islands and continent from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.