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Mpodyongo's resistance among the Basolongo in the context of the Portuguese colonial occupation

A resistência de Mpodyongo entre os Basolongo no contexto da ocupação colonial portuguesa

Resistencia de Mpodyongo entre los Basolongo en el contexto de la ocupación colonial portuguesa

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Abstract: This study analyzes the actions taken by Mpodyongo and his army—a key leadership force in the resistance against Portuguese colonial rule in the Basolongo territory during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The research is qualitative in nature, employing a literature review, analysis-synthesis, and unstructured interviews with twenty participants residing in Soyo, Angola. The literature review enabled the identification and analysis of relevant works on the subject. The analysis-synthesis method was used to examine, interpret, and integrate information from the various sources consulted, facilitating a coherent understanding of the subject matter. The study found that Mpodyongo organized various resistance strategies, utilizing military mobilization, the coordination of local leaders, and territorial defense as mechanisms to confront the Portuguese presence. The research demonstrated that the resistance was not limited to Mpodyongo's individual actions but stemmed from the active participation of the Basolongo people; their collective mobilization served to defend the political autonomy, traditional institutions, and sociocultural values threatened by colonial expansion.
Keywords: Resistance; Basolongo; Soyo; Effective occupation; Mpodyongo.

Resumo: O estudo analisa as ações conduzidas por Mpodyongo e pelo seu exército, uma das mais importantes lideranças da resistência à dominação colonial portuguesa no território dos Basolongo entre segunda metade do século XIX e princípio do século XX. A pesquisa caracteriza-se como qualitativa, recorrendo à revisão bibliográfica, à análise-síntese e à realização de entrevistas não estruturadas com vinte participantes residentes no Soyo, Angola. A revisão bibliográfica permitiu identificar e analisar a literatura pertinente sobre a temática em estudo. O método de análise-síntese foi utilizado para examinar, interpretar e integrar as informações provenientes das diferentes fontes consultadas, possibilitando a construção de uma compreensão articulada do objeto de estudo. Verificou-se que Mpodyongo organizou diferentes estratégias de resistência, recorrendo à mobilização militar, à articulação das lideranças locais e à defesa do território como mecanismos de enfrentamento à presença portuguesa. A pesquisa evidenciou, que a resistência não se limitou à atuação individual de Mpodyongo, mas resultou da participação ativa dos Basolongo, cuja mobilização coletiva expressou a defesa da

autonomia política, das instituições tradicionais e dos valores socioculturais ameaçados pela expansão colonial.
Palavras-chave: Resistência; Basolongo; Soyo; Ocupação efetiva; Mpodyongo.

Resumen: El estudio analiza las acciones llevadas a cabo por Mpodyongo y su ejército, uno de los líderes más importantes de la resistencia a la dominación colonial portuguesa en el territorio de los Basolongo entre la segunda mitad del siglo XIX y principios del XX. La investigación se caracteriza por ser cualitativa, utilizando revisión bibliográfica, análisis de síntesis y entrevistas no estructuradas con veinte participantes residentes en Soyo, Angola. La revisión bibliográfica permitió identificar y analizar la literatura relevante sobre el tema en estudio. Se utilizó el método de análisis-síntesis para examinar, interpretar e integrar información de las diferentes fuentes consultadas, permitiendo la construcción de una comprensión articulada del objeto de estudio. Se encontró que Mpodyongo organizó diferentes estrategias de resistencia, utilizando la movilización militar, la coordinación de líderes locales y la defensa del territorio como mecanismos para enfrentar la presencia portuguesa. La investigación mostró que la resistencia no se limitó a las acciones individuales de los Mpodyongo, sino que resultó de la participación activa de los Basolongo, cuya movilización colectiva expresó la defensa de la autonomía política, las instituciones tradicionales y los valores socioculturales amenazados por la expansión colonial.
Palabras clave: Resistencia; Basolongo; soyo; Ocupación efectiva; Mpodyongo.

1 INTRODUCTION

The present study analyzes the different actions carried out by Mpodyongo and his army, one of the most important leaders of the resistance to Portuguese colonial domination in the territory of the Basolongo, a subgroup of the Kongo (Bakongo) people. Between the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Mpodyongo led the opposition to the Portuguese invasion and colonial practices, in a period marked by the intensification of European imperial expansion in Africa.

This context was profoundly influenced by the decisions of the Berlin Conference (1884 - 1885), whose deliberations redefined the territorial division of the African continent between European powers. For Portugal, the conference meant the non-recognition of the so-called “historical rights” that it claimed over a vast region of Central-West Africa, forcing the Portuguese State to intensify the effective occupation of the claimed territories (Panzo, 2020). It was in this scenario of consolidation of colonial rule that African resistance movements emerged, among which the actions of Mpodyongo and the Basolongo stood out.

In this context, this article seeks to answer the following research question: to what extent did the resistance led by Mpodyongo express forms of African contestation to the Portuguese colonial occupation process in the Basolongo territory? To respond to this problem, the study's general objective is to analyze the resistance strategies led by Mpodyongo in the face of the advance of Portuguese colonial domination between the second half of the 19th

century and the beginning of the 20th century. Specifically, it seeks to contextualize the Portuguese colonial occupation process after the Berlin Conference; Identify the main forms of resistance and military developed by Mpodyongo and his army; understand the participation of the Basolongo in opposition to colonial rule; and discuss the historical relevance of this resistance for understanding the dynamics of contestation against Portuguese colonialism in Central-West Africa.

Regarding methodological procedures, this research is characterized as qualitative, using a bibliographical review, synthesis analysis and unstructured interviews with twenty participants living in the municipality of Soyo, province of Zaire, Angola. The bibliographic review made it possible to identify and analyze the relevant literature on the topic under study, providing the theoretical framework that supported the investigation. The analysis-synthesis method was used to examine, interpret and integrate information from the different sources consulted, enabling the construction of an articulated understanding of the object of study. The unstructured interviews enabled the collection of narratives, experiences and knowledge from the participants, providing greater depth to the data analysis.

In addition, information obtained through observation resulting from the authors' experience in the municipality of Soyo was considered. Furthermore, as they are part of the same genealogical lineage as Mpodyongo, the authors had access to knowledge and traditions transmitted orally since childhood. This knowledge was treated as a complementary source of information and subjected to critical analysis, in dialogue with the literature consulted and the empirical data obtained during the investigation.

Figure 1 presents, in a synthetic way, the genealogical lineage of Mpodyongo in relation to the authors of the research and the deponent Estanislau Pedro Isabel (or Nchimba a Mvaia or Nchimba Mbeú). According to family genealogy, Mpodyongo is the great-great-grandfather or great-great-grandfather of the research authors. The deponent, Estanislau Pedro Isabel, is a first cousin of the authors' father and nephew of their grandfather, and, in the context of family relationships, is considered a second-degree uncle of the authors. This closeness of kinship gives special relevance to his testimony, as it is directly linked to Mpodyongo's family lineage and the knowledge transmitted between generations; and for being part of the Council of the Basolongo traditional authority in Soyo.

Figure 1 – Genealogy of the authors in relation to Mpodyongo and Estanislau Pedro Isabel (Nchimba a Mvaia or Nchimba Mbeú)

Great-great-grandfather or great-great-grandfather: Mpodyongo
Great-great-grandmother: Madya ma Mpodyongo
Great-grandmother: Mpemba a Madya
Grandfather: Vidi is Vulu
Father: Filipe Pedro Isabel (Ngonga is Vulu)
Authors: xxxxx and xxxxxxxx
Grandfather's sister: Beú is Vulu
Father's son/cousin: Estanislau Pedro Isabel (Nchimba a Mvaia or Nchimba Mbeú)

Source: Prepared by the authors (2026)

2 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE TERMS BASOLONGO, KISOLONGO AND MUSOLONGO

The terms Basolongo, Kisolongo and Musolongo belong to the Kikongo linguistic system, and express different dimensions of the ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity of the Solongo community, one of the subgroups of the Kongo people. Its formation results from the system of nominal classes characteristic of the Bantu languages, in which nominal prefixes perform specific semantic and grammatical functions. The nominal class system constitutes one of the main structural characteristics of Bantu languages, allowing people, communities, languages, objects and other nominal categories to be distinguished, and is also a feature present in the grammatical organization of the Kikongo language (Quiala, 2013; Nurse and Philippson, 2003).

In the context of this linguistic organization, Musolongo designates the individual belonging to the Solongo subgroup. The prefix Mu – identifies a person in the singular, indicating the individual's belonging to a specific ethnic community. Thus, the term Musolongo represents not only a person, but also their cultural, social and historical identity within the Solongo community.

The term Basolongo, in turn, corresponds to the plural of Musolongo. The prefix Ba – is used to designate a group of people, referring to the Solongo subgroup as a community. The concept goes beyond the simple notion of plurality, encompassing the social organization, values, customs, cultural practices and collective memory that characterize this Kongo subgroup.

Kisolongo designates the language spoken by the Basolongo. In Bantu languages, the prefix Ki- is often used to name languages, forms of expression and cultural manifestations. In this way, Kisolongo represents the linguistic system through which the community transmits knowledge, preserves traditions and reinforces its cultural identity. Language therefore

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constitutes one of the main elements of historical continuity and appreciation of the cultural heritage of the Basolongo.

The terms Basolongo, Kisolongo and Musolongo express more than linguistic categories: they represent the social and cultural organization of the community and reflect the importance of language as a vehicle for transmitting knowledge, history and traditions. Therefore, understanding the conceptualization of Basolongo, Kisolongo and Musolongo contributes to the study of Bantu languages and to the appreciation of the historical and cultural heritage of Kikongo-speaking communities.

Understanding the conceptualization of the terms Basolongo, Kisolongo and Musolongo is essential to correctly frame the Solongo subgroup in works of a historical, anthropological, linguistic and ethnographic nature. These terms are not mere nominal designations; they reflect identity, cultural and linguistic categories specific to the Kongo tradition. Its appropriate use contributes to a more rigorous representation of the social organization and identity of this subgroup, avoiding generalizations, ambiguities or misinterpretations. Thus, the correct distinction and contextualization of these concepts strengthens the scientific consistency of the writing and ensures greater precision in the analysis of the Kongo sociocultural universe.

Table 1 – Prefixes and meanings of terms in Solongo

Term	**Prefix**	**Meaning**
Musolongo	Mu-	A Solongo individual
Basolongo	Ba-	The Solongo subgroup
Kisolongo	Ki-	The language of the Solongo

Source: Prepared by the authors (2026)

3 GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE LAND OF THE BASOLONGO

Soyo is the traditional capital region of the Basolongo, one of the subgroups of the Kongo people, as previously mentioned. Currently, it is a municipality in the province of Zaire, located in the north of Angola, on the south bank of the mouth of the Zaire or Congo river, bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in particular with the province of Kongo Central.

The traditional area of the Basolongo extends beyond the borders of Angola, also covering part of the current province of Kongo Central, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (xxxxxx, 2025). This division occurred as a result of the Partition of Africa by European powers, between the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, when colonial borders separated communities that previously belonged to the same historical and cultural space.

In Angola, in addition to the municipality of Soyo, the municipalities of Quelo and Tomboco, including the commune of Kinzau, are also part of the traditional area of the Basolongo, all located in the province of Zaire.

During the Kongo Kingdom period, the Soyo region was governed by the designated Mani-Soyo sovereigns. At different times, its authority extended southwards to the region of the current municipality of Ambriz, where it bordered the territories that correspond to the current municipality of Dande, in the province of Bengo. The extent of this domain varied throughout history, depending on the political and military changes in the Kingdom of Kongo.

4 PORTUGUESE SITUATION AND POLITICAL-SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE KINGDOM OF KONGO IN THE TIME OF MPODYONGO

According to Thornton (1983), the Kingdom of Kongo had a highly organized political structure, based on a centralized monarchy, supported by provincial governors (manis) and local leaders responsible for the administration of the different regions of the kingdom. However, throughout the second half of the 19th century, this structure was progressively weakened as a result of succession disputes, growing European interference in the kingdom's internal affairs and the expansion of Portuguese colonial rule.

The Kongo Kingdom had its own mechanisms for choosing the Mani Kongo, based on royal lineages and traditional succession rules. However, Portuguese intervention, which began at the end of the 15th century, profoundly changed this political system. After the death of Nzinga a Nkuwu, in 1506, Portugal supported Mvemba a Nzinga (Dom Afonso I) militarily and politically, to the detriment of Mpanzu a Kitima, considered by part of the Kongo tradition as the legitimate successor. This episode constitutes a milestone in the growing Portuguese interference in the kingdom's internal politics, inaugurating a pattern of intervention that would influence successive disputes for the throne and redefine power relations within the Kongolese monarchy. As Thornton, Hilton and Batsikama demonstrate, Portuguese influence went beyond religious and commercial domains, producing profound repercussions on the political and institutional organization of the Kingdom of Kongo (Thornton, 1983; Hilton, 1985; Batsikama, 2012).

Despite these transformations, Vansina (1963; 2010) argues that traditional kinship structures, local chiefdoms and the historical memory preserved by oral tradition remained central elements of the political and cultural identity of the Kongo people, allowing the continuity of their own institutions and practices even under increasing colonial pressure.

At the end of the 19th century, the Kingdom of Kongo found itself in an advanced process of political fragmentation. The power of Ntotila, a title attributed to the sovereigns of Kongo (which means “unifier”), was practically limited to M'Banza Kongo and the surrounding territories. At the same time, several communities, including the Basolongo, already exercised de facto political autonomy in relation to the central power (Panzo, 2020). This situation coincided with the period of greatest expansion of European imperialism in Africa, intensified after the Berlin Conference (1884 – 1885).

The Berlin Conference represented a decisive milestone in the consolidation of the colonial partition of the African continent. Although initially convened to discuss issues relating to the Congo basin, the conference's deliberations established the principles that would guide the effective occupation of African territories by European powers (M´Bokolo, 2011; Uzoigwe, 2010). Among these principles, that of effective occupation stood out, according to which the international recognition of territorial claims would depend on the administrative and military presence of the claiming power, replacing the argument of the so-called “historical rights” until then invoked by Portugal (Brunschwig, 1972).

Faced with this new international order, Portugal intensified its diplomatic and military efforts to consolidate the occupation of territories located in the Congo basin. The Portuguese strategy combined the signing of protectorate treaties with some African authorities and the conclusion of border delimitation agreements with other colonial powers. In this context, several treaties were signed with the Cabinda authorities, among which the agreements of Chinfuma (1883), Chicambo (1884), Simulambuco (February 1, 1885) and Futila (March 7, 1885) stand out, which guaranteed the maintenance of the Cabinda enclave under Portuguese rule (Madureira, 2001).

At the same time, Portugal signed, on February 14, 1885, a treaty with the International Congo Association, representing the interests of King Leopold II of Belgium. Through this agreement, he renounced his claims on the right bank of the Zaíre River, for the benefit of the Independent State of Congo, losing important commercial centers such as Boma and Banana. On the other hand, it obtained international recognition over Cabinda and the left bank of the Zaire River, with Noqui as its border point, although the limits to the interior remained undefined, being later fixed along the Kwango River (Pélissier, 1997; Madureira, 2001).

Another factor that favored Portuguese interests was the reduction of British influence in the region between the Zaire River and the town of Ambriz, corresponding to the territories of the province of Soyo. As Pélissier (1997) observes, this change allowed Portugal to

consolidate its dominance on the Basolongo coast and advance inland to the Kwango River, even though it was unable to annex the entirety of the former Kingdom of Kongo.

It is important to highlight that all of these decisions were taken without the participation or consent of the African populations. Colonial borders were defined exclusively by European powers, ignoring existing political and territorial structures. When they understood the scope of these decisions, several people organized forms of resistance to the colonial occupation. Among them, the Basolongo stood out, who opposed Portuguese expansion under the leadership of Mpodyongo and his warriors (Pélissier, 1997).

The period between 1885 and 1915 thus constituted a phase of profound transformations for Central Africa and, particularly, for Angola. For Europe, it corresponded to the height of imperialist expansion driven by the Industrial Revolution; for African peoples, it meant the fragmentation of their territories, the imposition of new borders and the consolidation of colonial rule. In Angola, this process resulted in the gradual definition of current borders through international treaties and military campaigns, accompanied by administrative occupation, the imposition of taxes and the systematic use of forced labor (Neto, 2000; Madureira, 2001).

It was precisely in this context of consolidation of Portuguese colonialism that the Basolongo resistance emerged, led by Mpodyongo. Opposition to the Portuguese occupation should not be understood as an isolated episode, but as an integral part of the various forms of African resistance to the political transformations imposed by the colonial partition of the continent and the disruption of the traditional institutions of the former Kingdom of Kongo.

5 RESISTANCE OF MPODYONGO AND HIS ARMY AGAINST COLONIAL DOMINATION

Mpodyongo stood out as an important military leader of the Basolongo, having played a central role in the resistance to the Portuguese colonial occupation in the Basolongo territory, located in northern Angola, between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

Based on information obtained through oral tradition sources, Abranches (1991) presents Mpodyongo as a figure of great relevance, recognized as the main leader of the Basolongo resistance to colonial occupation.

An important figure in the town of Kinganga Mavakala, located close to the current municipal headquarters of Soyo, it is estimated that his activities lasted approximately 34 years.

The longevity of this period of leadership has raised questions among scholars, since, given the context marked by successive clashes with Portuguese colonial forces, it would be unlikely that a local political authority would remain in activity for so long. However, Abranches (1991) argues that such doubts lose strength given the convergence of different documentary evidence. According to the author, both the testimonies preserved by local tradition and the records produced by agents and external observers point to the same period of activity of this personality, reinforcing the consistency of the proposed chronology.

In oral traditions and in some documents produced during the colonial period, the name Mpodyongo remains associated with resistance against Portuguese occupation. His leadership stood out for his refusal to accept the payment of taxes and the imposition of forced labor. Far from exercising the role of king, Mpodyongo was a mfumu – a chief recognized for his political and military authority – who managed to bring together different Basolongo villages around the fight against colonial rule. Its activities brought together military, political, diplomatic and economic strategies aimed at defending the autonomy of local communities and the legitimacy of traditional institutions of power (Pélissier, 1986).

In the military field, Mpodyongo organized guerrilla actions and ambushes against the Portuguese columns that roamed the forests between Soyo and Tomboco. The Basolongo fighters used their knowledge of local geography to surprise the colonial troops, carrying out quick attacks and strategic retreats, which hampered the advancement of Portuguese military campaigns. This form of combat became one of the main characteristics of African resistance to colonial occupation in the region (Pélissier, 1986).

Mpodyongo's military successes were attributed to his remarkable ability to rally fighters, both in Kinganga Mavakala and neighboring villages. This mobilization capacity indicates that recruitment did not occur through coercion. According to Mpaka Mbele1, the basis of his military strategy was the discipline and fidelity demanded of his men. The organization of the army was structured into different contingents subordinate to his command as Chief of Staff. The first contingent corresponded to the elite troop, made up of carefully chosen warriors, equipped only with a sword (nyanga) and shield (ngubo), wearing reduced clothing, with their heads covered and their feet barefoot. The second group was made up of marines, armed with canhangulos – firearms that preceded modern shotguns –, strategically positioned in the woods. Finally, the army was made up of allied forces from the various sanzalas, led by local chiefs, but subordinate to the general command of Mpodyongo (Abranches, 1991).

Mpaka Mbele was the traditional leader consulted by Henrique Abranches during his field research in Soyo in the 1980s and early 1990s.

In the attacks, after the initial shots and the consequent withdrawal of the canhangulo men, the allied troops converged on the sides to reinforce the elite troops. The hostilities began with the cry “life and death!”, uttered by Mpodyongo, whose voice, according to the testimonies collected, could be heard at a distance of up to ten kilometers (Abranches, 1991).According to oral tradition, Mpodyongo had an exceptionally powerful voice, capable of being heard over great distances, and his screams were readily recognized by many Basolongo.

Oral tradition maintains that Catholic and military authorities who were present in the northern region of Angola recognized Mpodyongo as one of the most difficult leaders to subdue. This recognition shows that their actions constituted a significant obstacle to the occupation and consolidation projects of Portuguese colonial rule.

Resistance also manifested itself in the economic sphere. Under his leadership, several villages stopped directly trading rubber and agricultural products with the Portuguese, maintaining commercial relations with the Belgian Congo. This strategy aimed to reduce economic dependence on the Portuguese colonial system and preserve the autonomy of Basolongo communities in the face of increasing intervention by the colonial administration.

Faced with the growing influence and repercussion of the insurrection led by Mpodyongo, the Portuguese authorities sought to develop a strategy to contain its advance. To this end, they devised a conspiracy aimed at neutralizing him, resorting to a proposal to negotiate a truce in Pângala, presented as an initiative for reconciliation and re-establishment of peace (luvuvamu). Convinced of the legitimacy of the invitation, Mpodyongo agreed to participate in the negotiations and went to the previously established location (Abranches, 1991).

When they arrived at Pângala, the Portuguese, who were already hiding in the church, took advantage of the surprise factor to attack Mpodyongo and his men, starting a massacre. In an attempt to escape the ambush, Mpodyongo reorganized his forces and began to withdraw. After around two months of successive clashes and retreats, he was captured in Kifuma, a town located approximately 40 kilometers from Pângala, and was subsequently deported to São Tomé (Abranches, 1991).

According to Abranches (1991), the collection of taxes in the Soyo region – later known as the cubata tax – began shortly after the capture of Mpodyongo, in 1901. This process occurred during the reign of Nsambi a Nkumbu, considered the last legitimate king of Soyo since the existence of the Solongo State until the Portuguese colonial occupation of that

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territory. The introduction of the Cubata tax in this period indicates that taxation played a central role in the consolidation of colonial rule, functioning as a mechanism of political, administrative and fiscal control over the local population. In this way, its implementation marked the strengthening of the Portuguese colonial administration and contributed to the progressive reduction of the autonomy of traditional power structures, represented by the reign of Nsambi and Nkumbu.

According to the oral tradition preserved by some descendants of Mpodyongo, collected in an interview given by Estanislau Pedro Isabel (Nchimba a Mvaia or Nchimba Mbeú), member of the current Soyo Traditional Council, to Radio Soyo, on the Program in Kisolongo by journalist Estevão Amélia and some residents of the municipality of Soyo stated that Mpodyongo is Lembeswa2 was betrayed by one of his cousins during the period in which he was refugee, trying to escape persecution from Portuguese colonial forces. This persecution began in Pângala, when the Portuguese invited him to establish a truce between the Solongo army and the Portuguese army; a truce that was essentially a trap to capture Mpodyongo.

Thus designated by his descendants: Mpodyongo is Lembeswa.

According to this account, after abandoning his initial position, Mpodyongo took refuge in the village of Kifuma. However, the constant presence of Portuguese troops in that region caused successive disturbances and put the safety of the local population at risk. Faced with complaints from the village's inhabitants, he decided to retreat to the forest called Nfinda é Kunku, where he remained hidden.

Also according to Estanislau Pedro Isabel, the Portuguese authorities managed to entice one of Mpodyongo's cousins to collaborate in his capture. The emissary went to the forest and, in a loud voice, announced that a truce had been established between the Basolongo and the Portuguese, inviting him to abandon his hiding place. Convinced of the veracity of the information, Mpodyongo left his refuge and was immediately captured by colonial forces.

There is a discrepancy between the data collected by Abranches and the information presented by Estanislau regarding the place where Mpodyongo was captured by the Portuguese. According to Abranches (1991), the capture took place in Kifuma. Estanislau, based on the testimony transmitted by his great-grandmother, Madya ma Mpodyongo (daughter of Mpodyongo), states that the capture took place on the outskirts of the Nfinda é Kunku forest. According to this oral tradition, Mpodyongo was hiding in the forest when he heard the voice of one of his cousins calling him. Without suspecting that it was a trap, he left his hiding place and was then captured by the Portuguese.

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It is possible that this divergence results from the relative geographic proximity between Kifuma and the Nfinda é Kunku forest, which could have led to different interpretations or forms of transmission of the tradition over time.

Oral tradition also states that, after his capture, the Portuguese authorities chose not to execute him. Instead, they decided to deport him to São Tomé and, later, to Portugal, considering that his political and military influence could be taken advantage of by the colonial administration. According to Estanislau Pedro Isabel and other descendants of Mpodyongo, during the trip he was allowed to carry traditional food and water from his land, as he refused to consume European food. The purpose would be to present him alive to the king of Portugal.

This account finds some support in historical documentation. Abranches (1991) states that Mpodyongo was captured in 1901 and deported to São Tomé, during the reign of Nsambi a Nkumbu, considered the last legitimate king of Soyo, as mentioned above. As the capture took place in 1991, the trip to Portugal falls chronologically within the reign of D. Carlos I of Portugal (1889 - 1908), which makes the oral tradition reference to its presentation before the Portuguese sovereign compatible. On the other hand, some sources indicate that Mpodyongo only returned to Soyo in 1914, a fact that does not invalidate the oral narrative, since this time interval could correspond to the period in which he remained deported in São Tomé, a practice frequently used by the Portuguese colonial administration to remove African leaders considered a threat to colonial rule.

According to the narrative of Estanislau, Mpodyongo's descendants and other people interviewed, during the audience in Portugal, D. Carlos I sought to establish an alliance with Mpodyongo. The latter, however, refused any understanding and, in a gesture of defiance, spat in the monarch's direction. Those interviewed also add that Mpodyongo's sword was so heavy that three soldiers were needed to carry it, an element that, in the Basolongo collective memory, symbolizes his extraordinary physical strength, courage and prestige as a warrior.

Oral tradition continues stating that, given the impossibility of obtaining Mpodyongo's collaboration, the Portuguese authorities ordered his return to Soyo. As he approached the region, near the elevations of the village of Kinganga-Mavákala, close to the place currently known as Cavalos, Mpodyongo announced his arrival through a shout that, according to the narrators, could be heard from great distances: "Entanta tanta tanta! Mono mbele ya nkany nlweke!", translated as: "Attention, attention, attention! I, the knife of revenge, am on my way". The strength of his voice allowed the news of his return to spread quickly among the communities of Soyo.

This episode can be related to the Solongo proverb “Onzungu ke vilakananga nfumu andi ko”, whose approximate translation is: “A joke or indirect message never forgets its recipient”. According to oral tradition, the cousin who had betrayed Mpodyongo, upon hearing his voice, feared being the target of reprisals and immediately sought out the Portuguese authorities, requesting that they not allow him to return to Soyo.

As a result, oral tradition states that the colonial authorities decided to deport Mpodyongo again to São Tomé, a territory that, during the colonial period, was widely used as a place of exile for political leaders, military leaders and African resisters considered dangerous for the consolidation of the Portuguese occupation. However, during the crossing to São Tomé, Mpodyongo was thrown into the high seas.

In addition to the military, political and economic dimensions, Mpodyongo became an important symbol of unity among Basolongo chiefs. His leadership strengthened the articulation between different communities, contributing to the organization of resistance against the Portuguese occupation. Even after his death or capture, his memory remains alive in oral tradition, being constantly evoked as an example of courage, legitimacy and defense of local sovereignty.

According to the oral tradition preserved by our grandparents, Mpodyongo stood out for its firm commitment to valuing African material culture. In his daily life, he favored the use of domestic utensils of African origin, consciously rejecting those of European origin. This choice transcended mere personal preference, constituting an expression of cultural resistance and affirmation of the Basolongo identity.

Ancestral narratives also state that Mpodyongo was uncompromising in defending Solongo sovereignty. He reprimanded and severely punished those who opposed the ideals of autonomy of his people or who, by action or omission, favored colonial domination in the land of the Musolongo. His leadership is thus remembered as a symbol of determination, patriotism and commitment to the freedom and dignity of his people.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present study analyzed the resistance led by Mpodyongo in the context of the Portuguese colonial occupation among the Basolongo, in the period between the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, seeking to answer to what extent this movement represented a form of African protest against the advance of colonial rule. The analysis developed allowed us to conclude that Mpodyongo é Lembeswa's resistance

constituted a relevant expression of the political and military protagonism of African societies in the face of European imperialist expansion, showing that the colonial occupation was marked by intense processes of opposition, and not by a simple submission of local populations.

The proposed objectives were achieved as the study contextualized the Portuguese colonial occupation after the Berlin Conference, demonstrating that the redefinition of African borders and the effective occupation policy intensified conflicts between the colonial power and traditional authorities. In this context, it was found that Mpodyongo organized different resistance strategies, using military mobilization, the coordination of local leaders and the defense of the territory as mechanisms to confront the Portuguese presence.

The research also showed that resistance was not limited to Mpodyongo's individual actions, but resulted from the active participation of the Basolongo, whose collective mobilization expressed the defense of political autonomy, traditional institutions and sociocultural values threatened by colonial expansion. In this way, resistance assumed a collective character, representing a continuous effort to preserve local sovereignty in the face of the transformations imposed by the colonial system.

In response to the research problem, it is concluded that the resistance led by Mpodyongo é Lembeswa expressed, in a significant way, the forms of African contestation to the Portuguese colonial occupation process. The evidence analyzed demonstrates that the Basolongo developed political, military and social strategies that challenged colonial authority, revealing the capacity for organization and resistance of African societies in the face of European domination. Even in the face of opposing military superiority, African resistance left a fundamental historical legacy, reaffirming the leading role of its people in defending their freedom, their identity and their territory.

Finally, this article contributes to the deepening of studies on African resistance to Portuguese colonialism, by highlighting the experience of the Basolongo and the leadership of Mpodyongo as central elements for understanding the history of Central-West Africa. It is hoped that this investigation will encourage new research based on diverse historical sources and perspectives that value the historical protagonism of African populations, contributing to a more critical, plural historiography committed to reinterpreting the experiences of resistance to colonialism.

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