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The Confederation between the Kingdoms of Portugal and Kongo, 1511–1665

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Abstract: In this study I propose rethinking the nature, purposes, and impacts of relations between the kingdoms of Portugal and Kongo in the period between 1511 and 1665. My main argument is that the Pact of Confederation formed by these two kingdoms was decisive, exceptional, and unprecedented. While covert attempts by the Portuguese to gain control of the Kingdom of Kongo were common during this period, the relations spelled out by the pact nevertheless endured for over a century and would have global repercussions. From the vantage point of historiography, the pact presents modern historians with serious difficulties, largely because it spells out modes of interaction that do not fit readily into recognized systems of European colonialism. Central to these modes of interaction is the significant role that religion played in defining Portuguese imperialist policies in Central Africa. In the end, the Pact of Confederation between the kingdoms of Portugal and Kongo forces historians to rethink Portuguese imperial dynamics and the modalities of their presence in Africa and beyond.

Keywords: confederation; Portugal; Kongo; Angola; empire; spiritual conquest

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1. Introduction

Despite having pursued new points of view, languages, and ways of approaching the past, along with opening itself to innovative analytical methodologies and categories, modern historiography addressing the history of Portuguese expansion has not yet been able to fully overcome two of the main trends that have long dominated this field of study. The first is a focus on the history of maritime discoveries, encouraging the selection of facts, events, and protagonists. The second historiographic trend is to distance itself from the traditional projection of Portugal in the world to be more attentive to the history of imperial culture and prone to consider the diversity of analytical strands that the study of empire presupposes. Embarking on this type of dichotomous reading of history tends to privilege explanations of an economic nature.

Authors who focussed on the configuration of the Portuguese Empire have been particularly effective in developing dichotomous explanations. On the one hand, there is the defence of the idea that the strategies that shaped expansionist activities were based on the exercise of war, subjugation and direct territorial domination, or the installation of protectorates and the application of indirect domination. On the other hand, there is an understanding that the empire assumed a configuration either land based, with the settlement of populations and domination over the means of production, or maritime, with the subordination of wide areas into a complex network of resources, producers, and consumers. In this context Central West Africa appears generally associated with two ideas that this study aims to contradict. The first is that in this territory, Portuguese imperialist policy developed only along the coast. The second holds that the political formula to ensure the cooperation of local groups and the viability of the occupation of land was based on the establishment of temporary agreements or the imposition of vassalage.

There is now a consensus that, for the modern era, no region in Africa is better documented than the kingdoms of Kongo and Angola (Hilton 1987; Thornton 1987, 1997,

2017a, 2017b). The diverse narratives of chroniclers and travellers are well known and sufficiently studied, while the abundance of primary sources on Central Africa has resulted in admirable collections of documents transcribed and sometimes translated from Latin, notably the works of Manso (1877), Brásio (1952–1988, 1958–2004), Cuvelier and Jadin (1954), Jadin and Dicorato (1974), Jadin (1975), and Bal (1963). Despite this, the nature, purposes, and impact of the relations established between Portugal and the sovereigns of these territories in the period between the end of the fifteenth century and the middle of the seventeenth century have not yet been fully explored.

The Portuguese systems of domination can be analysed using perceptions that cross and intersect political, diplomatic, economic, social, and religious history. This should be open to the insertion of historical dynamics in their articulations between micro and macro, local and global, planning and improvisation, assimilation and adaptation, and acceptance and resistance. Taking into account the perspectives of connected and global history (Subrahmanyam 1997; Gruzinski 2001; Conrad [2016] 2019), I propose to reflect on how religious dynamics were the key to a confederative pact established between the kingdoms of Portugal and Kongo, seeking to demonstrate that both parties competed and were competitive, interacting, negotiating, and impacting each other.

Authors such as Hilton (1985), MacGaffey (1986, 1994), Thornton (1984, 2013), Sweet (2003, pp. 104–15), Heywood and Thornton (2007), and Ferreira (2012) have addressed some of these issues, especially when they refer to the process of the Catholicisation of Africa and the Africanisation of Catholicism. Important theories have been developed that emphasise the Kingdom of Kongo as a state open to correlative cultural encounters, yet which had not undergone significant structural change (Vansina 1966; Thornton 1983; Hilton 1985; Doré 2008; Fromont 2011, 2014, 2017). However, it is possible to go in deep into the historical roots of these relations with Portugal and the legal principles that governed them.

My argument is that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Portugal and the Kingdom of Kongo formed a decisive, exceptional, and unprecedented Pact of Confederation, which remained in force until 1665. This led to the development of a complex relationship of assimilation and resistance that was established, promoted, and tolerated within the framework of a temporal and spiritual alliance, which allowed Portugal to economically exploit a kingdom that was not politically subordinate to it. This legal relationship highlights the following: (1) that although relations between the kingdoms were permeated by attempts at covert domination, they nevertheless endured and would have global repercussions; (2) the strategy outlined and put into practice by Portugal in these territories has specific features that, because they do not fit readily into the systems of domination already identified by historians, force us to rethink Portuguese imperial dynamics in the overseas territories; and (3) religion had a decisive impact on the definition of Portuguese imperialist policies in West-Central Africa. It is precisely on this last point that the next subchapter will focus[1].

2. Religion and Empire: At the Forefront of an Original Expansionist Project

The ambition to achieve an alliance with "Ethiopia" to weaken and eventually conquer the Islamist dominions of Africa is documented in several works written from the early fourteenth century onward (Sanuto 1611; Adam 1906, pp. 549–55; Leopold 2000). According to Thomaz (1994, pp. 149–67), and more recently Disney (2009, pp. 42–44), commercial attraction was not absent from these projects.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Portugal justified its expansionist project, which began in 1415 with the conquest of Ceuta, as a service to Christendom (Marcocci 2012, pp. 46, 73–106). From a legal point of view, this was achieved when the papacy granted Portugal rights of (re)conquest that would allow the expansion to be carried forward. Papal judges weighed the fact that some African regions were, many centuries ago, under the authority of the Roman Empire and the Visigothic monarchy. To this was added the ideological tradition of the Crusades, which aimed not only at securing the holy places but also everywhere not subject to the *Respublica Christiana* (Padrón 1979). Preceded by

other crusading bulls, issued during the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century, the bulls *Dum Diversas* and *Divino amore*, signed by Pope Nicholas V (1447–1455), on 18 June 1452, granted the kings of Portugal the power to "invade, conquer, expunge and subjugate kingdoms, duchies, counties, principalities and other domains, lands, places, villages, strongpoints, and any other possession, movable and immovable property" of the Gentiles, but also to "reduce their persons to perpetual slavery" (Rosa 2010, pp. 18–20; Marcocci 2012, pp. 41–71). Through the bull *Romanus Pontifex*, issued on 8 January 1455, the same pope confirmed the conquests of Cape Bojador and Cape Chaunar (*Cabo Não*), conferring on the Portuguese crown the right to send missionaries, establish churches, monasteries, and other pious places in the overseas territories "discovered and undiscovered", from the Maghreb to the Swahili city states of the East African coast. The Supreme Pontiff also forbade, under the pain of excommunication, any other kingdom visiting or interfering in the conquest and exploitation of these lands (Jordão 1868, pp. 22–34; Levi 2008).

These concessions were later ratified by Popes Callixtus III (1455–1458) in the bull *Inter Caetera* on 13 March 1455; Sixtus IV (1471–1484) in the bull *Aeterni Regis* on 21 June 1481; Alexander VI (1492–1503) in the bull *Ineffabilis* on 1 June 1497; and Leo X (1513–1521) in the bull *Praecelsae devotionis* on 3 November 1514. In addition, the bull *Inter caetera*, of 4 May 1493, promulgated by Pope Alexander VI, promoted the division of the lands, both "discovered and to be discovered", between the Portuguese and Spanish monarchies, tracing a line from the Arctic to the Antarctic, which passed 100 leagues west of the Azores and Cape Verde, granting to the former what was to the east and to the latter what was to the west. Finally, the bull *Ea quae pro bono pacis*, by Julius II (1503–1513), dated 24 January 1506, confirmed the agreement between João II of Portugal (1481–1495) and Fernando V of Castile and León (1475–1504) regarding the limits of conquests and discoveries (Jordão 1868, pp. 36–270).

Consequently, when the interest of Portuguese policymakers during the reign of João II was aroused by the so-called "Black Africa" and the adjacent seas, religion would continue to play a preponderant role in defining the conditions of access to this territory. Although the Portuguese monarch acknowledged the importance of Africa as a passage to the "Indias", he also now recognised that its enormous commercial potential could be exploited, provided that incursions into the interior did not exacerbate the fragile financial situation of the kingdom. In practice, this meant relegating conquest by force to the last resort. With this in mind, the king promoted several expeditions with the purpose of converting the local powers to Catholicism, concluding pacts, treaties, and alliances to initiate commercial relations with them. Thus, within this different framework, religion would once again be at the heart of expansionist policies. Indeed, by being made manifest, as was intended, in other forms of influence, the expansion of faith represented a greater political project. When between 1481 and 1484 Diogo Cão, a royal agent and mariner with extensive experience in the seas of Guinea, reached the coast of the kingdoms of Kongo and Angola, he proposed conversion to Catholicism to the local sovereigns. Such an approach, moreover, had already been tried with other African leaders (Bontinck 1976; Radulet 1988).

In 1487, Bemoim, king of the Jalofos, in present-day Guinea-Bissau, petitioned the Portuguese monarch for "the help of horses, weapons and people" and was told to "receive baptism, and then he could be helped as a brother by law and faith, and as a friend by the deeds we have received from him". According to the account by Garcia de Resende, the king informed Bemoim about the "excommunications that the pope had imposed on anyone who gave arms to infidels", which is why, not being a Christian, such aid "could not be sent to him" (Brásio 1958–2004, I, pp. 543–49). The *Mani* (lord) of the Kongolese province of Sonho received a similar response when he asked the captain of a Portuguese ship if "those things he had brought could all be taken with the guarantees to his King" (Radulet 1992, p. 109).

Following the same religion was not merely a unifying factor that generates solidarity, as Costa (2013, p. 135) stated, but the legal imperative that, with rare exceptions, legit-

imised the creation and maintenance of relationships fostering military and commercial cooperation between kingdoms[2].

The reservoir of experience accumulated during the first failed projects to convert African leaders may have been important for the success that would be achieved in the kingdoms of Kongo and Angola, with their official adherence to Catholicism. Nor should it be forgotten that, by the time the Portuguese reached the Kongolese coast, their overseas expansion had already been underway for around seven decades. The coasts of Mina and Ouro in the Gulf of Guinea, which correspond to the current coastal strips of Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria, had already been explored (Ballong-Wen-Mewda 1993, pp. 45–77). From the fort of S. Jorge da Mina, built (1482) in the hope of establishing a commercial monopoly over the area, expeditions were sent to the kings of Songo and Mosses, south of the Sahel region. Similarly, diplomatic dealings with the gold potentates had already been established, and permanent trading posts had been set up in Ugató, Benin, and Uadan, in the Adrar of Mauritania (Thomaz 1994, pp. 161–62; Escribano Páez 2016).

Relations with Kongo in the late fifteenth century were in line with Portuguese commercial projects in the Gulf of Guinea. In addition, it demonstrates a change in the religious policies being pursued in these regions. Created in the fifteenth century from territory separated from the diocese of Morocco, the dioceses of Ceuta, Tangier, and Safim, had been governed from a distance and were in a state of constant instability. This uncertainty discouraged the Church Militant from undertaking actions of spiritual conquest in the interior (Bethencourt 1998; Giebels 2021)[3]. The situation changed under João II, who ordered the first systematic evangelisation of non-Christian territories, and this policy would be developed more effectively during the reigns of subsequent monarchs (Brásio 1943). The ideological justification for the expansion would continue to reside in religion (Thomaz 1990), but during the reign of Manuel I (1495–1521), initiatives with greater impact would be launched. For example, the overseas diocesan network was instituted with the creation of the diocese of Funchal in 1514, and this more structured approach would prove essential for the territorialisation of imperial power (Paiva 2023).

Efforts aimed at strategic cooperation with local leaders in the Zaire River delta intensified when many earlier ventures further north failed. One example of this was the trading post at the river port of Ugató on the Benin River. In 1507, the Portuguese abandoned to site due to the conditions imposed by the local *Obá* (king), who refused to allow the Portuguese to enslave people in the numbers they had expected (Thornton 2020, p. 51; Fage 2010, p. 248). For a long time, the trade in enslaved men and women was one of the most lucrative Portuguese commercial interests on the African continent, and there are many references to the "ransoming" and "stealing" of free people in order to sell them as slaves (*os dittos mercadores levam cada dia nossos naturaes. . . porque os ladrões e homens de ma concyencya os furtam e lhos trazem a vender*) (Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 468–71). According to Rui de Pina, Bemoim himself had accompanied his petition for Portuguese aid with a shackle of gold, as a "letter of faith", due to the lack of writing culture in his kingdom, also sending "one hundred slaves, all young men" (Brásio 1958–2004, I, pp. 536–49). Contemporary sources indicate that the establishment of these commercial relations was one of the key points in early contacts between Portuguese and Kongolese, although they were unsuccessful due to the "difference of the language" (Radulet 1992, p. 99). Actually, West-Central African slavery was first referred to in 1502. The Planisphere of Alberto Cantino (Figure 1) includes a note about this region, stating that there had been "slaves [in exchange] for things of little price" (Metcalf 2017; Thornton 2020, p. 53; Diffie and Winius 1993, pp. 101–21).

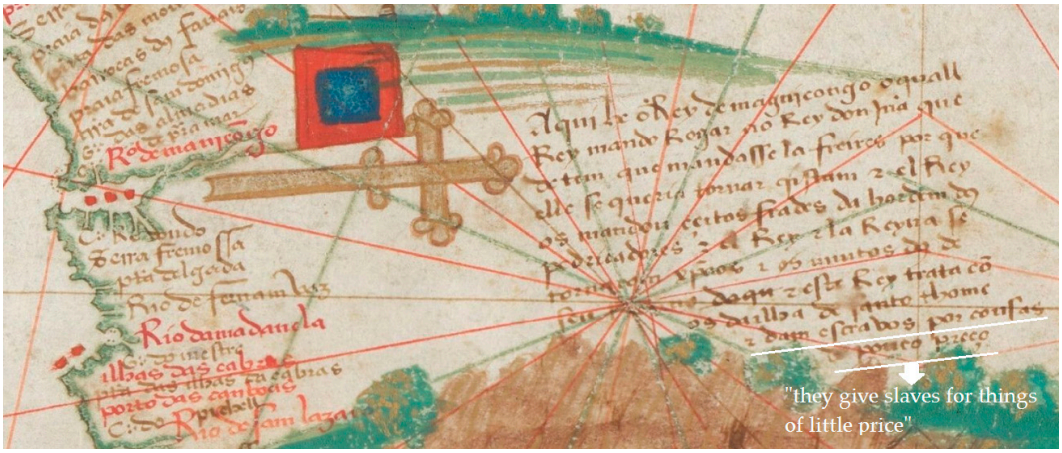

Figure 1. Detail of the Cantino planisphere, 1502. Source: Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, Modena, Italy, https://edl.cultura.gov.it/item/yzjge1e57d (accessed on 2 October 2023).

In the final decades of the fifteen century, a system directly linked to the slave economy of São Tomé, emerged, in which the kingdoms of Kongo and Angola would play an important role (Thornton 2009, pp. 58–93). Moreover, as a measure to increase the population on São Tomé Island, in 1500, the Portuguese monarch Manuel I declared that those who lived there could go with their ships "to redeem and trade all the goods and things either indigenous or created on the said island, from the Rio Real and the island of Fernão de Pó to the lands of Manicongo" (Brásio 1952–1988, XV, pp. 17–20). However, to ensure that this trade would be viable and durable to the point of not compromising either the relations initiated with the local kingdoms, or the wider expansionist projects, the Portuguese crown deemed it necessary to take overall control. Would this be possible in independent kingdoms, not politically subordinate to Portugal, without the outcome being similar to that previously witnessed in the kingdoms of Benin and the Jalofos?

Manuel I assumed that this would be possible and took advantage of an initiative by the *Mani* of Kongo, Afonso I (c.1506/1509–c.1540/1543), to attempt to reconfigure his kingdom according to the "Portuguese system". He adopted an unprecedented strategy consisting of a legally binding pact of alliance and union with an obligation of close fidelity. It was a Pact of Confederation and would have global significance. The pact became the basis for the establishment of formal and informal transatlantic and trans-imperial trade routes, along with the creation of networks for the circulation of political and religious information. It encouraged the transfer of people and knowledge while also promoting cross-cultural encounters and exchange.

3. The Confederation between Portugal and Kongo: A Temporal and Spiritual Union of Strict Fidelity

In addition to fitting perfectly into the messianic Manueline plans to rebuild a Christian empire that stretched from Africa to Asia (Thomaz 1990; Rosa 2010, p. 29), the Christianisation of the kingdoms of Kongo and Angola would be associated with hidden political and economic interests, mainly related to the creation of monopolies. Perhaps the most important of these involved slavery. Because of the fact Christian slaves could not be sold to non-Christians, unfree African people were pressured into the waters of baptism. On the Kongolese side, the closer relationship with Portugal that religious conversion of their kingdom might provide proved equally decisive. Conversion could guarantee the support of an external force, which would recognise and promote Kongolese independence and enhance political stability in a territory susceptible to sedition and attacks by rivals. Furthermore, this would bolster the central position Kongo already occupied by providing resources and knowledge that no other kingdom in Central Africa possessed. While Portugal could access the internal trade networks established by the African kingdom, Kongo was able to develop a new maritime economic policy. Hitherto, this policy had been confined to the

obtaining of salt and zimbo shells along the coastline. As Portugal provided military aid in the skirmishes and wars in the interior, and secured considerable material benefit from victory, so too Kongo would capitalise on this aid to consolidate and extend its dominions (Miller 1985, p. 123).

According to the sources of the time, the conversion of the local sovereigns was swift and successful. The same cannot be said of the process for consolidating Catholicism in these territories, which would be complex, prolonged, and difficult. While European chronicles portray this as a remarkable achievement for Portuguese interests, the reality was quite different. Yet these narratives have proved influential on the work of modern historians who have been less attentive to the strategic nature with which the two parties viewed conversion. For both the Kongolese and Portuguese, the process was based on negotiation rather than imposition. Diplomacy was paramount, and if the Kongolese made trade-offs, in return they won recognition of their territory by important European external forces. The African kingdom also gained the guarantee of strategic cooperation in the field of migration and trade, opening up access to the new world order and consolidating its predominance among its neighbours (Gouveia 2022).

The apparent success of the initial wave of contacts established at the end of the fifteenth century encouraged the strengthening of relations between Portugal and Kongo in the early decades of the following century. During the reign of the first Christian king of Kongo, João I (?–c.1506?), there were important initiatives that had the effect of consolidating ties with Portugal. Embassies were sent to Lisbon in which young Kongolese were included to be instructed in the Catholic faith, study Latin, and learn "the other customs of good living", so that when they returned they could "serve God and serve and help his King and his Kingdom". The Kongolese monarch also asked for "artisans, masters of stonework and carpentry, workers of the land, donkeys and shepherds", so that from then on, the men of the two kingdoms would be "equal and convinced on one and the other part of the love and the need to act and converse on the basis of the same way of living and the same customs" (Radulet 1992, p. 103). By alluding to the social and political value of emotional ties, the final section of this text exemplifies how the political culture of the time reflected a theological understanding of the world and the order that presided over it. This link between power relations and their internal rationales has been studied in depth by Cardim (2000).

After the death of João I, the first Christian king of Kongo, a fratricidal war broke out. Only one of the potential claimants to the throne was a Christian, an indication that in these early times Catholicism was limited to only a portion of the local elites. After the triumph of Mvemba-a-Nzinga in 1506, both the Portuguese and Kongolese crowns devised policies and developed plans of action aimed at strengthening the ties initiated in the previous period. Afonso I, as Mvemba-a-Nzinga came to call himself, dispatched a brother, Pedro, and a cousin, Henrique, to the Portuguese monarch bearing letters of unknown content. Pedro was charged with asking for a suitable person to be sent to Kongo to assist in implementing the Portuguese political and judicial system, that is, to supervise the administration of justice and warfare (*folgaria muyto de nos lhe emviarmos huua pesoa nosa, que menestrase as cousas da justiça em seus reynos ao noso costume; e asy tambem entemdese nas cousas da guerra, e a metese em uso ao modo de ca*) (de Matos 1938, p. 272). The African agency clearly visible in this first phase of official correspondence undermines the idea that the Portuguese acted unilaterally to "impose a copy of its political and social organisation", as Russell-Wood (1998, p. 115) argued.

Shortly after this embassy, Gonçalo Rodrigues departed for Kongo, accompanied by a group of missionaries and bearing a reply from King Manuel I to his African counterpart. Not only are the contents of this letter unknown, so too are the details of the response. However, considering the request that Manuel I had received and the decisions that he had then made, this correspondence presumably outlined the framework for a more substantial cooperation. In 1511, the same year Gonçalo Rodrigues arrived in Lisbon, Simão da Silva[4] left for the Kongolese kingdom on the important mission of conveying a portfolio of written

regulations and instructions for how certain actions should be carried out (ANTT, Leis e Ordenações, Leis, mç. 2, n.º 25). These regulations (*Regimento*) were transcribed in full and published for the first time in 1936 in the journal *Arquivos de Angola*, although the work was not attributed to an author (Minuta 1936). Two years later, Norton de Matos (1938) published these findings in the proceedings of the *I Congresso da História da Expansão*. A decade and a half later, he also integrated the work of António Brásio (1952–1988, I, pp. 228–59). These editions notwithstanding, the regulations have been little explored in historiography. The fact that there is only one paragraph about Simão da Silva in the five volumes of the *História da Expansão Portuguesa*—which is, to date, one of the most substantial works in this field of studies—demonstrates the relative disregard to which he has been subjected (Russell-Wood 1998, p. 242).

To date, Maria de Lurdes Rosa, Isabel dos Guimarães Sá and Ilídio Amaral have produced the most extensive studies on this topic. In a chapter dedicated to the second official embassy sent by Portugal to Kongo, Amaral (1996, pp. 107–18) described the regiment as part of an ambitious project of "Christianization, acculturation or Lusitanization and the establishment of a commercial agreement", conceived as a response to the demands of the sovereign of Kongo. Considering that the king of Kongo was "subordinate to the Portuguese monarch", Sá (2009, pp. 313–32) presented a detailed but descriptive account of the contents of the *Regimento*, defining it as a "manual for the perfect colonizer". On the other hand, Rosa (2006, pp. 19–36; 2010, pp. 47–56; 2017, pp. 240–45) argued that the Regiment was part of a "project" of narration and interpretation of the "Christianization" of the Congo that needs to be further explored, but was also part of a vast ideological program of religious and cultural acculturation put into practice during the reign of King Manuel I.

The operations detailed in the regulations Simão da Silva delivered began with the presentation of "orders and greetings", a diplomatic act intended only for Christian kings and princes. Consequently, Simão da Silva advised Afonso I that maintaining the Catholic faith would give him access to the help and favour of Portugal "with much good will" (*com muito boa vontade*). The "orders and greetings" were followed by the presentation of a written grant of arms of the type customarily used by Christian princes for the king to sign, use, and bequeath to his descendants. There were also additional coats of arms for him to distribute to the nobles of his kingdom. Also included was an example of how royal documents should be authorised, along with a seal and signet ring. There followed instructions on how these were used in formalising grants, privileges, and other important acts. Further instructions were provided in a book containing a list of royal officers and a description of their roles at court and in the kingdom, so that the model could be replicated. The benefits of Portuguese culture were also on display: battle flags and descriptions for their use; a copy of the ordinances of the kingdom, along with a scholar to help in their application; bells, altarpieces, ornaments, and objects of worship for the construction of a church or monastery; materials for building a royal palace where the king could live in the manner of Christians; technical officials to teach the skills necessary for different trades; sailors, nautical charts, compasses, and astrolabes; animals, seeds, plants, and agricultural implements; and instructions on the operation of the table service at the Portuguese court. In addition, there were gifts for the *Mani Kongo,* including a mirror from Flanders, a Malaga tea set from Valencia, towels from India, chairs upholstered with silk, and silk dresses from Bruges. Therefore, as we can see, it was not just Europe that had come to Kongo, but the entire world (Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 247–59).

Responsibility for the administration of justice also fell to Simão da Silva. Manuel I granted him civil and criminal jurisdiction, recommending prudence and asking him to apply everything "in broad terms" (*em grosso modo*), that is, without great rigor and in a general way. He would have the discretion to proceed in conjunction with the *Mani Kongo*, who might be present in court and could intervene in cases involving his vassals, either to increase or decrease penalties. The king concluded by making clear "this must now be begun in such a way as to provoke no scandal and carried out as decently as can be done" (*se vos parecese que ha geente da terra recebe por rigorosas, as penas de nosas hordenacoes,*

praticalo-eis com el rey; e na maneira que elle ouver por bem, ho fareis, tomando vos por fumdamento que ysto se deve agora neste começo fazer, de maneira que nam recebam escandollo, e se meta em uso o mais docemente que se poder fazer) (Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 247–59; de Matos 1938, p. 273).

However, the mission entrusted to Simão da Silva went further. In the final section of the regulations, the Portuguese monarch revealed the true intentions behind this solicitude. First, Silva was instructed to explain to the king of Kongo the consideration he would receive if slaves were "rescued" in his lands. If he did not wish to consent to this, it should be stressed that Portugal had borne the expenses of the voyage and the cargo they had brought with them, in addition to supporting the accompanying clergy and the maintenance costs and studies of the relatives he had sent to Lisbon. Silva was then tasked with loading their ships with whatever the local monarch had to give, be it slaves, copper, or ivory. He should ask the *Mani* to fill the holds of the ships, especially with slaves, so that the Portuguese would continue to collaborate with him ("in such a way that we can do their things as well as we already do". However, Silva was to speak to the *Mani* in his own name, without mentioning that he was actually conveying his king's instruction. Instead, he should declare that the Portuguese monarch's objective was the increase in faith rather than any financial benefit (Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 247–59).

Simão da Silva was also to assess, both in Kongo and the neighbouring kingdoms, the geography, human and natural resources, markets, capacity of the army, and annual profit that might be derived from any commercial relations established there. In addition to wanting to know about the circulation of goods, the characteristics of land ownership, the local economy, social relations, and the power structures, the monarch hoped to understand how much Kongo could support their expansionist policy. Finally, the regulations charged him with presenting to Afonso I a "letter of faith". The king should sign this letter and forward it to Rome to formalise his obedience to the pope, as was the custom among all Catholic princes, and Portugal was prepared to fund this African delegation. It was also suggested that Henrique, the son of the Kongolese monarch, might offer prayers in Lisbon and the king undertook to expedite his promotion to the episcopate, as indeed did happen on 5 May 1518 (Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 247–59; Brásio 1958–2004, I, pp. 281–90; Jordão 1868, p. 120). No doubt it was hoped that this supervision might facilitate the establishment of a spiritual domain that would allow Portugal to consolidate its interests in this territory. The right of conquest did not in itself constitute a *jus in re*, but rather a potential right that to become effective, required a legitimate act of "acquisition" (Thomaz 1994, p. 219). As a process mediated and encouraged by Portugal, the signing of the document that formalized voluntary obedience to the Pope became one of these acts of legitimization.

In summary, the mission the catalogue of regulations entrusted to Simão da Silva was to put into practice a confederation between kingdoms, with the longer-term aim being the creation of a great Christian empire "sub signo crucis". Etymologically derived from the Latin *Foedus inire* (form a pact), the confederation presupposed a pact of alliance and union with an obligation of close fidelity (Diccionario 1729). The broad outlines and guiding principles at the political, administrative, judicial, and religious levels were embodied in the Manueline regulations. It is not surprising, therefore, that several converging narratives emerged that portrayed the two kingdoms as common originators and joint founders by establishing poles of identification and cohesion (Rosa 2010, pp. 45–91). Despite this, the confederation was a political model perfectly framed by European law, which is why the "Diccionário da Lingua Portugueza", composed by Rafael Bluteau and later added to by António Morais Silva, defines it as "a union of princes, or states, or cities, for some common purpose of peace or war" (Bluteau 1789, I, p. 307). The jurists of the *ius commune* distinguished two forms of union between kingdoms: the form *aeque principaliter*[5] and the *acessória* form. Kingdoms or provinces were united under the principle of *aeque principaliter* in that each retained its own separate character, although they were governed under the same laws or ruled by the same sovereign[6]. Provinces, on the other hand, joined a kingdom through a *união acessória*, by which they became a single political entity governed by the law and privileges of the kingdom to which they had bound themselves. The

difference between the two models, which were also applied to dioceses and municipalities, was in the effects that the union had on the two entities, merging or maintaining them (Barros [1885] 1945–1954, V, p. 138; Torres 2006, p. 152; García Pérez 2015). In my view, relations between the Portuguese and Kongolese monarchies were structured on the basis of an *aeque principaliter* form.

Some eighteenth-century lexicons described this political–administrative model as one in which sovereigns confederated themselves not to submit but to become arbiters. This is exactly the expectation that drove the creation and maintenance of this Pact of Confederation over the centuries, despite some occasional interruptions. This framework of covert relations, domination and power, and cooperation and competition assumed disparate dynamics and involved diverse agents. Two reasons could explain why Manuel I embarked on this strategy. First, the contents of the regulations had to a large extent been requested by the Kongolese monarch himself. Second, the characteristics of the political system that Kongo had already developed seemed to guarantee success. Although Kongo was a vast kingdom, it was already quite centralised, with territory structured into provinces or lordships and administered by members of a local nobility, the *Mani*. The kingdom had a defined political organisation, a consolidated tax system, well-organised commercial networks, an established currency, a professional army that was highly trained and respected, and an elective monarchy chosen by clan leaders (Boxer 1969, p. 109; Thornton 2020, p. 33).

4. The Validity of the Pact of Confederation

Although there is no existent written document signed by the two kingdoms, the confederative pact can be inferred from its political, legal, religious, military, and commercial repercussions in other documents from different chronologies. It is also possible that the formalization of this pact took place with the implementation of the instructions that King Manuel I sent with Simão da Silva. In addition, several documents drawn from different chronologies refer directly to the terms of the confederative pact. The scope of the pact was reinforced in 1553, when King João III (1521–1557) sent a charter to Kongo authorising the local monarch to appoint a general ombudsman, something that had already been granted to his grandfather decades earlier. The document only mentions Portuguese residents in Kongo as eligible for the appointment, but does not say over whom the magistrate could exercise jurisdiction, only that his power extended to the entire "kingdom and lordship" of the king of Kongo (*ey por bem e me praz que elle posa elejer de meus vasalos e naturais huã pesoa auta e sufi[ci]ente como espero muyto que ele fará, pera que seja ouujdor jerall e todo seu Reyno e senhoryo*) (Brásio 1952–1988, II, pp. 321–22).

On 2 October 1564, the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545–1563) were sent to the Kingdom of Kongo. It is significant that this happened on the initiative of Cardinal Henry, regent during King Sebastian's minority, immediately after the decrees had been received and solemnly published in his kingdom. In the letter in which he sent the decrees, on 2 October 1564, he addressed D. Bernardo of Kongo as "very high and very excellent brother prince", stating that the reason for sending those documents was "the special obligation" he had "in the spiritual and temporal matters of those kingdoms of the Kongo". "Special obligation" is a very strong expression that clarifies the relationship established between the two kingdoms (Brásio 1958–2004, II, pp. 524–25; 1973, pp. 209–21).

On 25 February 1588, Monsignor Cesare Spacciano, apostolic nuncio to Madrid, wrote to Cardinal Montalto, secretary to Pope Sixtus V (1585–1590), referring to the sending of a Kongolese ambassador to the Spanish monarch. This man was, he noted "confederated as successor of the kingdom of Portugal" (*viene mandato dal Re di Congo nell'Etiopia per ambasciatore à questa Maestá, con la quale stá confederato come successore nel regno di Portogallo*) (Brásio 1952–1988, III, pp. 362–64; Filesi 1968b). In 1595, the Kongolese embassy also made reference to this arrangement when opposing the enslavement of subjects of the king of Kongo. Their objection was based on "an agreement" (*una conventione*) made with King Manuel I in which this practice was prohibited (Brásio 1952–1988, III, p. 520). Half a

century later, the union between the kingdoms was still described as a confederation. A letter sent by the Chapter of the See of Kongo to the Pope on 13 October 1651 recorded that the most serene kings of Portugal were "confederates and protectors of this kingdom" (Brásio 1952–1988, XI, pp. 94–97).

Under the auspices of the confederative pact, the kingdom of Kongo underwent significant transformations. The most important changes were in four main areas: local leaders officially adhering to Catholicism; the development of foreign trade, connecting into transoceanic and transcontinental markets where the Portuguese language, or Africanised versions of it, became a lingua franca; Kongo becoming a recognized international entity with embassies in various parts of Europe; and oral laws and customs being formalised into judicial and political structures built on written conventions (Fage 2010, p. 255; Thornton 2020, pp. 43–44; Santos and Tavares 2002).

In the context of international trade, these relations had an immediate and lasting impact, but at the same time created considerable uncertainty. Kongo received goods traded by the Portuguese and in return exported African animals unknown in Europe, along with ivory, copper, and, above all, slaves. The Portuguese immediately established a commercial monopoly that would be accepted and indeed protected by the local sovereigns (Thornton 2020, pp. 43–44). At various times, the Kongolese kings made clear that they were adhering to the terms of the pact they had signed with Portugal. On 25 August 1526, the *Mani Kongo* informed his Portuguese counterpart that he would send nine of the twelve Frenchmen imprisoned for landing at Kongolese ports (ANTT, Corpo Cronológico, I, mç. 34, n.º 127). In other situations, the Kongolese monarchs acted against any clandestine trade that violated the commercial rights agreed with Manuel I. Thus, they would investigate whether enslaved people had come from regions over which they held sovereignty and determine whether or not they could legally be held in bondage (Thornton 1981).

The religious aspect of the pact also remained important. As early as 1512, in a letter to the *Mani* nobles of his kingdom, Afonso I announced that he had instituted on his coat of arms the insignia used by Portuguese Christian kings and princes, which had been presented by Simão da Silva. The king explained the religious symbolism contained in the insignia and declared his confidence that with them, God would grant him "victories" and keep him "in his kingdom until the end of the world" (ANTT, Casa Real, Cartório da Nobreza, liv. 20, 7; Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 260–65). In the same year, a letter of faith and obedience was drafted, signed, and sent to Pope Julius II. A copy also remained in Portugal (ANTT, Corpo Cronológico, II, mç. 30, n.º1). On 5 May 1535, Pope Paul III (1534–1549) issued the papal brief *Summa jucunditate*, which recognised Kongo as a Christian kingdom and acknowledged the spiritual alliance forged with Portugal, designating Afonso I as "Dearest son in Christ" (Jordão 1868, p. 164).

Scant documented evidence exists to support suggestions that Africa conversion was insincere or pragmatic, as demonstrated in studies by Birmingham (1977) and Boxer (1970). The complex and prolonged process of the Catholicisation of Africa followed its own dynamics that would lead to an Africanisation of Catholicism, while still creating deep roots in Kongolese society (Thornton 1984, 2023). Religion became the arena for cooperation and for the resolution of disputes, in which the interests of the two parties of the confederation would be scrutinised and arbitrated by the Roman Curia. Over the centuries, political elites have for many reasons sought to exploit religion on their own behalf, especially to legitimise their exercise of power. Due to religious beliefs, people might consent more readily to the discipline that ordered and pacified society, and if subjects considered themselves to be members of an overarching moral community, their behaviour might become more predictable, homogeneous, and obedient. Religious traditions could also offer access to administrative skills, educational provision, and institutional networks (Strathern 2017).

The kingdoms of Kongo and Angola were not subordinate to Portugal; therefore, they were often able to resist attempts to interfere in their internal and external political and economic affairs. In the religious sphere, however, Portuguese influence could be more

pervasive. Perhaps because the Pact of Confederation was signed under the assumption of future conversion to Catholicism, the Kongolese monarchs expected to control religious policy within their own kingdoms. The Portuguese crown, however, opposed this on the grounds that they were engaged in a spiritual conquest of the territory—a view also shared by the Roman Curia. On 11 October 1577, Pope Gregory XIII (1572–1585) was consulted about "the rights of Portuguese monarchs in the East and West Indies". He explained that, by apostolic authority, the Kingdom of Kongo, while "never subjugated by the Portuguese", was granted to the power and conquest of the kings of Portugal. Furthermore, not only did kingdoms, provinces, islands, etc. occupied by the Portuguese fall under the right of conquest, but so did those empires, kingdoms, provinces islands, etc. they "discovered"[7]. Finally, the pope declared that "empires, kingdoms, provinces, islands, etc. simply discovered by the Portuguese and never actually ruled by them were nevertheless designated not only as "conquest" but also as being under the "power" [*diccionis*] of the kings of Portugal" (Bullarum 1707, pp. 181–83).

In identifying Kongo as a conquest under the power of the kings of Portugal, Pope Gregory was emphasising the spiritual side of conquest and underlining the status of the kingdom as a military protectorate and a zone of commercial exclusivity, which was the relationship established by the Pact of Confederation. This relationship was also referred to in the titles Portuguese monarchs adopted as lords of the "conquest, navigation and trade of Ethiopia". This notion of "spiritual conquest" led the kings of Portugal to obstruct for almost a century any direct contact between Kongo and the Roman Curia and to similarly defend their *de jure* and *de facto* rights of patronage as Grand Masters of the Order of Christ. One event that demonstrates this is the election of Henrique as titular bishop of Utica, *in partibus infidelium*, which was proposed by Manuel I and confirmed on 5 May 1518 by the papal brief *Vidimus quae super*, issued by Pope Leo X (1513–1521) (Jordão 1868, p. 120). The elevation of the Kongolese monarch's son to episcopal dignity, the first indigenous, sub-Saharan African to achieve this distinction, is directly related to the Pact of Confederation. Manuel had promised this to his African counterpart, as noted in the regulations brought by Simão da Silva, as an encouragement for the rulers of the Kingdom of Kongo. On the one hand, this event intensified Portugal's spiritual ties with Kongo and, on the other, it reinforced Portugal's leading role in the evangelisation of Africa. In addition, the elevation of Bishop Henrique consolidated the patronage rights the Portuguese monarchs had gained through the papal bull *Dum fidei constantiam*, issued on 7 June 1514, and the papal brief *Dudum pro parte*, of 31 March 1516, which recognised *de jure* the perpetual right of patronage of the kings of Portugal over all overseas dioceses already created and to be created, and the practice of monarchs introducing bishops into these dioceses (Paiva 2021a, 2021b; 2006, pp. 38–44).

The creation of a Portuguese diocese in S. Salvador de Mbanza Kongo in 1596 is an example. Although the initiative came jointly from the courts of Filipe I of Portugal (1581–1598) and Álvaro II of Kongo (1587–1613), the bull provided that the "perpetual right of patronage and presentation" in the new diocese was granted exclusively "to the kings of Portugal and the Algarves" (Gouveia 2022). The foundation of dioceses in places subject to local rulers, such as the kingdoms of Kongo and Angola, was not a common event in the Portuguese empire. These modifications to ecclesiastical structures resulted from negotiations within the confederated kingdoms and were a product of pressure from the local kings to be involved in the religious administration of their territories. This local pressure, along with the scarcity of resources either to support churchmen residing there or to attract others, led to concessions by Portugal.

During the episcopate of Frei António de Santo Estêvão (1604–c.1608), the second bishop of the diocese, the Kongolese king assumed responsibility for providing partial support for the bishops, the provost, and the vicar general, along with the collection of tithes and the presentation of some dignities and canons of the cathedral (Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Congregazione Concilio, Relationes Dioecesium, vol. 50, fl. 4v-5v, published in https://www.uc.pt/fluc/religionAJE/fontes/congo_angola, accessed on 21 August 2023;

Brásio 1952–1988, VIII, pp. 11–25). Years later, "due to the poverty of the places", the kings of Kongo "by their liberality" gave to the priests of the parishes among the provinces of their kingdom "a certain part from their treasury and income" (Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Congregazione Concilio, Relationes Dioecesium, vol. 50, fl. 12–14, published in https://www.uc.pt/fluc/religionAJE/fontes/congo_angola, accessed on 21 August 2023). The sovereigns also paid the stipend of the preacher of the cathedral, in the amount of 250 ducats and gave "something as wages" to the local people who sang at Masses and in the divine services (Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Congregazione Concilio, Relationes Dioecesium, vol. 50, fl. 4v-5v, published in https://www.uc.pt/fluc/religionAJE/fontes/congo_angola, accessed on 21 August 2023; Brásio 1952–1988, VIII, pp. 11–25). The creation of this policy of cost sharing and the willingness of local rulers to financially support ecclesiastical structures and dignities they had neither chosen nor created can only be understood in light of the Pact of Confederation.

From the point of view of judicial and political administration, there is evidence that attempts to implement the Portuguese custom (*ao noso custume*) (de Matos 1938, p. 272) produced a new legal and institutional culture. The widespread use of writing in the African courts, which was put into practice by both Kongolese and Portuguese clerics, was key to an interpenetration between the political–administrative and legal systems of Portugal and Kongo. This is particularly evident in the standardisation of revenue collection through the use of annotated taxation rolls. This new system, which came into operation from 1529, continued to be deeply influenced by African practices. These measures allowed Kongolese royal officials to police tax evasion and detect abuses by intermediate agents. The programme of standardisation also allowed Portuguese monarchs to better monitor the inflow of taxes, despite the vast extent and sometimes porous borders of these territories (Brásio 1952–1988, I, p. 530).

Although, in theory, the confederated kingdoms ought to be governed by the same civil and canon laws, a complete transplantation of the Portuguese system presented practical problems. This can be seen from the Kongolese monarch's reaction after receiving and reading the five books of *Ordenações* (Ordinances). After questioning the strictness of the normative system contained therein, he noted with a heavy irony "the harsh penalty exacted from those who simply put their feet on the floor". It would be impossible, he felt, to "reduce his subjects and vassals to such an order of living" (Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 373–75). Such words suggest that there could be no wholesale transposition of the Portuguese legal system, but rather graduate interpenetration based on tolerance and consent. The result would be a multi-normative system capable of adaptations from a common institutional matrix, as can also be seen in other imperial territories (Benton and Ross 2013; Duve 2017; Berman 2012). The world of *praxis* shows this. In several documents there can be found examples of a judicial apparatus which, while retaining many local characteristics, adopted new procedures and was composed of the same judicial officials as existed in Portugal. Furthermore, the composition of this apparatus was essentially triggered by the initiative of local monarchs, as illustrated by a letter from King Afonso I on 5 October 1514, in which he requested books to register the acts of the administration of justice (*aver[y]amos mester huma mão de papel pera poer camtas emburilhadas cá sam feitas*) (Brásio 1952–1988, I, p. 322).

The existence of a new legal culture, arising from the mixture of the Portuguese legal system and local custom, with shared oversight between the monarchs of Portugal and Kongo, indicates that relations between the two kingdoms were framed by a confederative pact and not by mere extraterritorial agreements, as was the case in other territories under Portuguese domination. It is important to note that the judicial offices were appointed by the king of Portugal but were subject to confirmation by the king of Kongo, who could grant them jurisdiction over both Portuguese and Kongolese people (*e em todos os juizos, asy dos feitos crimes, como dos cyvees, ora seja damtre a geente nosa que levaaes, como da geente de la da terra*) (de Matos 1938, p. 273). Here, the aforementioned letter written on 5 October 1514 by King Afonso I is an illuminate example. He informed the Portuguese king that after

the death of Simão da Silva, there had been a dispute over who should replace him. After "summoning all the white men" and asking them which would be the most suitable, they replied that the Portuguese monarch had ordered that in such cases it should be Álvaro Lopes, the overseer (*feitor*). Before going to war, he appointed him captain and overseer (*e Senhor eu ho fyz capitam e feytor*), leaving him a servant with the powers to administer justice to both his vassals and "the white people" (*assy aos nossos como na gente branca*). After some disturbances and murders, Álvaro Lopes only arrested and flogged those involved, but because it was local custom to give the death penalty to those who committed murder, the queen forced him to do so (*mandou a Alvaro Lopez que hos mandasse matar, porque nosso costume era que [a quem] matava matarem-no, e entam Alvaro Lopes conprio seu mandado e os mandou matar*) (Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 294–323).

Two years later, in a letter sent to Lisbon on 4 March 1516, King Afonso I described the conflicts that had arisen between the captain and the magistrate (*corregedor*). His references to large "gatherings and councils" led by the magistrate are a clear indication of the interleaving of the new legal system and local custom. The king then asked his Portuguese counterpart to send him "an *Ordenações* book in *lingoagem* (vernacular)" so that he would not judge "the new law in accordance with the old." In addition, he said he had been approached by a friar who told him that "it was a service to God" to sign a decree allowing the magistrate to hold hearings and make inquiries of his vassals (*ho alvará hera que ouvesse por bem que ho co[r]legedor fizesse oudiencya à minha gente e lhes tyrasse emquirições, asy como se fazia em Portugal, porque era serviço de Deus*), and if he refused to do so, he would be excommunicated, which would prevent him from attending mass and receiving the sacraments. He signed the decree, and the magistrate conducted an inquiry into the captain, who ended up killing him. The Portuguese then asked the king to impose capital punishment, but he sent the murderer to São Tomé to be judged by the Portuguese authorities (Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 355–58).

This letter suggests three things: (1) that religion, one of the most important bases of the confederative pact, continued to be an instrument of manipulation; (2) that there was a co-involvement of the two monarchs in matters of justice; and (3) that this new legal system was far from being rooted but already had important structures and agents in place. Other documents reinforce this final point, such as the "inquest" (*devassa*) that King Diogo (1546–1561) ordered on 10 April 1550 against Pedro Canguano Bemba for alleged treason, referring to the existence of several judicial offices: ombudsman, proctor (*provedor*), public notary, and clerk of the judiciary and orphans (Brásio 1952–1988, II, pp. 248–49). There are also references to bailiffs and quartermasters (*meirinhos-mores* and *armadores-mores*) (Manso 1877, p. 57).

The existence of similar situations in other periods means that the incidences of time, circumstances, and the styles of the various reigns did not affect the essence of the confederative pact. Despite being a union, the confederative pact between the kingdoms of Portugal and Kongo was an alliance that promoted and mutually reinforced their political independence. Although joint actions by the two monarchs were possible in various matters, especially in the religious and judicial fields, the recognition of the political autonomy of the confederate kingdoms guaranteed the preservation of the jurisdiction of monarchs over their own vassals. Several documents of the time have reaffirmed this, such as the consistorial records of the bishops of the diocese of Kongo and Angola. In the section detailing the city where the cathedral was based, the respondents almost always declared that Kongo was "subject, in the temporal", to the local king, but for "the Lusitanians residing there" justice was "administered by officers of the king of Portugal" (Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Archivio Concistoriale, Processus Consistoriales, vol. 24, fl. 804v).

As previously noted, this does not mean that there were no platforms for cooperation and mutual delegation of competences. Although the kings of Portugal had their captains, ombudsmen, and proctors in S. Salvador de Mbanza Kongo, with authority over the Portuguese residing there, it was not uncommon to delegate the appointment of these offices to the kings of Kongo (Manso 1877, p. 148; Brásio 1952–1988, II, pp. 321–22). Nor was

it uncommon to install Kongolese on the judiciary in cases involving Portuguese. In 1529, for example, the brother of the local ruler discharged this office (Brásio 1952–1988, I, p. 535). In the event of conflicts between Portuguese and local people, the Kongolese sovereigns would strive "as Catholic kings and defenders of justice" to punish the guilty and accept those magistrates deemed suitable for these cases, under the penalty of suspension of "navigation and trade". As a letter sent to the king of Kongo on 13 August 1566 claimed, if he acted with rigor and integrity there would be no need for the king of Portugal to interfere in the legal cases involving his vassals, making it clear once again that there was a legal system that co-involved the two sovereigns (*e quanto mais rigurosso e majs integro se mostrar nestas cousas, tanto menos ficará a S. A. que fazer… terá também lembrança de dar todo o favor e aviamento necessário, e assi que toqua ao spiritual como temporal das ditas partes*) (Brásio 1952–1988, II, pp. 559–61). Furthermore, in some parts of Angola, the practice of Portuguese officials applying justice in the manner of their kingdom while simultaneously allowing "mocanos", a local judicial practice of issuing sentences only after "making a plea (*pleito*) and hearing the parties while standing" was also developed (Demaret 2011). There were, as can be seen, two intertwined jurisdictional systems that formed the basis for a single legal order.

The Pact of Confederation also had significant military implications. Portugal began offering such support to the kingdoms of Kongo and Angola before the establishment of a formal confederation, and there were further instances of aid being provided in various military campaigns, invasions, and rebellions (ANTT, Colecção de Cartas, Núcleo Antigo, 878, n.º142; Brásio 1952–1988, I, p. 301; 1958–2004, IV, p. 70; Thornton 1988, pp. 361–62). A powerful force sent by King Sebastião (1557–1578) and commanded by Francisco de Gouveia Sotomaior rescued Álvaro I of Kongo (1568–1587), who had been deposed by the Jaga tribes. King Álvaro was then reestablished on the throne (Miller 1973, 1978; Thornton 1978; Bontinck 1980). The mission included building a fort and providing military personnel to protect the African king and the Portuguese living there. King Álvaro was then expected to meet the expenses of this garrison. Some historians have interpreted the Portuguese rescue as an attempt to dominate these kingdoms, arguing that the episode placed Kongo in the position of a tribute-paying vassal and thus constituted a "humiliating submission of the Kongo to Portugal" (Filesi 1967a, 1968a; Thornton 2020, p. 78).

Contrary to what Filesi has argued, the aforementioned episode of military aid did not inaugurate a new phase in these relations (Filesi 1967b). Many of the Portuguese initiatives already undertaken in this territory included a military component. The new confederative army had a significant impact on Kongolese expansionist and imperial plans. There would be new conquests, such as that of Mpanzualumbo, which took place in 1516. Kongolese authority was also strengthened in a number of other territories. Moreover, it should also be noted that the reverse also occurred. For example, the Portuguese received aid from the Kongolese army during the conquest of the kingdom of Angola (Amaral 1996, p. 35).

Portugal never intended to replace the local government and instead sought only to exert influence, such as intervening in succession elections to support preferred candidates (de Alencastro [2000] 2014, p. 291). Nor did such a policy breach the spirit of the Pact of Confederation, which had always presupposed close involvement. The epitaph of Gouveia Sotomaior (d. 1577) states that he reduced the Kingdom of Kongo "in five years back to obedience of his Majesty, renewing vassalage and the payment of tribute". However, the flattery and glorification inherent in such eulogising should be viewed with some reservations. Although, at the time, some Portuguese may have seen benefit in suggesting that the payments offered by Kongolese monarchs amounted to "vassalage" this does not mean others agreed. These payments were offered by the Kongolese rulers as reimbursement to Portugal for the costs of maintaining them in power. There is also further evidence of other relationships. D. Álvaro I repaid King Sebastião for his assistance through the concession of Angolan territory and the provision of permanent military aid, as recorded in the instructions given to the Governor of Angola, drafted on 26 March 1607: "in the trading post there are promissory documents signed by the said king Dom Álvaro, as in the

Chamber of this city is a promissory document that grants part or the totality of the island of Luanda and its fish for the payment of my soldiers. The said king made this donation for the large expenses that the king his brother (referring to Sebastião) made when he expelled the Jagas from his kingdom and re-established him on the throne" (Brásio 1952–1988, V, p. 277).

That this episode indicates submission or humiliation seems a difficult position to maintain because what occurred was evidently aid between "brother kings" and the reinforcement of parity between the confederate kingdoms. Moreover, any affront would simultaneously be considered an offense to Portugal, the king's Portuguese subjects, and Catholicism. Admittedly, the Pact of Confederation was not always stable. Moulded by circumstances, it was susceptible to the actions of individuals and the changing policies of different monarchs. The confederation was shaped by various events and became a complex power game of agreement and discord and advances and retreats, while remaining flexible enough for both parties to maintain their respective interests.

Discursive attempts to defend the idea of parity between the kingdoms were not uncommon. On 25 May 1516, Rui de Aguiar, vicar of São Tomé, sent a letter to King Manuel I recounting how the local sovereign had declared the king of Portugal to also be the king of Kongo and that this was a reciprocal arrangement. In addition, a letter issued by the Kongolese monarch on 8 June 1517, described Manuel I as a "very powerful brother" and claimed that his kingdom was "so Portuguese and so loyal in his service" (Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 361–63, 408–9). From the Portuguese too, there were similar statements. In response to a missive issued by the king of Kongo toward the end of 1529, in which he revealed an interest in acquiring a ship, King João III declared: "I am very surprised, because mine are yours" (Brásio 1952–1988, I, p. 527)[8].

Of course, among the flourishes of diplomatic rhetoric, with its exchanges of gifts and grants, presents, and honours, individuals did not always speak their true thoughts or indeed think as they said. For example, in a missive of 26 July 1562, the regent Catarina (1557–1562) addressed Bernardo I of Kongo (1561–1567) as "my very beloved and dear brother", expressing a desire that the Portuguese residing there "be as loyal to the kings of the Kongo as they were obliged to be to those of Portugal". Yet in 1607, the Council of India declared that the Portuguese should not reside in Kongo or teach the local people military and weapons skills, nor should the African monarch have "white vassals" (Brásio 1952–1988, II, pp. 483–85; 1952–1988, V, pp. 280–93).

The Kongolese monarchs, meanwhile, were determined to match their confederates in dignity. They attempted, for example, to obtain the right to use the insignia of the military orders and asked the Supreme Pontiff for the titles and honours customarily granted to Catholic kings (Brásio 1952–1988, V, pp. 502–3, 552–54; 1952–1988, VI, pp. 80, 125–27). When the requests were not met, the Kongolese kings did not hesitate to remind their Portuguese counterparts how much profit was being gained in the gigantic territory over which they held lordship *in solidum* (as a whole). They held that this made them powerful monarchs, as suggested by the European-style titles they adopted. Afonso I, for example, in a letter addressed to the pope on 21 February 1535, styled himself "king of *Conguo, Ibungu, Cacongo, Engoio, of Hither and Further Zaire, lord of Ambundos and of Angola, of Quisima and Musuru, of Matamba and Muilo and of Mucuso, and of Anzicos and of the conquest of Panzualumbo*, etc." (Brásio 1952–1988, II, pp. 38–40). Because they were responsible for the political and economic administration of their kingdoms, they did not fail to take action when their rights were impinged upon. Despite being "great servants" of Portugal and allowing Africans to be "rescued" by the Portuguese, they refused, as Manuel I stated in 1520, to permit any clandestine activities that involved the enslavement of peoples within their territory. In particular, they opposed the enslavement of their vassals, which sometimes included even their own relatives. They also rejected and attempted to repress smuggling and other illicit business activities (Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 435, 488–91; 1952–1988, II, pp. 433–35; Heywood 2009; Demaret 2016, p. 48).

The confederation, therefore, became a means of cooperation that could be moulded by the sometimes subtle interests that had created it. There was, for example, no wholesale transposition of European political systems into Kongo, nor did the kingdom reconfigure itself in the image of Portugal. Instead, the Portuguese were more triggers than agents of transformation. The African monarchs adapted what they considered appropriate in a process of advances and retreats, negotiations, and improvisations. This reality is evident, for example, in the testimony of Frei Manuel Batista (1609–1620), the third bishop of Kongo and Angola. On 10 July 1612, the bishop confided that: "here everything is so diverse, that from one moment to the next everything changes" (ANTT, Corpo Cronológico, I, mç. 115, doc. 136).

The sources also provide clear testimony of great ostentation on the part of the royal elites. They wore garments made with materials from remote parts of other continents, and their family members were sent to study in Portugal. A permanent embassy was established in Lisbon, then in 1580, another in Madrid, and from 1608, a third in Rome. Royal entourages were subjected to long sea voyages taking in the African islands, the lands of Brazil, and numerous European ports (Radulet 1992, p. 123). Sovereigns are known to have promoted the foundation of Catholic churches and, to this end, asked for priests and objects of worship to be sent to them. They worked towards the establishment of an indigenous clergy and took measures aimed at the extirpation of idolatry (Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Congregazione Concilio, Relationes Dioecesium, vol. 50, fl. 12–14, published in https://www.uc.pt/fluc/religionAJE/fontes/congo_angola, accessed on 21 August 2023). However, there are also accounts of other rulers who were less zealous in matters of faith who sought "that under the title and name of Christians the pope would hold them in the highest regard", yet when they indulged in wine "publicly cursed baptism, rejected Christianity and covered the clergy and the bishop with insults, before ordering them to immediately leave their kingdoms" (Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Congregazione Concilio, Relationes Dioecesium, vol. 50, fl. 4v-5v, published in https://www.uc.pt/fluc/religionAJE/fontes/congo_angola, accessed on 21 August 2023). Extant records show that there were "Christians of the land", free and unfree, who knew and fulfilled their religious obligations. However, there is also evidence that the majority were ignorant of the basic principles of Catholicism, and many of them were merging their ancestral religions with the new faith, creating a spirituality of complex beliefs and ideas. In this spiritual ferment, they often transformed "religious objects" into instruments of power (Fromont 2020, 2022).

Kongo was not a static piece in a game of Portuguese imperialist chess, as Balandier (1968) and Davidson (1973) argued. Instead, the Kongolese took advantage of doors left ajar to contact and engage with the wider world, while also managing to maintain, consolidate, and even extend their own domains (Birmingham 1977; Lovejoy 2012). While the Kongolese revered the Pact of Confederation and took advantage of it when they could, just as the Portuguese also took advantage of it, the Africans did not fail to assert their own rights and interests. Thus, when King Álvaro III (1614–1622) learned that. the Portuguese were fishing for zimbo shells elsewhere in the empire and then conveying them into Kongo, he quickly instituted a strict anti-inflationary policy by prohibiting the importation of the mollusc (Brásio 1952–1988, VI, pp. 375–84).

While the African monarchs imitated their confederates in some rituals and ceremonies, they continued to wear their own ancestral regal insignia, such as the *impud*, a tall cap made of palm cloth, which they refused to remove inside sacred temples or during religious celebrations. In addition, these elites would simultaneously use both their original and adopted Portuguese names. The concubinary and gentile practices common in the court and among the people continued, as did the internecine power struggles that led to 10 successions in just 100 years. Self-serving and arbitrary government actions were frequent, such as the appropriation of farms or the creation and sudden closure of fairs, all of which might result in exponential price increases. Rising political tensions in the area of religious authority culminated in the murder of bishops and the relocation of the seat of the diocese to Luanda (Manso 1877, pp. 93–96).

On the Portuguese side, however, actions that were no less diverse and often contrary to the Pact of Confederation might well have made the kings of Kongo wonder if the pact brought them more burdens than benefits. These problems ran the full gamut of misbehaviour: corruption, smuggling and trafficking; betrayals, bribes, quarrels, and usurpation of jurisdiction; immoral behaviour; discretionary power and arrogance of the cadres linked to the administration and government of São Tomé, often with insults to the Kongolese monarch; and conspiracies and attempts at regicide (Brásio 1952–1988, I, pp. 429, 468–71, 475–82; II, pp. 559–61; VI, pp. 128–40; VII, pp. 17–24).

Moreover, the Kongolese did not stop courting or allowing themselves to be courted by the representatives of other nations. When circumventing Portuguese interests was advantageous, and several times it was, the Kongolese did not balk at making contacts with Christian and non-Christian people from other European nations. The tensions that would arise from this would give rise to new balances and imbalances of power that would lead to the end of the Confederation Pact.

5. The End of the Pact of Confederation

The founding of St. Paul of the Assumption of Luanda in 1576 had a direct impact on relations between Portugal and Kongo. Although in theory Portugal continued to respect the independence of the Kingdom of Kongo, the conquest of Angola was, in practice, the dispossession of a territory long claimed by the Kongolese monarchs. One of the Portuguese intentions was to reestablish the region as a privileged area for the capture and commerce of slaves, on which the trading post of St Tomé was increasingly dependent (Green 2012, pp. 177–325). It was estimated that control of the island of Luanda could be extended to other parts of Angola, a desirable prospect as the kingdom was considered "the greatest treasure in Ethiopia for fishing *zimbo*", to the exploitation of precious metals, to the trade of slaves, and to ensure the safety and pacification of those lands. The control of this "treasure" could remove power of the local king, discouraging whites who would submit to his control, becoming enemies of the Portuguese (Brásio 1958–2004, III, pp. 227–28; IV, pp. 536–45).

Some attempts were made to encourage the Angolan kingdom to adhere to the Catholic Church, in the hope that this would stimulate trade with the lands bordering southern Kongo. The Portuguese first attempted to use the strategy that they had employed in Kongo, trying to convert the *Ngola*, but when this failed, they advanced with military conquest of the territory, installing there a government in 1589. The king of Kongo, who, like his predecessor, claimed ownership of this territory, ended up donating it to the king of Portugal in exchange for help against his enemies (Amaral 1996, pp. 54, 79–88, 173–212; Pedro 1970, pp. 32–34).

The conquest of Luanda and the repression of *Ngola* reinforced the influence and power of the Iberian crowns in the region while at the same time circumscribing once again a force adverse to Kongo Mani (Thornton 2020, pp. 83–87). Even so, the open wounds were not completely healed, and the politics of the relationship between the two kingdoms would remain unstable in the future. The Dutch took advantage of this opportunity. Their arrival in Kongo in the last decade of the 16th century with the purpose of establishing a trade in cloth and ivory instead of slaves was well received (Green 2019, p. 3). According to Meuwese (2012), the *Manicongo* himself even negotiated a secret agreement with the *Dutch.*

Growth in this trade could threaten Portuguese commercial domination and open doors to the introduction of a new Christian faith in a territory that had been subjugated to Catholicism until then. From then on, Portugal ceased having a monopoly on European trade in Africa. In 1593, the first Dutch vessels called on Loango and Kongo, establishing a commercial link. In response to this perceived threat, the crown ordered that Portuguese living in Kongo be concentrated in Soyo's port of Mpinda, and in 1612, King Alvaro expelled António Gonçalves Pita, who had been appointed to manage Portuguese affairs in Kongo (Thornton 2020, p. 97).

In his report on the visit *ad Sacra Limina*, written in 1619, Bishop Manuel Batista noted that he had travelled to Padrão de Pinda, where he met "some people of the Netherlands" (*aliquos belgas invenit ex statibus Olanda et Gellandae*), who had been there for fifteen years and who traded with the Africans, offering them books "of the offices of Our Lady, full of falsehoods", as well as vernacular bibles and other "utterly depraved books. . . against the holy Gospels of Christ and above all violent against the authority of the Roman See". According to the same report, the *Mani* of Sonho favoured heretics and publicly harassed Catholics (Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Congregazione Concilio, Relationes Dioecesium, vol. 50, fl. 4v-5v, published in https://www.uc.pt/fluc/religionAJE/fontes/congo_angola (accessed on 21 August 2023)).

In the literature, there is abundant evidence of these rising tensions, which contributed to the beginning of the end of the Pact of Confederation. Relations between the two kingdoms would then begin a phase of decay that the foundation of a diocese in 1596 subordinated to the Portuguese *Padroado* would help to mitigate at an early stage, but the conflicts that would later arise between the episcopal power obedient to the Iberian monarchies and the kings of Kongo who wanted to control religious policies would create more instability (Thornton 2020, pp. 102–7).

During the first half of the seventeenth century, relations between the confederated kingdoms took a turn for the worse. In 1622, the periodical instability that had, until then, characterised these relations dramatically worsened. In that year, for the first time, two confederate forces clashed, and the first casualty was the Pact of Confederation. A large Portuguese army with a significant number of African soldiers, including Imbangala, invaded southern Kongo and achieved victory at the Battle of Mbumbi. King Pedro II (1622–1624) of Kongo tried in vain to stop the invasion at the Battle of Mbamba and then sought Dutch assistance (Thornton and Mosterman 2010, pp. 235–48). At Mbanda Kasi, the Portuguese met the royal army of Kongo and were defeated. Tensions then arose between the Luso-Africans who did business in Kongo because trade routes would now be closed to them in retaliation (Thornton 2020, pp. 128–31).

King Pedro then went on a military offensive to reverse the Portuguese incursions of 1615–1622 in the Dembos, taking vassalage agreements from many who had sworn allegiance to Portugal. He wrote to the Dutch States General through merchants operating in Soyo, proposing a joint attack on Angola and subsidizing their efforts with payments in silver and ivory. Although the attack was never carried out because King Peter died unexpectedly on 13 April 1624, and the Count of Soyo claimed that he was unaware of Pedro's intentions, maintaining that as a Catholic he could not support Protestants in an attack against Catholics, this is a clear example of how the Thirty Years War also played out in Africa (Thornton 2016, pp. 189–213). Despite all these setbacks, the confederative pact had taken deep root and was holding out.

Instability within Kongolese politics would be a constant in the following decades and would collapse into an endless civil war. The rapid change from Álvaro III to Pedro II and then Garcia I left many provinces in the hands of people who might or might not support any king. The Portuguese agents who submitted to the Iberian monarchies sought to mitigate Dutch influence in this adverse environment (Thornton 2020, pp. 162–216).

As a result, the African kingdom failed to support the Portuguese in their campaign for the restoration of independence from Spain in 1640. The break in relations between Portugal and the papacy (1640–1668) that followed the restoration of full autonomy to the Kingdom of Portugal was taken advantage of by Kongo to intensify more direct relations with the Roman Curia, with the consequent introduction of Propaganda Fide missionaries into African territory (Walden 2022, pp. 38–58; Gonçalves 2008, pp. 45–55).

The simmering hostility between the two kingdoms was briefly eased by the signing of a peace treaty in 1651, although this was only valid for two months. Again, relations worsened until 1665, when Portugal and Kongo decided to support opposing factions for the succession of a small Angolan kingdom (Brásio 1952–1988, IX, pp. 450–53; XI, pp. 84–87).

The army led by Portugal, which included soldiers from Kongo and Brazil, annihilated that of Kongo at the Battle of Mbuíla on 29 October 1665. More than 5000 Kongolese royal troops perished, among them King António I (1660–1665), who died wearing the brass crown granted to his predecessor, Garcia II (1641–1660), by Pope Innocent X (1644–1655) (de Alencastro [2000] 2014, pp. 296–97; Thornton 2020, pp. 182–83). He was given a Catholic funeral even though Portugal considered him a renegade. This was the justification put forward to reassure those who had hesitated over the lawfulness of breaking the spiritual and temporal bonds of the Pact of Confederation. Years earlier, when the possibility of war was actually first considered, the Conselho Ultramarino (Overseas Council) was invited to render an opinion. In the declaration issued on 15 September 1651, the council stated without any reservations that "The king of the Kongo is not a vassal of this Crown but a brother in arms of its kings". Consequently "it would not be just to capitulate with him (to force him to surrender) for the sake of the exercise of power, except for matters relating to reason and justice". Therefore, only matters *de jure* could precipitate the conflict. The justification found to actually do so was an accusation that the Kongolese monarch was schismatic and idolatrous, which implied deviation from Catholicism and the violation of his obedience to the pope (Brásio 1952–1988, XI, p. 64).

To expand his political and military base, the *Mani* had reestablished an alliance with the *ganga Matambula*, "sorcerers", who claimed to be able to raise the dead, and he even used this traditional religious title in the declaration of war he eventually made on Portugal. However, the sovereign signed this document in his Christian name, while his chief secretary (*secretario maior da puridade*) called himself "D. Calisto Sebastião Castelo Branco Lágrimas da Madalena at the foot of the Cross of Mount Calvary" (de Alencastro [2000] 2014, pp. 290–92). It seems evident that neither the king nor the local nobility believed themselves to have renounced the faith they had accepted when the Pact of Confederation was signed. At the same time however, they did nothing to avoid a conflict which, quite evidently, both sides desired. In the aftermath of defeat, Kongo descended into civil war, and the capital, as the eighth bishop of Kongo and Angola, Frei Manuel da Natividade (1675–1686), noted on 16 May 1684, was "destroyed and depopulated" (Arquivo Apostolico Vaticano, Congregazione Concilio, Relationes Dioecesium, vol. 50, fl. 15–16, published in https://www.uc.pt/fluc/religionAJE/fontes/congo_angola (accessed on 21 August 2023).

6. Rethinking Portuguese Imperial Dynamics? Final Considerations

Some historians have been inclined to deny the reciprocal nature of interactions between the kingdoms of Portugal and Kongo between the end of the fifteenth century and the middle of the sixteenth century (Sá 2009; Amaral 1996, pp. 213–28). On the one hand, these have been defined as "formal friendship" (Thornton 2020, p. 127) or "cordial relations", based on mutual respect between kingdoms, although it has also been argued that the tacit recognition of a Portuguese presence, "civil and ecclesiastical, became a form of colonisation" (Riley 1998, p. 162; Russell-Wood 1998, p. 242). On the other hand, suggestions that from the reign of D. João II onwards, expansionist policies in West-Central Africa created an "abscess of Christianisation", in which the Portuguese aspired more to the attainment of suzerainty than of effective sovereignty, leaving Kongo as a "disguised vassal state" (Thomaz 1994, pp. 163, 165; Amaral 1996, p. 65). The establishment of deep ties of spiritual kinship between the kings of Portugal and Kongo has been seen as a political fiction and simply a means of concealing a "latent vassalage" (Thomaz 2008). Conversely, Africanist theses have defended Congolese agency by noting the ability of the local kings to control and capitalise on external interference to strengthen their own political autonomy (Thornton 1984).

Yet in reality, the periodic externalisation of personal ties and spiritual kinship was anything but fictitious. It constituted a "liturgy of submission" or, in other words, a ritual practice that declared the permanence and perpetuation of the bond between the two kingdoms and of the order that was intrinsic to it (Legendre 1974; Cardim 1999). Although they were bound to their Portuguese counterparts through ties of patronage and spiritual

kinship, the monarchs of Kongo never paid them tribute. Even the sources of the time, when describing certain ritual acts of Kongolese diplomacy before the representatives of the Portuguese Crown, such as touching their hands on the earth and on their face, interpret these as signs of "honour" or "respect", not of vassalage (Radulet 1992, pp. 107, 140, 145–46; Disney 2009, p. 67). Nor, for that matter, was Portugal ever subject to Kongo. The gestures made between the monarchs were customary and reciprocal courtesies (Biedermann et al. 2018; Biedermann 2014; Halikowski-Smith 2006) and not any kind of "political tribute to local sovereigns", as de Alencastro ([2000] 2014, p. 74) has argued.

Portugal did not exercise full dominion over Kongo, a theory first proposed by James Duffy and later reinforced by Basil Davidson. Nor did Kongo enjoy full control over the policies carried out in its territories, as several authors have argued (Duffy 1959; Davidson 1961; Thornton 1981). The meaning and scope of relations between the kingdoms of Portugal and Kongo can be seen in the Pact of Confederation, with its legal, temporal, and spiritual implications, framed by the *ius commune*—a European concept of Roman origin. The foundation was reciprocity, which, while not always respected, forged a balance that gave both parties scope to defend their interests, sometimes covertly. Yet the authors have simply not understood the Pact of Confederation. Such a phenomenon, consisting of different dynamics and built by such diverse agents, cannot be assessed using either a top-down or bottom-up approach, but instead must be scrutinised from all directions as an exercise of history in equal parts (Bertrand 2011; Gouveia and Lemos 2022).

The approach taken in this article has been to present the Portuguese sovereigns as only one power among powers, on a par with their Kongolese counterparts. Considering that this topic is by no means resolved, it is necessary to seek a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the diversity of actions that structured these dynamic relationships. The encounters and disagreements between the kingdoms of Portugal and Kongo provoked various types of interactions, negotiations, exchanges, and mutual influences, where adherence competed and sometimes mixed with resistance. This perspective creates the space to question and discuss normative and essentialist interpretations of Europe that have not allowed it to be seen as a space built by transnational ties (Patel 2010).

This failure to grasp the existence of the confederation or to understand its significance meant that Africa's decisive role as a place for implementing new strategies of political organization was underestimated (Bennet 2019, p. 3). First, it was not only the "Americas", as Fernández-Armesto argued, that created a "new world" of politics, where the institutions resulting from the interaction between the indigenous local people and newcomers were innovative and not transplanted from a European "homeland". West-Central Africa also played a leading role, albeit rarely recognised, in the formation of the Atlantic world and the construction of modernity (Thornton 1998). Second, the confederation was a temporal and spiritual alliance with a legal underpinning, the model of which had never before been carried out between kingdoms on different continents.

Due in large part to the Pact of Confederation, Portugal was able to control some of the most lucrative contemporary global trade, including the trade in enslaved people. Consequently, the Portuguese succeeded in exploiting large territories on different continents using forced labour. The dynamics of slavery, which quickly became an integrated global phenomenon, were the foundation stones of the Portuguese empire (Marcocci 2012, pp. 42–71, 281–333). However, the construction was not based on rigid processes or models, or on direct or indirect ownership, or even on territorial and maritime domination. Nor was it framed in only two systems, Asian and Atlantic, as de Alencastro ([2000] 2014, p. 73) has argued. Instead, it encompassed possessions, conquests, and places of influence, constituted using disparate strategies, which included an agreement whose legal support enabled a unique model of spiritual domination and economic exploitation to be put into practice in West-Central Africa, based on the principle of reciprocity between kingdoms.

Portugal acquired sovereignty and created spheres of influence in various places where there were already strong powers with which it was not possible to directly contend. While Hormuz recognised Portuguese suzerainty through formal agreements, Ternate and Ceylon

passed into Portuguese control under the terms of Wills left by indigenous Christian kings. Timor was a case of voluntary submission, while on the Malabar coast, Portugal created zones of influence through contracts with local powers. These types of arrangements could evolve into formal protectorates and de facto possessions, such as Sofala, Mozambique, and the eastern islands of Indo-India. In Ugulim and S. Tomé de Meliapor, the Portuguese obtained extraterritorial commercial rights, and in Negapatão, the Portuguese Crown was allowed to appoint captains with jurisdiction over the resident Christians. In the mercantile republic of Macau, the presence of Portuguese traders was tolerated, and in Zambezia, the Portuguese managed to insert themselves into the traditional hierarchy as vassals of the emperor of Monomotapa, sometimes with the "fumos", small local chiefs, as their vassals. It was also through negotiation and diplomacy that the Jesuits acquired the right to remain in Nagasaki (Russell-Wood 2016, pp. 50–51; Thomaz 2008; Cardim and Hespanha 2018, pp. 62–75). However, nne of the negotiation processes referred to are comparable or have had the repercussions of the strategy implemented in the Kingdom of Kongo. Nowhere else in the world would Portugal obtain such significant advantages without resorting to military conquest or occupation. Nowhere else would the Portuguese find or create conditions, *de iure* and *de facto*, for the establishment of a confederation between kingdoms of different continents, a model of mixed power, distinct from all those that have so far been studied in historiography, which forces us to rethink Portuguese imperial dynamics and the modalities of its presence in overseas territories.

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Notes

1 The use of the concepts of "empire" and "imperialism" here follows Marcocci's convincing arguments, according to which "from the years following Gama's voyage to India, the complex system of domination put in place by the Portuguese was described in explicitly imperial terms" (Marcocci 2012, pp. 73–106).

2 Relations between people defending their own comercial interests seem to have been shaped differently. While developing arguments presented in an article on intercultural exchanges Francesca Trivellato published a book (Trivellato 2003, 2009) on transcultural trade in the Portuguese-Jewish diaspora showing that trust was not bound to any particular religious solidarity. More recently, the book organized by Antunes et al. (2014) shows that Religious constraints did not prevent cross-cultural trade, and Poettering (2019, pp. 4, 183–93) argued that despite cultural limitations and religious prejudices, members of different ethnic and religious groups were able to develop the trust necessary for profitable economic cooperation.

3 The concept of "Church Militant" is used here in the sense defined by Boxer (1978), as a reference to spiritual warfare.

4 Almost nothing is known about this person, except for what the chronicle of King Manuel I says, describing him as a "nobleman" in whom he "trusted a lot". See Brásio (1952–1988, I, pp. 226–27).

5 According to Cardim and Hespanha (2018, p. 58) it literally means "equally important" (*união em igualdade com o principal*).

6 According to some authors, this was the model commonly adopted in "composite monarchies". See (Elliott 1992, pp. 48–71; Elliott 2018; Frost 2015, pp. 405–23). Bouza Álvarez (1987), Schaub (2001), Cardim and Hespanha (2018) also claimed that the incorporation of Portugal into the Hispanic Monarchy took place through an *aeque principaliter union*.

7 Marcocci (2012, p. 78) clarifies what this aggressive legal notion of "discovery" consisted of.

8 Similar requests were made later, but the Portuguese always tried to control relations between the Congo and Europe. This explains why Portugal never replied to the various letters that the Kongolese king sent to Lisbon in the 40s of the 16th century, asking for an armed ship (Brásio 1952–1988, II, pp. 85–86).

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